

spa business

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Time to engage with governments

News that the government of the Maldives had instructed spas on the islands to close (see p16) sent shock waves through the industry when it was announced recently.

Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed attributed the ban to lobbying by an opposition party, saying: "The government has decided to close all massage parlors and spas, following an opposition-led religious protest last week calling for their closure."

Opposition leader Maumoon Abdul Gayoom said the move was aimed at harming spa businesses owned by rivals, claiming: "We wanted massage clinics closed to prevent prostitution [but]

Nasheed is misusing the demands to take revenge by imposing the ban on resorts owned by opposition members."

Although the ban was subsequently lifted pending a review, the very fact that something like this can happen out of the blue came as a shock to both investors and operators.

Tourism is worth US\$1.5bn (€1.1bn, £1bn) to the Maldives and makes up 30 per cent of GDP and the announcement is bound to have a damaging impact on the islands' tourism industry.

The episode has highlighted several critical issues. The first is the important but often underestimated role spas play in drawing high-spending customers to resorts and the second is the industry's lack of coherence when it comes to high-level lobbying and proving its economic value strategically.

We could learn a valuable lesson from operators in the airline industry who've become past masters at leveraging their influence commercially by negotiating terms with governments, cities and local businesses. You can be sure that



We could learn a valuable lesson from operators in the airline industry who've become past masters at leveraging their influence commercially to negotiate terms with governments, cities and businesses

when a new route opens up which involves carrying hoards of new customers to a destination, the airlines involved have negotiated themselves the very best deal possible.

The episode of the Maldives ban should act as a catalyst for the industry and prompt us to commission research which proves the economic value of the spa industry to world tourism and to set up the necessary lobbying infrastructure to enable us to speak on a peer-to-peer basis with governments and other key stakeholders to sell the case for our industry.

With so many parts of the world in turmoil which involve clashes of ideology, spas are vulnerable to threats of this nature. Being clear about both health and economic benefits and then being united in getting these points across in a clear and culturally sensitive way is vital if our industry is to avoid further disruption.

Liz Terry, editor twitter: @elizterry

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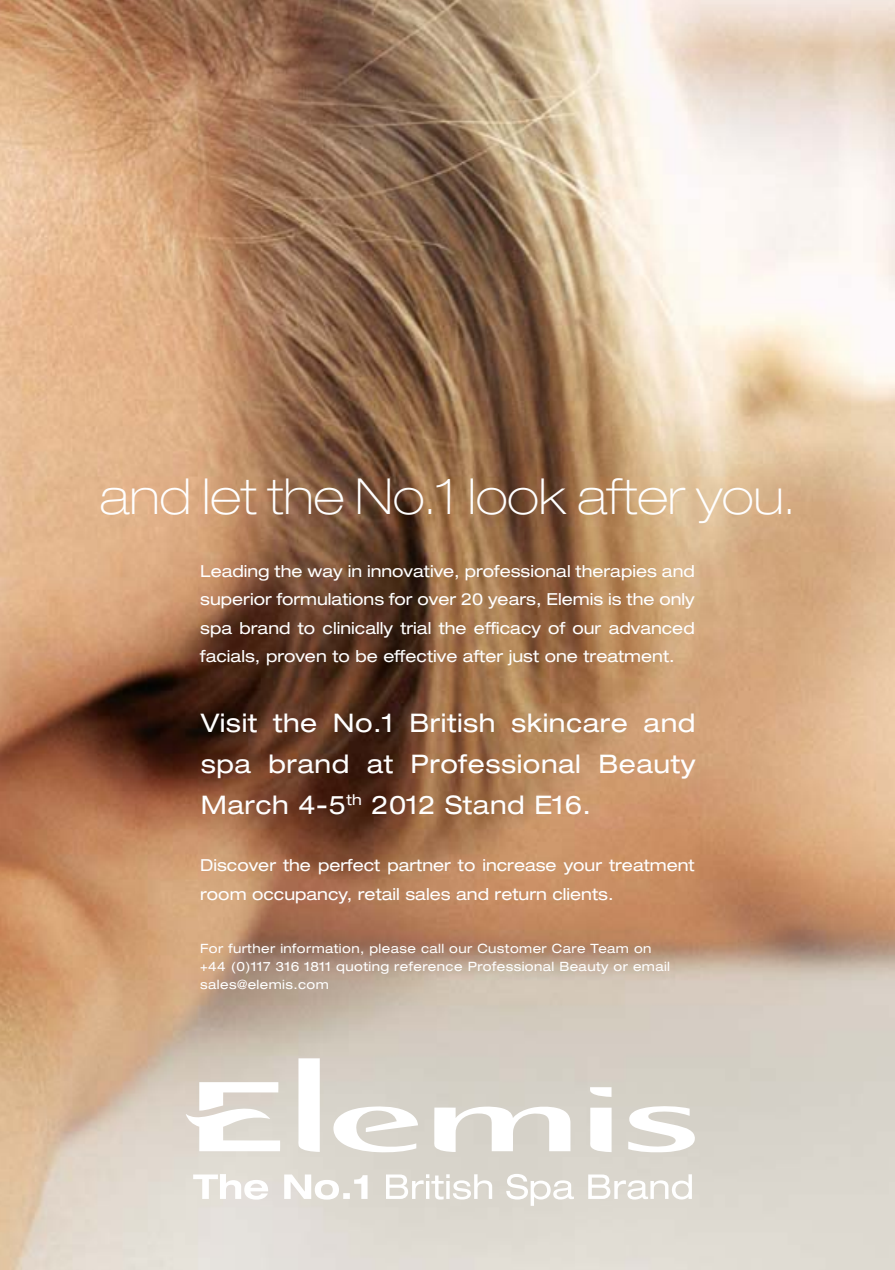


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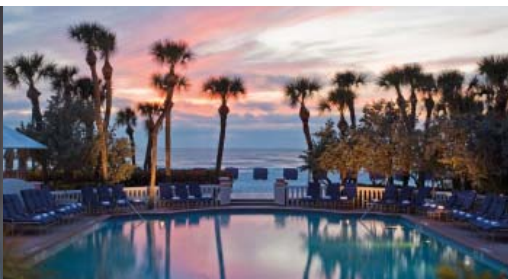
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IN THIS ISSUE



Interview: Gary Henkin, president and founder, WTS International (p68)



Talking to the top team at The Peninsula Hotels (p32)



Cynthia Chua, the woman behind Ministry of Waxing (p40)

5 Editor's letter: Time to engage with governments

Liz Terry on the valuable lessons to be learned from the Maldives spa ban

14 Letters

Why spa operators should shop around for deal site partners

16 News

Maldives government spa ban; key figures released on US hotel spa market and the Middle Eastern spa sector; Minor launches Avani brand

24 News report: Tivoli to strengthen ties with Banyan Tree

The Asian spa operator collaborates with a Portuguese hotel chain to expand in Europe and South America

26 Everyone's talking about: Menu engineering

Treatment menus have become too long and complicated, but which therapies do you cut or keep?

Katie Barnes investigates

32 Top team: The Peninsula Hotels

Ministry of Hudson talks to key figures behind the leading Asian hotel chain about how they run their spas and exciting future plans

40 Profile: Cynthia Chua

The Singapore entrepreneur behind Ministry of Waxing and Browhaus has revolutionised personal grooming worldwide. She talks to Katie Barnes about the business of beauty and integration with spas

48 First-person: Hot springs Chinese-style

Lisa Starr tries out two hot spring spas – one catering to international visitors and the other to the domestic market – in China's Yunnan province

52 Opinion: Bath time

Lee David Stephens gives an insight into a traditional Chinese bathhouse and how Chinese people like to spa

54 Sands of time

The Oitavos hotel and spa on Portugal's Estoril coast is 90 years in the making. Tom Walker pays a visit

62 Mystery shopper:

Talise Ottoman Spa, Dubai
Daniella Russell goes undercover at one of the largest spas in Dubai



The Oitavos hotel and spa, Portugal (p54)



Thermal bathing at Polynesian Spa in New Zealand (p76)



Mystery shopping in Dubai (p62)

68 | Interview: Gary Henkin

The president and founder of WTS International – the US-based spa management and consultancy firm – talks to Rhianon Howells about expanding globally

72 | Ask an expert:

Crisis control

The Arab Spring, the Japanese tsunami and bombings in Mumbai – what's the best way of dealing with a crisis? We ask those who have first-hand experience of the events

76 | Pooling resources

The Polynesian Spa in the geothermal town of Rotorua in New Zealand boasts 25 thermal pools and is one of the longest running attractions in the country. Chris McBeath takes a look

82 | Tourism: Booming Baku

Terry Stevens reports on the Azerbaijan capital which has seen a surge of international hotel openings in the past two years

86 | Fitness:

Pilates – pure versus applied

We find out how pilates is evolving

91 | Product focus:

Uniforms & linen

A showcase of spa uniform collections and the latest in linen

94 | Products

New products and equipment

98 | Research: Making headway

Fitness can help with migraine relief say Swedish scientists

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ON THE COVER

Beauty business – the Ministry of Waxing and its sister companies (p40)

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Letters

Do you have a strong opinion, or disagree with somebody else's point of view on topics related to the spa industry? If so, *Spa Business* would love to hear from you. Email your letters, thoughts and suggestions to theteam@spabusiness.com

Spas should shop around for deal sites

Gavin Brown, commercial director, BlueKoko.com

Reading about deal sites and spas (see SB11/4 p24) brought home quite vividly the mass of different offers and platforms that now exist for businesses to sell their services at knock down rates.

Yet one argument – that the offers will help to drive footfall – can be a hollow one as people become increasingly reliant on deal following and will go wherever the deal is next, no matter how great a treatment they had at the original spa.

One point the *Spa Business* article made – that once a treatment is paid for but not used, the payment typically belongs to the spa – also does not apply to most deal sites. It's more typical that the deal site keeps the money from the consumer, even if the voucher is not redeemed.

The big players seem to have blitzed the beauty care world but a 35-50 per cent commission on top of a heavy discount is simply not sustainable. There are now a few new models emerging – including BlueKoko – that

are more about supporting businesses, giving them full control over their offers and making it a commercially viable marketing option for them. Spas need to shop around and really find a deal site that works for them. Always read the small print and ask questions about the marketing and, if you can, find other businesses locally who have run an offer and ask for their feedback and advice.

Deals that enable spas to run offers at quiet times of the week and that give them the chance to up-sell to customers – following up an initial deal with a special price offer of a course for example – are a good way to build a more regular clientele and sell offers direct. And there are sites that will give operators all the tools they need to run deals themselves and at times when they need customers the most. Spas no longer need to rely on deal sites to tell them when they can run an offer.

However, it all comes down to the service, quality of treatments and making clients feel special. This time customers might spend £10 (US\$16, €12); the next time £100 (US\$155, €121) if they're impressed enough to come back.



Susan Stein (far right) led a class for 10 Bhutanese spa practitioners

A burgeoning spa industry in Bhutan

Susan Stein, technical advisor, Jari Menari, Bali, Indonesia

Travelling in Bhutan, as part of the APSWC Spa Study Tour (see SB11/4 p58), I noticed a definite familiarity with traditional herbal medicines, often used for minor ailments and occasionally in indulgent, fire-warmed baths. Yet the concept of spas offering massages, facials, body exfoliations and yoga, is only just being introduced to the Bhutanese as enticements to satisfy foreign visitors.

The spa practitioners I did meet are the first within the country; young, dedicated, English-speaking, truly hospitable and confident in their skills they've learned from international teachers. Like sponges, they have absorbed the lessons and proudly offer a variety of sessions, in stunning settings, such as reflexology, relaxing or deep tissue massage, facials and packages that conclude with hot stone baths.

During my time, I was honored and pleased to offer a class in 'quality of touch' to 10 practitioners. This was one of the first gatherings of Bhutanese spa practitioners, which enabled them to network and to even put down roots for forming a potential spa association.

For the spa industry to further blossom, the Bhutan Tourism Council will need to follow up with the creation of a good vocational spa training school, governed by the Department of Tourism, to ensure a respectable education is available.

Intense training is mandatory to bring the interested Bhutanese practitioners up to international standards, which I hope will happen, rather than importing foreign practitioners.

As long as education for Bhutanese citizens remains a priority, the interested spa operators will find a wealth of potential in the country – a country that is prime for development of retreat centres where mind, body and spirit are touched in natural settings by warm-hearted staff.

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Virgin Hotels to open very first site in Chicago in 2013

Virgin Hotels is expected to launch its first property by the end of 2013 in Chicago, US, following the acquisition of the Old Dearborn Bank Building in the downtown area of the city in late 2011.

Formerly an office complex, the 27-storey building will be converted by Virgin Hotels into a 250-bedroom hotel, which will comprise a spa spanning between 4,000-5,000sq ft (372-465sq m).

Further details about the composition of the spa are yet to be announced, although the hotel will also incorporate meeting space; restaurants; lounges; and other areas reflecting the Virgin brand.

Launched in September 2010, the new Virgin Hotels business aims to develop and operate hotels offering 150-400 bedrooms in gateway cities across the world.



Dusseau will be president of TSV

Dusseau takes strategic role at Trilogi Spa Ventures

Trilogi Spa Ventures (TSV) has confirmed that Richard Dusseau, founder and CEO of the Spa Strategy consultancy, started in his new role as president of TSV on 1 January.

The news that Dusseau, also a founding member of the board of directors for the Global Spa Summit, would join TSV was first announced in November.

Based in New York, USA, TSV is a spa management company that creates and operates branded spas in the hospitality industry.

In his new role, Dusseau will be responsible for day-to-day management as well as for the development, supervision and operation of additional international branded spas. He is also an equity partner in the firm.

While his full-time focus will be on TSV, Dusseau will remain a partner in Spa Strategy (see S808/1 p22). Elaine Fenard, also a partner at Spa Strategy, will continue to manage the consultancy.

Avani brand launches in Sri Lanka

Asian-based Minor Hotel Group (MHG) has unveiled a new luxury brand – complete with a signature in-house spa concept – for markets in Asia, Australia and the Middle East.

Avani Hotels & Resorts will be upscale and contemporary with a “simple sense of style”. Minor will offer the brand to third-party hotel operators as well as look for opportunities to own and operate sites itself.

The inaugural Avani has just opened in the south of Sri Lanka. The 75-bedroom Avani Bentota Resort and Spa – formerly known as Hotel Serendib Bentota – is owned by local hotel firm Serendib Leisure.

The resort has benefited from an extensive LKR650m (US\$5.7m, €4.4m, £3.6m) refurbishment as part of a rebranding process which includes adding a more “modern and chic ambience”. Facilities include an Avani-branded spa with four treatment rooms – one of which



The concept will rollout across Asia, Australia and the Middle East

is a double – and a sauna. Products are supplied by Sri Lanka-based brand, Spa Ceylon.

MHG CEO Dillip Rajakarier said: “With Sri Lanka poised for a boom in tourism, this well-appointed property will offer the experience that discerning travellers are seeking.”

It is the first of two properties announced by MHG under the new Avani brand, with the second due to open in Sri Lanka in 2012. ‘Avani’ comes from the Sanskrit word for ‘earth’.

Therapist training academy for Chuan Spa

The Langham Hospitality Group (LHG) has announced plans to launch a therapist training academy, for employees in its signature Chuan Spas (see S806/1 p42), in the third quarter of 2012.

LHG will partner with an undisclosed international training organisation to offer accredited qualifications.

Speaking to *Spa Business*, LHG director of spa operations Barry White said the academy will offer a pipeline of qualified staff through a three-pronged approach.

It will provide training to therapists who do not currently have an international qualification, with an initial focus on massage and beauty treatments. It will also enable qualified staff to gain training in particular disciplines within a recognised programme. And at a later stage, it is



There are currently eight Chuan Spas, with three more planned for 2012

planning to offer management training in conjunction with education institutions.

White said: “The academy will enable our students to train within a spa environment to gain some really good hands-on knowledge.”

There are currently eight Chuan Spas open – five in Asia, one in the UK and two in the US – and three are due to launch in China in 2012.

Kerzner shifts from owning to managing sites

Kerzner International is shifting its strategy from owning hotels to managing them.

As part of the move, Brookfield Asset Management has taken on three Kerzner sites in a US\$175m (€130m, £111m) debt for equity swap. The properties include Kerzner’s flagship

Atlantis resort and One&Only Ocean Club in the Bahamas and One&Only Palmilla in Mexico.

CEO Sol Kerzner said: “Kerzner will continue to own the Atlantis and One&Only brand names and retains the right to develop additional resort properties under these names.”

PKF releases in-depth 2010 spa data

A report released in January looks in detail at how US spas were affected by the economic downturn. *Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry 2011* by PKF Hospitality Research is based on 2010 figures and shows that mid-market and medium-sized hotel spas were worst hit.

Hotel spas suffered a 10.5 per cent decline in departmental revenue in 2010 on average. Urban hotel spas experienced less of a drop in revenue (-1.2 per cent) compared to the spas at resort hotels (-13.6 per cent).

The biggest losers, however, were spas with sales between US\$1m-3m (£0.78m-2.3m, £0.65m-1.9m), and those with 10-20 treatment rooms. These spas saw their revenues decline by 14.3 per cent and 17.8 per cent respectively.

"A possible reason for the significant decline in the medium-size spa group is overbuilding," the report states. "Medium-sized spas are often



Mid-market and medium-sized spas were hardest hit in the downturn

found in hotels that likely should have a spa as a guest amenity, but the property is not specifically known for its spa. Therefore, it's neither an intimate, boutique spa nor a showcase spa.

"Additionally, the spa may have been built as a ratio of spa treatment rooms to total guest rooms, rather than built to an actual projection of hotel spa demand and capture rate." Details: www.pkfc.com/store

Maldives spa ban quickly lifted by government

A ban on spa services in the Maldives has been overturned only a week after it was imposed.

On 30 December, the country's Tourism Ministry ordered all operators to close their spas following a claim that they were being used as brothels by Adhaalath – a political

Islamist opposition party. Yet the ban was lifted just five days later on 4 January.

Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed told the AFP press agency: "We found that they were perfectly healthy places where families can obtain a top-class treatment."

PwC publishes trio of Middle Eastern data

A set of benchmark studies from PricewaterhouseCoopers, charting the spa markets in Beirut, the Dead Sea (Jordan) and Doha (Qatar), has portrayed an encouraging picture for the territory after the economic downturn.

Tracking 11 key metrics from internationally branded hotels in the three Middle Eastern regions, the report shows that spas in Doha are recovering particularly well, with many of the 2011 key indicators well above 2010 levels.

The average treatment revenue per treatment sold from January to August 2011 was US\$133 (£104, £86), an increase of 11 per cent over the first 10 months of 2010.

Within Jordan's Dead Sea region, spas on average created revenues of US\$77 (£60, £50) for each treatment sold during 2011, only slightly above 2010 levels (see S8103/3 p30).

The spa sector in Jordan had a poor start to the year during 2011, but recovered later on with five straight months of growth between June and October.



Jordanian spas were up slightly on revenue in 2011

In Beirut, the data was collected for the first time, so no comparison was possible. The report shows that average treatment revenue per treatment sold from January to October 2011 was US\$83 (£65, £54). Details: www.pwc.com/mi/en/publications/

Pola Orbis completes AU\$300m Jurlique deal

Japanese skincare giant Pola Orbis has completed its acquisition of Australian rival Jurlique in a deal worth AU\$300m (US\$302m, €230m, £194m).

The acquisition is seen as a way for Pola Orbis to get a foothold in the Australian and New Zealand markets, where Jurlique's organic products have a strong presence.

In a statement, a spokesperson for Pola said: "This deal will accelerate our overseas expansion plan and will significantly contribute to achieving our long-term vision."

"Through this acquisition, we'll be able to strengthen our business platform and distribution capabilities globally."

As part of the deal, Pola Orbis will take control of all of Jurlique's nine consolidated subsidiaries in five countries.



The voluntary code will target all TSA members

Quality assurance scheme for Thailand's spa sector

The Thai Spa Association (TSA) has teamed up with certification company SGS to establish a voluntary code of standards for the country's spa and wellness industry.

Standards are being introduced by the association in order to "ensure provision of an international service offering in keeping with client expectations".

The code is based on five key elements identified by SGS – facilities and infrastructure; spa operations; sanitation and cleanliness; personnel and staffing; and monitoring and improvement.

It is hoped the new set of standards will help Thai spa operators and owners to define, roll out and monitor the quality and safety performance criteria in their business strategies.

In a statement, SGS said: "We'll aim to protect the reputation of Thai spas and leverage the industry's potential for continuous improvement, including improving internal cost controls."

Groupon UK faces fair trading inquiry over adverts

Complaints from consumers about Groupon UK adverts are being referred to the country's Office of Fair Trading (OFT) over "serious concerns" of its ability to adhere to the Advertising Code.

The UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) confirmed it will refer complaints that specifically relate to a failure to carry out promotions fairly, such as not clarifying significant terms and conditions.

A failure to supply evidence that particular offers are available and exaggerated claims of the likely savings are also among the complaints referred to the OFT. According to the ASA, it had formally probed and upheld complaints on 11 occasions throughout 2011, as well as informally resolving more than other 35 cases.



THE CAMPAIGN WILL INCLUDE SPA GRADING SCHEME

Romanian government to support spa tourism

The Romanian government is backing a scheme which aims to promote the country as a spa destination to inbound visitors.

As part of the campaign, 20 resorts will be graded as historic spa resorts by the Department of Regional Development and Tourism (DRDT). The first 10 resorts – which include Olanesti, Ocna Sibiului, Govora and Herculane – have been granted the status with a further 10 being announced during 2012. The accreditation will aim to highlight Romania's rich spa heritage.

Emilian Imbri, tourism advisor for DRDT, said: "These 10 resorts have been labelled as spa resorts for balneotherapy. The next step is for the Ministry of Health to officially grant the certification."

To obtain accreditation from the government, Imbri said that resorts will be required to meet a number of requirements, which include demonstrating a history in offering spa treatments for more than 100 years.

Ellis unveils 2012 Spa Trend Report

Healthy feet treatments, cold and ice therapies and 'online wellness gaming' are developments to watch out for in 2012, according to the ninth annual trends forecast by global spa and wellness resource SpaFinder.

The report also predicts that health coaching at spas will become more popular; and that there will be consolidation between hotels' spa and gastronomic offerings which will result in an increase in 'spa, wine and dine' packages.

The online wellness gaming concept follows the introduction of Spa Life by Clarins – a Facebook game based on managing a spa where points can be redeemed for Clarins products. The report also references Life Game, by US insurance company Aetna, which is "designed to make it fun, rewarding and social for [Aetna] members to achieve wellbeing goals".

The *Spa Trend Report* is developed under the direction of SpaFinder president Susie Ellis, a founding board member of The Global Spa Summit. She says: "After four tough years that made experimentation challenging, we're



ELLIS SAID THE SPA SECTOR IS "ONCE AGAIN" INNOVATING

seeing the industry once again innovating. Overall, we see two distinct themes. One is the industry innovating with diverse, new sensory experiences and treatments, such as cold and vibration therapies.

"The second is how spas are re-imagining and extending their connection to customers, moving beyond the sporadic visit."

€3.65m renovation for French medi-spa

Mélusine Spa, a dermatology centre based on the natural thermal waters in La Roche-Posay, France, is to reopen in the second quarter of 2012 as the Grand Thermal Spa, after a major €3.65m (US\$4.79m, £3.05m) overhaul.

The medi-spa facility that specialises in anti-ageing techniques is to receive an expansion from its current size of 800sq m (8,611sq ft) to more than 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) and fitted with new equipment.

Facilities at the new Grand Thermal Spa, La Roche-Posay will include a 140sq m (1,507sq ft) thermal pool, a hydro-whirlpool and a 22sq m (237sq ft) hammam, in addition to a sauna.

Product houses include La Roche-Posay, a skincare line made using the thermal waters, Biodroga, Phytos and SkinCeuticals.



THE THERMAL WATER SPA SPECIALISES IN TREATING SKIN CONDITIONS

A spokesperson for the local tourist board said it will represent a "new generation of chic spas" in the countryside, rather than coastal or town-based thalassotherapy resorts.

Architectural firm Latitudes is behind the design of the new-look spa, which will use natural materials such as baked bricks and tiles.

Self-help author jailed over sweat lodge deaths

Self-help author James Arthur Ray has been sent to prison for negligent homicide following the death of three people during a sweat lodge ceremony in, Arizona, US, in October 2009.

Yavapai County superior court judge Warren Darrow sentenced Ray to three two-year terms

to run concurrently, as well as being told to pay restitution, according to reports.

A further 18 people were hospitalised after the incident, with the prosecution reportedly arguing that Ray had increased the heat to dangerous levels and ignored pleas for help.



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Kimpton launches 'spa and arts' hotel in San Diego

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants has unveiled Hotel Palomar San Diego in the downtown arts district of the Californian, US, city.

The 183-bedroom property, formerly called Sé Hotel, has been revamped and – taking advantage of its location – will serve as a gallery and stage for visual art, performing art, dance and architecture.

As part of the overhaul, the hotel now offers a stylish, modern spa, in-room spa services and a lavish roof-deck lounge with an infinity-edge pool. The spa has seven treatment suites and also features Studio Sutra – a VIP room that can cater for two people – with a soaking tub, double steam shower and daybed.

There is also a Rasul and the Silk Lounge relaxation area that can be hired for parties. The spa offers Rasul-based treatments as well as reflexology and shiatsu. Beauty services include manicures/pedicures.



Each of the new properties comprise a large spa

Three new luxury hotels for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur is set to position itself as a top-end holiday destination, with the arrival of a trio of new luxury hotels during 2012.

The first to open was the 473-room InterContinental Hotel, which took over the former Nikko Hotel in late 2011. This year, it will embark on a 30-month refurbishment project, which includes work on a Zen-style spa.

The 412-bedroom Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, opening in early 2012, will have a spa with 11 treatment rooms, an indoor swimming pool, a health and fitness club and a 74-cover Sky Lounge restaurant.

Meanwhile, the 513-bedroom Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar will include a spa with more than 10 treatment rooms and relaxation areas, swimming pool, health club and a range of restaurants.

La Prairie spa for Hotel Le Bristol

The Hotel Le Bristol in Paris, France, has completed a €100m (US\$139m, £87m) revamp with the opening of a new spa in conjunction with Swiss skin-care brand La Prairie.

Spread over three floors, Spa Le Bristol by La Prairie has eight treatment rooms in total. In the basement, is a Russian-style wet room with a Vichy shower and a Turkish steamroom. The floor above features two treatment rooms, one of which is dedicated to hand and feet therapies.

On the second floor, there are five more treatment rooms – including two double suites. A female-only Turkish steamroom; a fitness centre and a hairdressing salon also feature as part of the spa, while there is a swimming pool on the sixth floor of the hotel.

Other product houses include Russie Blanche – for use in the steamrooms; Les



La Prairie spa houses eight treatment cabins – including two duo suites

Thermes Marins de Saint-Malo; La Maison De L'Argan; and The Organic Pharmacy.

The spa was designed by hotel owner Maja Oetker and renowned French architect Pierre-Yves Rochon, who also oversaw the wider refurbishment of the five-star hotel.

Prior to the overhaul, the hotel featured an Anne Semonin Spa.

Mövenpick opens ninth resort in Saudi Arabia

Switzerland-based luxury resort operator Mövenpick has announced the opening of the Beach Resort Al Khobar in eastern Saudi Arabia.

The resort, the ninth by Mövenpick in the Middle Eastern country, offers 36 three-bedroom villas, a spa and fitness centre, two restaurants, a large swimming pool and a private beach.

The 300sq m (3,229sq ft) Retreat Wellness Center and Spa has three treatment rooms; a salon; and one pedicure/manicure room. It offers beauty services as well as massage, aromatherapy and reflexology treatments using products by Payot and Phytoner.

Other spa facilities include a sauna, a steamroom, a large whirlpool, a fitness area and serene relaxation areas.



Al Khobar forms part of Mövenpick's plan to open 100 hotels by 2015

The resort will be marketed primarily as a family resort, with children-specific facilities such as a separate private pool area and a supervised children's club.

The opening of Al Khobar forms part of Mövenpick's ambitious plan to open 10 hotels in 2012 and 100 by 2015.

Jeff Kohl named new Red Door Spas COO

Red Door Spas has appointed Jeff Kohl as its new chief operating officer.

Kohl will be tasked with directing all Red Door Spa operations, including strategic partnership development and management of its 31 full-service spa and salon properties.

Kohl currently serves as a director of the International Spa Association (ISPA) and is also the president of the ISPA Foundation.

Former roles held by Kohl include director of global hospitality sales for fitness equipment supplier Precor between 2007 and 2011.



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YTL acquires UK thermal spa project

YTL Hotels, the hospitality division of Malaysia-based infrastructure conglomerate YTL Corporation, is to take on the development of a 98-bedroom spa hotel in the UK spa town of Bath.

YTL Hotels has acquired the project from Bath Hotel and Spa Limited (BHSL) – a joint venture between the Trevor Osborne Property Group and CP Holdings – for an undisclosed sum.

To be developed in a vacant hotel building in the heart of Bath, the new spa hotel will be one of the first in the country to use natural thermal water when it opens in 2014.

As initial development had already been undertaken by BHSL, construction could start as early as April. And Trevor Osborne, a co-owner of BHSL, will provide ongoing advice as the project moves forward.



The hotel will become one of the UK's first to use natural thermal water

Meanwhile, YTL Corporation – which owns the local water supply company Wessex Waters – has already started drilling a new borehole to source water from Bath's natural hot springs.

This the UK debut for YTL Hotels, which has hotels and spas in Malaysia, China, Japan, Thailand and France (see SB11/3 p46).

Investor brothers net US' Mayflower Inn and Spa

Investors Alan and Warren Kanders have taken over the ownership of the luxury Mayflower Inn and Spa in Litchfield Hills, Connecticut, US.

Famous for its destination spa and gourmet restaurant, the boutique hotel offers 30 designed bedrooms and is a member of the Relais &

Châteaux consortia. The 20,000sq ft (1,900sq m) spa is housed in a separate building and includes eight treatment rooms.

A hammam, an indoor pool and relaxation areas also feature among the facilities, as well as a fitness club with four exercise studios.

US\$48m Marriott refurb in US Virgin Islands

After six months and a US\$48m (€36m, £31m) renovation, Marriott Hotels & Resorts (MHR) has unveiled its iconic Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort in the US Virgin Islands.

Among the new amenities added to the property is the 4,000sq ft (372sq m) Lazule Sea Spa, which features seven single treatment rooms; a couples' therapy suite; three poolside treatment cabanas; a spa pool and a relaxation area.

Elsewhere, in the resort is a newly-expanded gym and a full-service salon with hair and manicure/pedicure stations. In addition, a deck located away from the main pool area features hot and cold plunge pools.

All of the properties' 302 bedrooms were also completely overhauled as part of the project.



The upgraded spa facilities include three poolside treatment cabanas

And numerous bars, restaurants and lounges have been updated and added too.

General manager Jose Gonzalez said: "The Reef has always been a popular resort and with this investment I believe we have set a whole new standard of what guests can expect."

DIARY DATES

15-17 FEBRUARY

Aesthetic Life

Kiev, Ukraine

This inaugural trade show and conference is part of Kiev's Healthy Nation event.

Tel: +380 44 423 30 89

<http://hn2012.treeex.com.ua>

20-22 FEBRUARY

Beauty Asia

Suntek, Singapore

One of the largest gatherings for beauty and spa professionals to take place in Asia.

Tel: +65 6299 8611

www.beautyasia.com.sg

3-5 MARCH

Mondial Spa et Beauté

Palais des Congrès, Paris, France

Free bilingual conference sessions will be on offer to visitors at this seventh annual exhibition for spa, beauty and make-up.

Tel: +33 4 93 06 26 26

www.msbparis.com

4-5 MARCH

European Spa Convention and Professional Beauty 2012

ExCeL, London, UK

How to maximise profits will be a key theme at this year's European Spa Convention that's held in conjunction with the UK's biggest beauty trade show.

Tel: +44 20 7351 0536

www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

9-12 MARCH

Cosmoprof Worldwide

Fiera District, Bologna, Italy

One of the largest, global beauty industry events, attracting 175,000-plus visitors.

Tel: +39 02 796 420

www.cosmoprof.com

14-17 MARCH

SPATEC Spring North America

The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, Florida, US

A three-day forum of one-to-one meetings between spa owners and suppliers.

Tel: +1 214 592 4270

www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

22-25 MARCH

Cosmoprof Middle East Istanbul

İtiff Kırdaş – Rumeli Exhibition Center, Istanbul, Turkey

Cosmoprof has launched its first-ever trade show in the Middle East.

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europeanspa
CONVENTION

Get down to business at the European Spa Convention 2012

Europe's leading business strategy
conference for the spa and hotel
industry is back on 4-5 March 2012
at London's premier venue ExCeL

The European Spa Convention will be part of a dedicated spa exhibition running alongside Professional Beauty 2012, the UK's largest health and beauty exhibition.

The European Spa Convention will focus on spa as a business and present solutions for spas to maximise profits. A 'Global Insight' Panel will give the introduction to the event with Susan Harmsworth, MBE; Jeff Matthews, president and COO of Mandara Spa; and Andrew Gibson, group director of spa at Mandarin Oriental giving their views on global developments and trends in the spa industry.

The agenda will look at financial models and best practice financial management for spa delegates to learn how to overcome the challenge of cost reduction to increase profitability and maintain quality at the same time.

The conference addresses challenges of running large operations and the opportunities that arise for global enterprises in local markets.

Creating marketing strategies and influencing customer retention will be covered by Anne Biging and Elisabeth Ixmeier from Healing Hotels of the World. Jeremy

McCarthy, director of global spa development and operations at Starwood Hotels & Resorts will showcase how to use branding and positioning as a revenue driver.

Jane Scott, director of marketing and revenue at the Grand Jersey will give insight into how hotel spas could work as a model for international brand expansion in terms of marketing and profitability. Hans-Peter Veit from the renowned Brenner's Park Hotel

In a European Spa Convention exclusive, Stephen Purdew, managing director of Champneys will be available for an extensive Q&A

Champneys will be available for an extensive Q&A and delegates will have the opportunity to hear case studies of award-winning spas such as The Sanctuary Spa and K-West Hotel and Spa – amongst many others – of how they have achieved their success.

Building a well-designed and practical spa within budget is every spa owners' dream and renowned architect Heidar Sodeki will showcase how to do it on time and within budget.

Understanding how to profit from specialisation and how finding your target market will increase your market share is vital for owners and directors. The European Spa Convention will also bring you an exclusive new session on how the corporate market could benefit spa financially.

The European Spa Convention 2012 will be uniting the international spa and hotel industry with speakers and delegates coming from successful spas in the UK, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America.

The European Spa Convention will offer unparalleled networking opportunities for delegates to mingle with their peers.

will give a sound overview of how spas can work for hotels as a highly profitable revenue stream.

Medical spa expert László Puczkó, managing director at Xellum, will address the topic of tourism as a driver for spas and how the medical side could work for spas in the long-term.

In a European Spa Convention exclusive, Steven Purdew, managing director of

Go to www.spaconvention.com for more information and to book your place now!

Tivoli Hotels to strengthen ties with Banyan Tree

Asian spa operator to expand its reach in Europe and South America

TOM WALKER • NEWS EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

Portuguese operator Tivoli Hotels & Resorts is to launch three more Banyan Tree spas at its properties in Portugal and Brazil. The openings will build on the existing partnership between the companies and double the number of Banyan Tree-operated spas at Tivoli hotels.

The first new spa was initially scheduled to open at Tivoli Hotel Lisboa in Lisbon in 2011, but the development was delayed due to the economic turbulence experienced in the Portuguese economy. The two others will be based in Brazil, according to Ravi Chandran, managing director of Banyan Tree's spa operations (see SB11/2 p26).

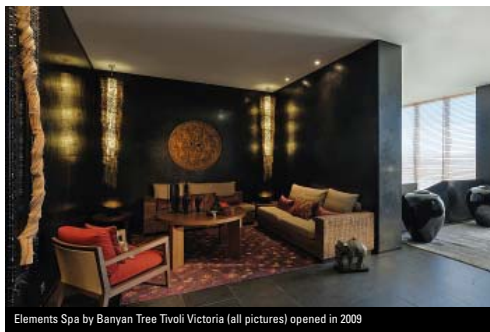
He says: "We signed a contract to open a spa in Lisbon a few years ago. Construction hasn't began yet but we do hope we will be able to start on it very soon."

He added, however, that the hold up has led to some improvements. "The planned location of the spa has been changed from the basement level to the top of the hotel. This move will enable guests to enjoy superb views overlooking the city."

The two other sites are still in planning, but are likely to come on line by 2014. "We're exploring openings [with Tivoli] in Brazil and talks are in progress," says Chandran. "There are a possible two new spa projects – one at [the existing] Tivoli Hotel in Bahia, located in the north-eastern region on the Atlantic coast, and another [in a new-build hotel] in Campinas in the coastal interior of the state of São Paulo. We are hoping to have these signed and open within the next two to three years."

Banyan Tree spas at Tivoli hotels are operated on management contracts. Banyan Tree operates the spas for a period of time, which is fee-based in terms of revenue and profits. Each spa runs independently in terms of its protocol, policies, operational procedures, training and treatment techniques and menu. The spas also works closely with the Tivoli team on the sales and marketing initiatives on-site to better promote the spa brand in synergy with the Tivoli brand.

Banyan Tree is the only spa brand that Tivoli works with. Its only non-Banyan Tree



Elements Spa by Banyan Tree Tivoli Victoria (all pictures) opened in 2009

spa is currently the Thalasso Spa at the Bahia, resort – one of the Brazilian resorts planned to include a Banyan Tree spa in the future.

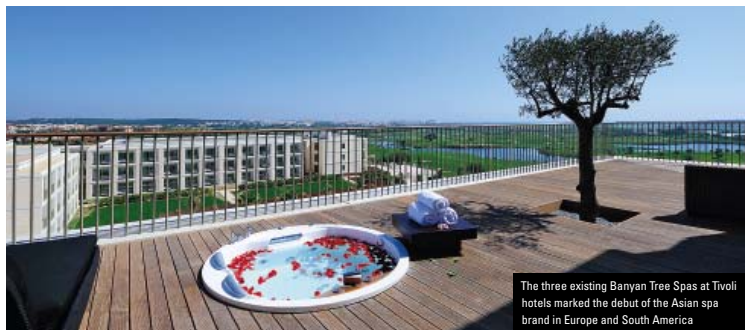
The three existing Banyan Tree spas at Tivoli hotels – one each in Lisbon and Vilamoura in Portugal and another in São Paulo in Brazil – were Banyan Tree's debut sites in Europe and South America.

The first one to open, in 2008, was the Angsana-branded spa at Tivoli Marina Vilamoura in the Algarve, Portugal. It was followed by two more in 2009 – Elements Spa By Banyan Tree Tivoli Victoria (also in Vilamoura) and Elements Spa By Banyan Tree at Tivoli São Paulo.

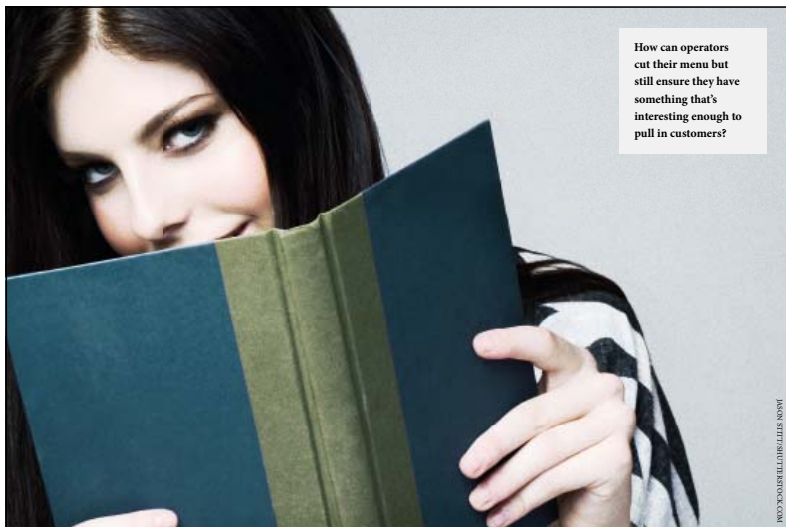
Tivoli Hotels & Resorts opened its first hotel, Tivoli Lisboa, in 1933. It's currently owned by Luxembourg-based investment company Espirito Santo Group. ●



Each spa runs independently in terms of its protocol, policies, operational procedures, training and treatment techniques and menu



The three existing Banyan Tree Spas at Tivoli hotels marked the debut of the Asian spa brand in Europe and South America



How can operators cut their menu but still ensure they have something that's interesting enough to pull in customers?

JASON STITT/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

MENU ENGINEERING

Until recently, the length of a treatment menu was synonymous with the quality of a spa facility. Operators were in competition with each other to come up with the most elaborate therapies to capture customer attention and the more treatments and choice they could offer their guests the better.

Now, however, reality is beginning to set in with the understanding that more therapies mean more time and money spent on training, not to mention the stocking of extra products. In addition, many are discovering that long, fancy treatment menus can be confusing and off putting for a customer – especially if they're first-timers.

With this in mind, shrewd operators are embarking on treatment menu engineering processes. They're streamlining their offer to make it easier and more financially via-

How and why are spas streamlining their treatment menus?

ble for themselves, and more palatable and enticing to clients. But just what does this engineering process involve?

Considering the cost and popularity of a treatment is obviously key, but where should the line be drawn? A few years ago, Disney overhauled its gift shops to only include the best-selling items, cutting out expensive extras such as Persian 'magic carpet' rugs that customers never bought. Yet following the exercise, sales plummeted as customers liked to have the

choice and that type of environment to buy in regardless of not purchasing items like the rug. Might the same apply to treatment menu engineering? How can operators reduce their offering, yet also ensure that they have got enough interesting therapies to keep customers booking?

And how can operators choose which treatments to keep on the menu and which ones to cut? Afterall, low treatment sales could be down to lack of trained therapists or something as simple as a poorly written description. Or perhaps the treatment is buried so deep in the menu that customers never get round to reading it before they make their decision.

We ask some experts about what operators should focus on and how frequently you should undertake menu engineering.

The number of treatments we offer varies with the location – resorts have a slightly larger menu with an increased number of packages. It also depends on the age of the property as we open with a smaller menu and build on this over time. Too many treatments, however, can be a recipe for mediocre quality.

Menu engineering is important because it enables you to keep pace with the market and to keep your offer fresh.

While we do take profitability of treatments into consideration, it is not our major driver. We look at what sells, but we also like to maintain a wide-enough range of choices. A good menu ensures a variety for guests and therapists. Everyone has their 'favourites' and the 'anticipation factor' of the spa experience means that menu deletions can be disappointing for regular guests who we strongly value.

SHEILA McCANN

Corporate director of spa brand quality, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts



– massage is just one word but an individual's expectations of techniques differ according to their background. We think about the order of the menu.

We used to place the most expensive packages first, but now put the most popular treatments upfront to make it more accessible for guests.

It can be tricky to cut down treatment menus, especially local treatments. Spa directors, in-house trainers and therapists often research and contribute to the refinement of local treatments. If they're enthusiastic about a treatment, they take great pride in them and are more likely to suggest them to a customer and to give a really passionate treatment.

The key is to re-craft with a combination of old favourites and new, interesting items. But my advice would be to plan at least six months to a year ahead. New treatments require adequate training, you need to think about order cycles and delivery times and stock levels need to be considered to avoid waste.

McCann has over 30 years experience in the service industry and oversees 35 spas globally at Shangri-La. Details: www.shangri-la.com

We have developed a framework of core menu treatments across different resorts to enable therapists to move between locations if necessary

As a city spa with eight treatment rooms, we normally offer 25 treatments and no more than 30. If you get up to 40-50 treatments, it becomes confusing for the guests to choose.

Every year, I go through a treatment menu engineering process as it's essential to make sure we don't offer treatments that the guest doesn't want. You don't want your therapist spending time on a treatment that isn't profitable and only gets booked twice a month. It's also a good opportunity for a spa director to ensure they've positioned their price point correctly within the market place as competitors may increase their price or new spas may have opened with a competitive price.

For our menu engineering, we use CRASE – Cornell's Restaurant Administration Simulation Exercise. The system was initially used to analyse food menus and it covers sales versus the profit margin of items. The result is a quadrant grid that plots your treatment Stars (high sellers, high profit), Plow Horses (high sellers, low profit), Dogs (low sellers, low profits) and Puzzles (low sellers, high profits).

LYNSEY HUGHES

Spa director, Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong



massage – could be an example of this as it involves two therapists and is costly. Similarly, a Dog might be a shirodhara treatment that uses up two litres of high-quality oil which literally

ends up down the drain. Yet just because a treatment falls into the bottom two quadrants, it doesn't mean that you automatically cut it out. In these two examples, you could raise the price point to cover costs.

While the CRASE diagram is a useful tool, you shouldn't use it in isolation and you need to look at the business as a whole. If a treatment isn't selling, it may be that you don't have enough therapists trained, or maybe you do but they're not on the right shifts.

I would avoid making too many changes in one go as you wouldn't want your regular guests to feel that they can no longer get what they want. The maximum number of treatments I've ever changed or taken off in one reprint of a brochure is three.

Hughes has worked in Mandarin Oriental spas for more than 11 years. Details: www.mandarinoriental.com/hongkong

That said, we have developed a framework of core menu treatments across different resorts to enable therapists to move between locations if necessary.

A treatment description is important. When we launched CHI, The Spa [Shangri-La's in-house brand], we used ethereal language for some therapies as that was part of the concept. While these remain very evocative of the ambience we want to create, we've refined some of the language to include details about the technique, pressure, benefits and how a guest might feel afterwards. If a spa-goer can link the description to their own needs, the treatments will have greater appeal. It also helps us to overcome cultural barriers

Directors can use this method to look at performance month by month or by categories such as massages versus facials. What I tend to do, however, is to analyse it per activity so that you can really see how well you're doing treatment to treatment.

Our top three Star treatments are our oriental essence, therapeutic and aromatherapy massages. They're popular and profitable because they only require oils, unlike facials which require gels, creams and serums.

A Plow Horse is an example of a treatment that isn't booked as often as our massages and works out less profitable. But we like them because they give our menu depth and set us apart from our competitors. As the therapist is with a guest for up to three hours, the customer receives a thorough, bespoke treatment and there's less wear and tear on the facility.

Puzzles are treatments that need tweaking. Our Oriental Harmony – a four-handed

Each spa needs a menu with descriptions and photos that capture its DNA. However, more is not better – long treatment menus can be hard on the staff as there are too many procedures, products and retail items to learn; financially draining due to the professional and retail inventory and training; and a hardship on the facility because of storage space required.

Guests get too stressed reading 'an encyclopedia of worldwide treatments' and research consistently shows that they typically only go for the basic four – massages, facials, manicures and pedicures.

In this case, it may be better to be service-orientated than quantity-orientated. Rather than over-complicate a menu and list variations on facials, massages etc, a service provider could offer the basic four at 30, 60 and 90-minute segments at a flat rate. This would empower the therapists to use whatever techniques they feel necessary to personalise the treatment, rather than restrict them to a step-by-step process.

JUDITH SINGER

President and co-founder, Health Fitness Dynamics Inc (HFD Spa)



labour, products and consumable supplies as well as the desired profit margin. There may be some loss leader treatments that a spa needs to offer because they are part of the con-

cept and the market wants them.

Before finalising the price, the spa needs to look at what competition is charging and its position in the market place. Mass market spas may be more focused on volume than profit margins, whereas an up-scale spa might focus on fewer people paying more.

If the spa director created the menu, he/she may have a hard time making changes and while it's nice to ask staff for feedback, this is another point of subjectivity. It's important to monitor what's happening and make decisions based on reality – if the guests don't want it, the staff don't like it and it doesn't make money, why offer it?

Sometimes it can be financially difficult to make changes because of reprinting, website changes, too much existing stock and a small training budget. But if a spa doesn't properly understand and analyse what it's doing – and make adjustments – it may not be doing it for long.

It would be interesting to see if a spa would be gutsy enough to offer the basic four services – massage, facial etc – at 30, 60 and 90-minute segments at a flat rate

HFD is a full-service spa advisory service that Singer co-founded in 1983 with the aim of helping to create marketable and profitable spas. Details: www.hfdspa.com.

The days of most people having a high disposable income to pay a high price to visit a spa and pamper themselves at any cost are few and far between.

There's no doubt that we're getting people through the door, but we're now doing it at a lower price entry – where operators used to charge £85 (US\$133, €102) for a 'day spa pass' to use facilities, they're now asking for £45 (US\$70, €54). So you can't expect someone who's paying that to then spend £70+ (US\$109, €84) on a facial.

We supply to more than 1,200 spas worldwide and we have found that these spas were full for usage of their general facilities, but that no one was booking treatments, which consequently had an impact on retail.

In order to capitalise on these non-treatment spenders we decided against changing our existing treatment menu and instead to create a menu that entices the current non-spending spa-goer to spend a little at a time.

NOELLA GABRIEL

Director of sales, product and treatment development, Elemis



ence, a comfortable spend is under £50 (US\$78, €60).

We've introduced this menu to 25 per cent of our spa operators and it really has been successful – around 75 per cent of cus-

tomers have tried a treatment from it. It's been revolutionary because we now have people booking 30-minute treatments and up-grading their spa experience, plus importantly, we're treating more guests per day which widens the opportunity for retail.

Although some people can afford top prices, they're in the minority and our A La Carte menu bridges the gap by offering more options to people who may then become repeat clients. It's made a huge difference to our business. Spa operators can't be precious if they want to survive the recession.

Gabriel's been the driving force behind Elemis' products and treatments since its launch in 1990. She took on the role of overseeing sales two years ago. Details: www.elemis.com



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A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman's face. She has dark hair pulled back and is looking upwards with a serene expression. Her skin is clear and hydrated. Numerous water droplets of various sizes are suspended in the air around her head, creating a misty, refreshing atmosphere. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

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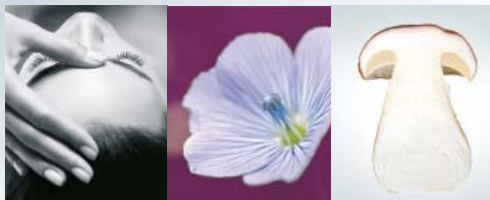
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THE PENINSULA HOTELS

As it prepares to launch its first site in Europe next year, the team at Peninsula Hotels tells *Spa Business* about the importance of spas in its chain of luxury hotels

The Peninsula Hotels is the hotel division of Asian-based hospitality group Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotels (HSH). The first site, known affectionately as the Grande Dame, was The Peninsula Hong Kong, which opened its doors in 1928. The quality of this hotel has set the standard for the rest of the chain. Set up with the aim of being the finest hotel east of the Suez, it now boasts a Philippe Starck-designed

restaurant and is consistently voted one of the top luxury hotels in the world.

Development of the group has been measured: the nine-strong chain is made up of sites in Manila (1979), New York (1988), Beijing (1989), Beverly Hills (1991), Bangkok (1998), Tokyo (2001), Chicago (2001) and Shanghai (2009). The Peninsula Spa brand by ESPA was first introduced in 2006, with the Hong

Kong, and Bangkok properties being the first two properties to benefit.

While future growth will be just as steady – the next site will open in Paris in 2013 (see p34) – the financial position of the group looks strong, with turnover up by 6 per cent in 2011 (see p38). And despite being a global brand, the company has remained tight knit, with the hotel, spa teams and head office working closely together.

SHARON CODNER

REGIONAL SPA
DIRECTOR ASIA



WHAT ARE YOUR DAY TO DAY RESPONSIBILITIES?

My main role is spa director at The Peninsula Hong Kong. However, I also oversee the operation of our spas in Asia and give advice to our US operators on everything from reviewing and collating

monthly spa figures and sales and marketing initiatives, to reinforcing brand standards.

HOW HAS YOUR ROLE DEVELOPED?

There have been significant changes during my time as regional spa director, because

I was promoted when we were going through the financial crisis in 2009, and when our sister property in Shanghai was opening. We concentrated mainly on maintaining standards throughout the spas

[during this time] and we now have a group training protocol for our spas to ensure service standards. Spa directors also assess our staff on a regular basis.

HOW IS THE SPA TEAM STRUCTURED AT PENINSULA AND HOW DO YOU WORK WITH THEM?

We have a spa director in all of our properties, as well as a treatment manager, head therapist and reception manager. There are also head therapists and, where necessary, senior therapists and receptionists.

I'm in contact with the spa directors several times a week, as they forward their financial results from the previous week and month-end. We have very skilled and talented spa directors, whom I trust completely, so I make sure I give them space to work and do not interfere too much with their operations. However, it's my responsibility to ensure that what is done in their spa is to Peninsula Hotel's standard, so I double check that all treatment descriptions and menus are consistent across the board.

HOW DO YOU WORK WITH THE REST OF THE HOTEL MANAGEMENT TEAM?

For my regional visits, I will meet with the director of sales and marketing to go through their calendar and initiatives, I share with them what other properties are doing in terms of sales and marketing packages and spa journeys that have been successful. I also meet with the hotel manager during my visits, to share my impression of the overall operation and staffing and where I believe improvements could be made.



The Peninsula Spa Hong Kong was one of the first to open in 2006



The Asian Tea Lounge reflects the locality of the Hong Kong spa

We have very talented spa directors, who I trust completely, so I make sure I give them enough space to work and do not interfere too much in their operations

HOW DO YOU TACKLE YIELD MANAGEMENT?

We try to ensure our treatments are optimised throughout the day and pay close attention to the allocation of our staff during peak times. We don't go as far as holding spaces for guests who could pay a higher rate during certain parts of the day, however, at some of our spas there is a promotional rate for certain treatments on weekdays.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WORK WITH ESPA?

We chose to partner with ESPA after months of rigorously screening every aspect of the spa consultancy business. Headed by renowned spa authority, Susan Harmsworth

(see S811/3 p50), we were confident that we could develop the ultimate spa concept through this partnership. We've now successfully launched six spas together – in Hong Kong and Bangkok in 2006, Chicago and Tokyo in 2007, Beijing in 2008 and Shanghai in 2009.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Our spas will be moving towards a new direction in 2012, to offer more results-driven treatments, ranging from an enzyme peel facial to microdermabrasion.

Over the next six months we'll also be researching and creating treatments which are suited to the climate and country at individual hotels, such as adding

a Chinese meridian massage at The Peninsula Beijing and a Japanese shiatsu-inspired treatment at The Peninsula Tokyo.

My overall ambition is for The Peninsula Spas to be the leaders in terms of treatment delivery, service and guest care. Training is the key to this – it's extremely important to us and we take a lot of time to coach our team. Each therapist must be qualified prior to joining us and once on board they undergo four to six weeks of intensive training – delivered by the head therapist – on essential treatments such as intensive facials and massage, as well as coaching on guest care and Peninsula standards. In addition, there's a further two weeks' certification training from our product suppliers. ►

PETER C BORER

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

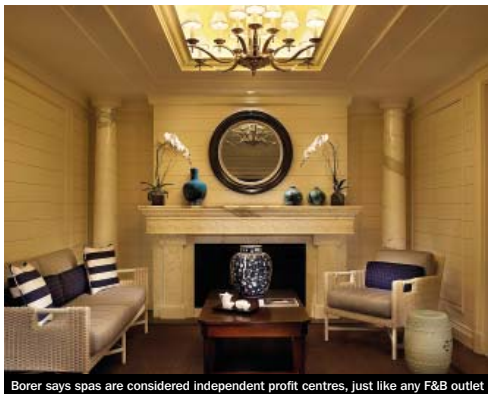
WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE INVOLVE?

The Peninsula Hotels is focused on quality and attention to detail; one of the aspects of my job is to upkeep the high standards of the design, the service and the brand.



HOW DO YOU WORK WITH THE PENINSULA SPA TEAM?

The Peninsula Spas are overseen by Paul Tchen – general manager, operations, planning and support at HSH. He and I regularly review the performance of our spas which we consider independent profit centres like any hotel food and beverage outlet. The most important key performance indicators that we look at are the treatment sales mix, capture rate – both internal and external – product sales versus treatment revenue ratio and guest demographics.



Borer says spas are considered independent profit centres, just like any F&B outlet

HOW WELL ARE THE PENINSULA SPAS PERFORMING?

Our spas are performing up to our expectations in most markets. There are obviously some which have been affected by the current economic climate, as well as unfortunate natural disasters such as those which have struck Japan and Thailand.

WHAT OBSTACLES DO YOU FACE?

Shortage of labour is a constant challenge. With the emergence of top-tier luxury hotel brands in China, this has created an unprecedented demand. However, retention is something we're very good at and the careers of myself – I joined the group in 1981 – and my colleagues are testament to this. ▶

The most important key performance indicators we look at are the treatment sales mix, capture rate – both internal and external – product sales versus treatment revenue ratio and guest demographics

The Peninsula Paris is the HSH's next planned hotel opening and its first foray into the European market. London could be the next European site, as projects manager, PT Wong, confirms sites are being sought there.

Centrally located near the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs Élysées, the 200-bedroom hotel will breathe new life into a century-old beaux art building, which has formerly been used as a hotel, the German headquarters in Paris during WWII and most recently as the Centre for International Conferences.

Around HK\$1bn (US\$129m, €100m, £82m) was paid for the site and an estimated HK\$512m (US\$66m, €50m, £42m) will be spent on the redevelopment. It is owned by QHotels BV, in which HSH has a 20 per cent stake. The Peninsula Hotels will manage operations for 30 years, with an automatic

THE PENINSULA PARIS

renewal of a further 20 years, subject to meeting certain performance criteria.

Work started on site in late 2009, interior demolition is now complete and the first major phase of construction began in September 2010. The hotel is scheduled to open in 2013: the launch date pushed back because it took longer than expected to complete



designs that complied with preservation considerations, local codes and HSH standards. New York-based Thierry Despont is in charge of interiors, aiming to bring about a contemporary look with reference to the original belle époque style. It's slated that The Peninsula Spa, fitness suite and pool will be a central part of the offering.

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Therapists undergo at least four weeks' intensive training which covers treatment protocols, guest care and Peninsula's rigorous brand standards

MARIA RAZUMICH ZEC

GENERAL MANAGER, THE
PENINSULA CHICAGO;
REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT USA

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

I would say that the goal of any general manager is to ensure that guests have a great experience in their hotel, that staff are well trained and that they're fiscally responsible.



HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUR SPAS?

Our spa definitely brings [in an extra] clientele from the local market as well as being a pull for international visitors. Around 75 per cent of our spa customers are local and 25 per cent are hotel guests. We've found that guests who stay for more days are more likely



The Chicago spa has "tremendous repeat business" thanks to its talented therapists

to use the spa – some even extend their stay because they want to try another service.

WHAT MAKES YOUR SPA STAND OUT?

The location is fantastic: on the top two floors of the hotel, offering great views. We also have the most talented massage therapists and aestheticians in the city who all have tremendous repeat business – 15.1 per cent of our guests request a specific therapist and for some therapists nearly half (48

per cent) of their appointments are made up of specific requests for them.

WHAT SPA TRENDS ARE YOU SEEING?

More people are viewing spa services as maintenance for their overall wellbeing, as opposed to a luxury. Technology is making people more disconnected with human interactions, and they seek that connection at the spa: they want to unplug, be looked after and recharge themselves. ►

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RAINY CHAN

GENERAL MANAGER THE
PENINSULA HONG KONG;
AREA VICE-PRESIDENT HONG
KONG AND THAILAND

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND HOW DO YOU WORK WITH THE SPA?

My role is constantly evolving as I need to stay conscious of the changing needs of our guests. In the past 10 years, the growing trend of male spa guests has encouraged us to introduce ESPA men's treatments and products.

We've also noticed the shift of guests' needs from massage treatments to stress relief, wellness and treatments addressing spiritual needs. As a result, ayurvedic treatments have become very popular in Asia, and we've also recently introduced reiki at our spa to fulfil guests' needs for relaxing both the body and the mind.

Aside from spa treatments, many guests also look for a well-balanced lifestyle where healthy cuisine plays an important role. Our chefs work closely with our nutrition consultant to create Naturally Peninsula light and healthy cuisine, which is served at our restaurants to combine dining with wellness for our health-conscious guests.

WHAT'S YOUR MAIN AIM FOR THE YEAR AHEAD?

Beginning January 2012, The Peninsula Hong Kong will embark on a bedroom enhancement project. Our rooms and suites will be taking on a brand new look, and the highlight of the project is to bring in state-of-the-art in-room technology, which will allow us to provide an array of tailor-made options to our guests.



High standards of design, service and brand is a core philosophy at Peninsula

SIÂN GRIFFITHS

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

My current role involves maintaining our media relationships and ensuring the brand image of The Peninsula Hotels is consistent in everything we do when we present ourselves to the world – from our press releases and marketing collateral through to our website.

HOW DO YOU WORK WITH THE SPA TEAM?

The spa teams in each property are very creative and continually come up with new



programmes and treatments [for press releases]. They then work closely with their respective hotel's PR team, who then liaise with me.

The hotels promote the treatments in their own region via local media, Facebook pages and so on, while on an international level, releases are sent out to our network of PR agencies to promote in their own countries, and also posted on our group website. Our spa managers are extremely keen to make their programmes work, so are very proactive with publicity.

THE FINANCIALS

Turnover at The Peninsula Hotels was up 6 per cent – HK\$2.17bn-2.31bn (US\$279m-297m, €214-228m £178-190m) – for the first half of 2011 compared with the previous year. This has been attributed

to improved rooms and F&B business. Occupancy was up everywhere, apart from Asia, where demand at The Peninsula Tokyo was severely affected by the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in March. Prior to this, the hotel had been trading at levels above the previous year. The hotels in Beijing and Shanghai are trading in a very competitive market and didn't meet expectations for the second quarter.

Revenue per available room (revPAR) has risen, mainly because of room rate increases and robust demand for the hotels' shopping arcades. RevPAR was HK\$2,864 (US\$368, €283, £238) from HK\$2,522 (US\$324, €250, £209) in Hong Kong; HK\$1,069 (US\$137, €106, £89) from HK\$1,039 (US\$133, €103, £86) in Asia and HK\$2,838 (US\$364, €281, £236) from HK\$2,496 (US\$320, €247, £207).



Revenue per available room was higher in 2011, mainly because of [hotel] room rate increases and robust demand for the hotels' shopping arcades



The team is noticing that more spa-goers seek stress-relieving treatments and a space where they can escape technology and recharge



CYNTHIA CHUA

THE SINGAPOREAN BEHIND THE INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED MINISTRY OF WAXING
AND BROWHAUS STORES TALKS ABOUT THE RESURGENCE IN WAXING AND THE ART
OF EYEBROW GROOMING AND HOW SPAS COULD INTEGRATE SUCH SERVICES

Two million Brazilian waxes, 33 dedicated waxing salons and 25 outlets focused on eyebrow services in nine cities worldwide. It's fair to say that Cynthia Chua, the woman behind all of this, is well-known in personal grooming circles.

The 40-year-old from Singapore prides herself on creating innovative businesses. After a brief spell in banking and marketing, she made her foray into beauty by setting up Spa Esprit – a fashionable day spa with six treatment rooms – in the city in 1996. She says that back then “it was quite rare to have a boutique spa and it was one of the first places of relaxation for women”.

For six years she introduced new therapies such as hot stone massage and designed her own product lines including a 20-strong range of aromatherapy oils. Ready for her next challenge, Chua then branched out

into waxing, followed by eyebrow grooming, under the Spa Esprit Group banner. Today her businesses turnover S\$50m (US\$39m, €29.9m, £24.9m) a year.

WAXING LYRICAL

The first Ministry of Waxing (MOW) salon launched in Singapore in 2001. “We were already offering Brazilian waxing in our day spa but because the focus was on relaxation it was seen as an ancillary service,” says Chua. “When I travelled to London and New York, I realised there was a lot of potential to do it in Asia, as there wasn’t somewhere I could have a proper Brazilian wax with good hygiene and safety standards.”

What she created was a salon dedicated to full body waxing where the talking point became the Brazilian wax. Her focus was on less painful and embarrassing Brazilian waxing methods along with a mantra

of HSQ – hygiene, speed and quality. MOW was one of the first to introduce the no double dipping technique – where the spatula is discarded after every use – as well as offering a sealed personal hygiene pack containing gloves, cotton pads, wet wipes and spatulas per customer. In addition, she got the service time down to a speedy 30 minutes.

All of this was packaged in a quirky style with playful marketing and menus (see p44) executed by ‘waxperts’ and funky décor to fit the target clientele aged between 18-40, with the majority being in their 20s. “It’s an extension of my personality,” she says. “I think it’s important to have fun in what you do. Just because it’s waxing, it doesn’t mean it has to be sterile and carried out in a white lab coat. Brazilian waxing is a very intimate treatment, so our light-hearted, friendly approach is designed to make the customer feel more comfortable.”



The first Ministry of Waxing (MOW) salon – launched in Singapore in 2001 – focused on full body waxing within a quirky environment featuring funky décor and a playful menu

As such services were practically unheard of by the conservative Singaporean people, Chua admits that it's been as much about educating people about Brazilian waxing as it has been about setting up a business. "Being a pioneer means you'll always have to educate the market. The first step was to teach the media what Brazilian waxing is and how the trend was lacking in Singapore. Luckily, many of them agreed that grooming habits needed to improve and were able to write stories about this and their experiences at Ministry of Waxing.

"When I first opened, everyone told me that my market would be ex-pats, but I gave myself a personal challenge of reaching out to Asian girls. Eighty per cent of my customers are now Asian and the trend has taken off so much that waxing salons are everywhere – so I've talked a whole nation into improving their grooming habits!" ►



It's important to have fun – waxing doesn't have to be carried out in a sterile room



PROFILE



Beauty Emporium includes six Brownhaus stations and five MOW treatment rooms

- Since 2006, MOW has expanded internationally and there are now 33 branches in major cities such as New York, London, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Jakarta and Manila. The facilities are operated as franchises, or as joint ventures in areas where Chua has a personal interest. The strategy when entering a new market is to undercut competitor prices – such as Bliss – by 10-20 per cent (see p44).

HAIR RAISING

"I had a lot of fun with MOW as a brand and realised that it was particularly easy to market something dedicated to one thing. So then I started to feel that there was a gap in the market for going to a place that focuses just on eyebrows," says Chua in explanation of why she launched Browhaus in 2004.

The concept she created was based on the removal of unwanted hair on the face and the enhancement of eyebrows and eyelashes. She reintroduced techniques such as threading – where thread is used to remove hair strands in a row – which can be done on its own or combined with tweezing.

Yet the signature service is a semi-permanent patented treatment called Brow Resurrection, involving a vegetable dye being applied with a multi-pin to replicate intricate brow strands. "I saw people in New York charging US\$70 (£54, £45) for brow shaping, so I came back to Singapore and tweaked the model, dropping the price point (see p44) so I could extend it to the masses."

The style of the facilities was, once again, trendy and different – the name Browhaus was inspired by the Bauhaus design movement that combines crafts and fine art. And Chua affectionately compares her business to



Selfridges department store in London is taking an interest in the Beauty Emporium concept

Chua was told that her key audience at MOW would be ex-pats. This spurred her on to reach out to Asian girls – now 80 per cent of her clients

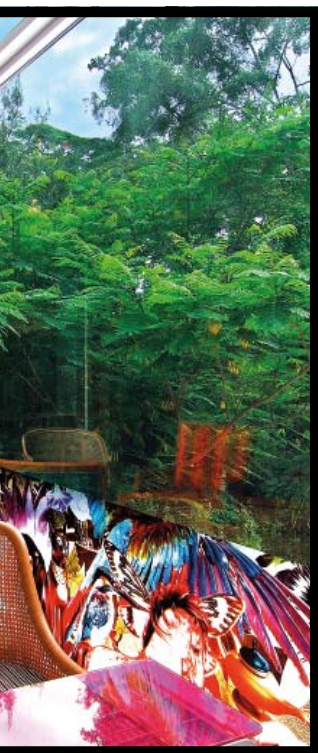
the building industry where she specialises in demolition (waxing) and construction (brow resurrection). Today there are 25 Browhaus stores around the world.

COMPARING BUSINESSES

So, out of the day spa, MOW and Browhaus businesses, which one does Chua feel is the most successful? All do well, she says, with each returning a profit margin of 20 per cent. While the day spa, with customers aged around 30-50, only attracts around

600 clients per month compared with MOW and Browhaus' 2,000 customers per outlet, its prices are higher (see p44).

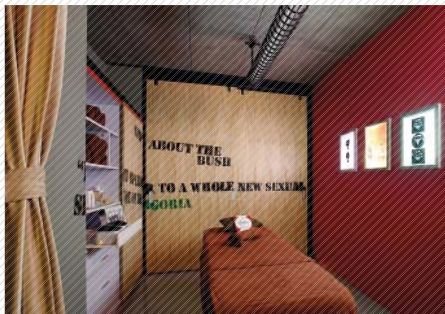
"It's a lot faster paced environment at MOW and Browhaus," adds Chua. "We're run at 70-80 per cent capacity and people think of the services as a necessity, so about 50 per cent of our customers are members and the other 30 per cent are regulars. As the spa is still seen as a luxury the numbers are lower – about 25 per cent are members and around 30 per cent are return guests."



Ultimately, however, she sees success as brand equity and in that sense says the winner is MOW, followed closely by Browhaus and the day spa a poor third. "It's also about scaleability and how quickly you can grow that brand based on yearly turnover," she says. "Considering the expensive set up costs, the size and scope of facilities as well as the need to offer, and train therapists in up to 30 different treatments, there are many barriers of entry for day spas. It would cost me three times as much to open a spa as it would a MOW and I could easily open up at least 20 MOW facilities in a city like Singapore, but it would be difficult to do 20 spas."

INTEGRATING WITH SPAS

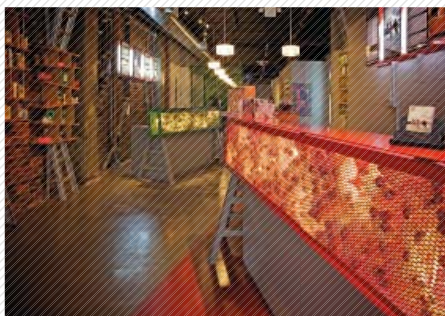
Despite the barriers of entry for day spas, Chua still feels it's important to experiment ►



MOW facilities are operated as franchises, or joint ventures if Chua has a vested interest



Beauty Emporium showcases all the products in the Spa Esprit Group's portfolio



MOW has expanded internationally with 33 branches in major cities, such as New York

MINISTRY OF WAXING
MARKETING



"Brazilian waxing is a very intimate treatment, so our light-

► with different types of spa. "The waxing industry has had a resurgence, whereas the spa industry has just been existing and really needs someone to inject a breath of fresh air into it," she says.

In 2007, she introduced HOUSE – a 35,000sq ft (3,252sq m) spa combined with a bar and restaurant – in Singapore. Two years later she added the Beauty Emporium, which includes six Browhaus stations and five MOW treatment rooms plus a large retail area showcasing all the products in the Spa Esprit Group portfolio. "It's a huge beauty supermarket that brings everything together with a fresh tone." Singapore is a test bed for different ideas, she says, and she's excited to tell me that the big London department store Selfridges is showing interest in the Beauty Emporium concept.

With many spa operators now turning to beauty services – which attract a regular

local clientele and revenue – what are Chua's tips on integration? "It's a difficult question," she says. "If you have too many brand messages it would be confusing."

MOW or Browhaus wouldn't work in a spa environment because the experience is far removed from a typical spa vibe – they are funky, fun and fast paced. Can a spa ever be upbeat? We're looking at a model that might appeal to a younger clientele with a lower price point, which might work.

"However, there's a demand for grooming right now compared to five years ago. So if operators were to introduce waxing and eyebrow services, their spend per customer would go up and it would definitely help if a guest wants everything done in one place."

Recruitment and training are two challenges operators should be aware of, she adds. "Manpower is always an issue – we need up to 15 staff per MOW outlet and

10 for Browhaus salons – but the problems vary from city to city. In London, we're able to get local aestheticians who we can easily train because the professional courses there give them a strong beauty knowledge. In Singapore, however, we're going through a severe shortage in service staff because people don't want the jobs. So I tend to find spa therapists from Indonesia, and for Brow Resurrection – which involves intricate embroidery and artisan work – we find that the Chinese have strong technical skills. For the front desk, a lot of service staff come from the Philippines. It can be tough and we're constantly in talks with the government about our foreign worker quota."

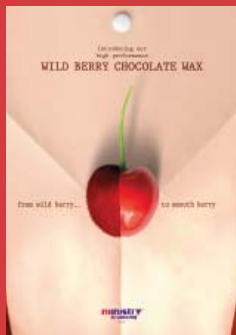
When it comes to training, the Spa Esprit Group's academy in Singapore sees 80-120 staff each year. There are dedicated training departments for spa therapy, waxing and brow work, and courses last between four to eight weeks depending on the students' capabilities and what they're learning about. Brow Resurrection, for example, is one of the most complicated procedures, so students would take longer to master this.

"A brow tidy is easy enough, but brow shaping and construction is more complicated," says Chua. "You need to understand about facial shapes, balancing and shades and it's not as simple as 'oh, it's just plucking a few hairs out'. And if Brazilian waxing isn't done properly, it can be very traumatic for the customer. So the training – covering everything from hygiene and contra-indications to bed-side manner – is very important."

SPA ESPRIT GROUP BY NUMBERS

- The 33 Ministry of Waxing (MOW) outlets typically cover between 900-1,200sq ft (84-111sq m) and have up to eight rooms
- A Brazilian wax costs around S\$26-58 (US\$20-45, €16-35, £13-29) and takes only 30 minutes
- There are 25 Browhaus salons worldwide and these usually cover 600-800sq ft (56-74sq m) and include five to eight stations

- A Brow Resurrection, which takes up to 90 minutes, costs S\$1,200 (US\$935, €717, £597) for a full brow. The after care kit is strongly recommended and costs S\$150 (US\$117, €90, £75)
- Brow Resurrection can last up to two years and maintenance costs S\$150 (US\$117, €90, £75)
- A 60-minute massage at Spa Esprit costs around S\$95-120 (US\$74-94, €57-72, £47-60)



hearted approach makes the customer feel comfortable"

Chua's top tip for a spa operator who's thinking of adding beauty services is to train just one or two therapists very well, rather than a whole team on the basics. "The standard of service is really high so if you want to get a slice of the pie you'll need to perfect what you do," she says. "If not, it could ultimately hurt the whole business in the end."

GOING UP A LEVEL

Locally, Chua has diversified into food and beverage, with the launch of HOUSE, followed by the Tippling Club bar and restaurant and three Skinny Pizzas. Most recently she introduced 40 Hands coffee bar; O My Dog, a gourmet hotdog booth; and Open Door Policy, a modern rustic bistro. Internationally, the expansion of MOW and Browhaus is top of her list with a goal to open 15+ of each next year, with Beijing being one of the main destinations.

And she's got more innovations lined up. At Browhaus, the next big thing will be fashion eyebrows, which will include experimenting with different colours to match make up and dressing them up with accessories. As services have been the main focus, Chua's next aim will be on retail and creating



an enticing shop front for stores to capture the attention of passers by. "The presentation will be really exciting and there'll be a much greater product focus," she says. "We'll be trialling it in Singapore and, if it works, we'll be rolling it out in London and New York."

For MOW, Chua launched the Brazilian facial in April, comprising microdermabrasion and skincare for the Brazilian area on top of waxing. "It's all about taking it to the next level," she says. "Years ago people went to the hairdressers to get their hair cut, but now everyone gets their hair coloured."

The next big thing at Browhaus is fashion eyebrows – using different colours to match make-up and dressing them with accessories

Overall, her aim is for MOW to become a household brand and for everyone to have perfect brows "because that's what everyone deserves". She concludes: "Having a vision and always pioneering something that no one has done before that involves innovation and creativity drives me. I feel it's my creative output." ●



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HOT SPRINGS

CHINESE-STYLE!



The Yunnan province is China's primary geothermal region. Lisa Starr pays a visit and tries out two very different hot spring experiences

LISA M STARR • SENIOR CONSULTANT • WYNNE BUSINESS

As a consultant, journalist and educator in the spa world, I've been to a number of wonderful spas in far-flung locations, and I'm always interested in the different roles that spas play in specific regions of the world. I recently travelled to Yunnan province in China where I visited two hot spring spas which, while they had some similarities, were very different experiences from the customer perspective.

Yunnan province in southwest China, borders Myanmar and Laos and is the country's primary geothermal region due to its location over fault lines. It's known for jade, tea, tobacco, medicinal plants and sugar cane, as well as its beautiful landscapes and a plentiful 97 volcanoes. The capital of the province, with 45 million inhabitants, is the city of Kunming, which is a three-hour flight from Beijing, Shanghai or Hong Kong.

BRILLIANT RESORT & SPA

Forty-five minutes outside Kunming, on Yang Zong Lake, is the Brilliant Resort & Spa – a member of Small Leading Hotels of the World. It features a 50-bedroom hotel, 17 pool villas and a spa. The central attraction, however, is the 25 hot spring pools which are free for hotel guests to use.

I spent four nights at the resort during the Spa China Summit, and was fortunate enough to stay in one of the enormous pool villas – without the lure of the extensive hot springs and spa, I might not have left!

The spa, set among the hot springs, included two couple's suites in a small building, five cabana-style treatment rooms



The hot springs area was not easy to find at the resort and the spa within it was also well-hidden

My treatment took place under the light of the full moon at 9pm – I was impressed that the resort was offering later times to fit us all [the spa delegates] in

overlooking the lake and another larger building with 22 treatment rooms.

It's possible that guests might never discover the hot springs or 'The Wetlands' as the entrance is hidden behind tall bamboo. Similarly, once inside, a visitor could enjoy the pools but have no idea there are spa treatments available just a few steps away. Information on the spa and treatments was available in my villa – and booking was easy – but the resort could do a better job of encouraging guests to take advantage of them and provide better maps.

My two-hour Chinese Five Element Therapy treatment, costing CNY1,880 (US\$299, €229, £191), took place in an impressive,

spacious suite. Built in a cabana-style for two people, it featured a WC, large shower, comfortable changing area, two tables and an outdoor hot spring pool.

My Chinese therapist helpfully guided me through the treatment steps, beginning with a soak in the pool, under the light of the full moon at 9pm – I was impressed the resort was offering later times to fit us all in.

Back inside, the treatment continued with a mild scrub incorporating buffalo horn, widely used in traditional Chinese medicine, followed by a massage with a choice of relaxing or muscle-soothing oil. Throughout the experience the therapist inquired about my comfort and communicated in



Hot spring devotees can enjoy the 25 pools, which offer different features and themes such as whirlpool, cave, fish and rose



English – although no attempt was made to sell the Aromatherapy Associates products displayed in reception. The treatment was both thorough and relaxing and, still wearing my bathrobe in the buggy back to my villa, I felt happily content.

The pools have different features and themes such as whirlpool, cave, fish and rose. The largest pool is set along a stage where you can view performances such as yoga dancing.

There was also a fairly clean and well-equipped public seating space – so while hot spring devotees can go from pool to pool, others can relax on lounge chairs with some tea, juice or wine served by staff with fair English who are always nearby.

In general, the Brilliant resort is a wonderful retreat for a long, romantic weekend. The company has yet to focus on cultivating an international reputation and up to 80 per cent of guests are Chinese, but it is beginning to see tourists from Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Europe. ►



The 22 natural hot springs contain calcium, magnesium and sodium bicarbonate

JADE HOT SPRINGS

An hour's flight west from Kunming is the city of Tengchong. This active geothermal corner of China, only 30km from Myanmar, is a vacation destination for Chinese nationals, but very few westerners. As part of a three-day tour I stopped off at the Jade Hot Springs – an alluring tree-lined valley with rising plumes of steam – in Tengchong Geological Park.

The park, known as the 'rehai' or 'hot sea', is rife with boiling pools, fumaroles, steaming ground and sinters. People have been taking the waters here since the early 1600s, but the current facility featuring a spa and a bathhouse dates from 2004.

There are various entry plans to the attraction and our CNY255 (US\$41, €31, £26) ticket entitled us to a tour of the geological features, a simple dinner and a visit to the spa to soak in the hot springs. Among the geological features were the Frog's Mouth Fumaroles which spurt hot steamed water into the air, and side-by-side 'pregnancy hot springs'; legend has it that drinking from one will begot boys, and the other girls.

The spa entrance, clearly marked in English, leads into a two-storey tall atrium where guests are directed to a check-in desk followed by a very functional, basic locker room – summed up by the curtainless shower stalls. Bathing suits and slippers on, we made our way down various hallways and stairs with occasional signage and although it was only a two-minute walk it felt like a bit of a journey.

The 22 natural hot springs contain calcium, magnesium, sodium bicarbonate, among other minerals, and the effects of hydrostatic pressure, warm water and mineral chemistry are said to aid various ailments from diges-



Chinese couples, groups of young men and women and families enjoyed the pools together

The spa is located in the alluring tree-lined valley of Tengchong Geological Park, which features boiling pools, fumaroles, steaming ground and sinters

tive and respiratory complaints to insomnia and rheumatoid arthritis. I didn't sense any changes in my body after the baths – either here or at Brilliant Resort – but it was an enjoyable experience. I tried the Aloe Pool to soften the sebum and increase skin nutrition; the Cedar Pool to clear the brain; and the Coffee Pool, containing small grains of coffee over the bottom to promote skin metabolism and relieve fatigue.

The pools don't seem to be arranged in any particular order, but are conveniently very close to each other. Each pool has a name or theme, and the temperatures ranging from 33-45°C are posted in LED lights – just as well, as the attendants only spoke Chinese! Yet there were thoughtful touches such as trays of water and tall wooden racks for robes and towels throughout.

While there, Chinese couples, groups of both young men and women, and families shared the pools. We visited during the mid-autumn festival, a national public holiday, so it might have been busier than usual.

Other features include a reflexology room and spa treatment rooms and cabanas spread throughout the complex. There were around 12 treatments on offer ranging from a Volcanic Stone Foot Spa soak & pumice for CNY58 (US\$9, €7, £6) to an Essential Oil Massage and Soak priced at CNY588 (US\$93, €72, £60). No facials were

offered and there was a distinct lack of retail. As is often the case in more remote markets, there was very little marketing of the spa services – no printed menus in any language, no mention by staff or promotional materials in lockers or lounge areas, and details such as products used or length of service were not available.

After dressing, we returned to the atrium, where a television showed local news amid a random collection of chairs and tables. There was rubbish on the floor, itself none too clean, and clients smoking, so not quite up to international spa standards, but we felt very relaxed and, in contrast, very clean!

OPPOSITES ATTRACT

I really enjoyed both experiences, although they were quite different. Both resorts represented significant capital investments, even in China, and I imagine that between legal and financial hurdles it would be very difficult for an international operator to open something on a similar scale.

Brilliant Resort is better equipped to handle international visitors and is more luxurious than much of the accommodation in the Yunnan province. Jade Hot Springs, while scenic and adventurous, would have been a difficult experience to navigate without Chinese-speaking guides. ●



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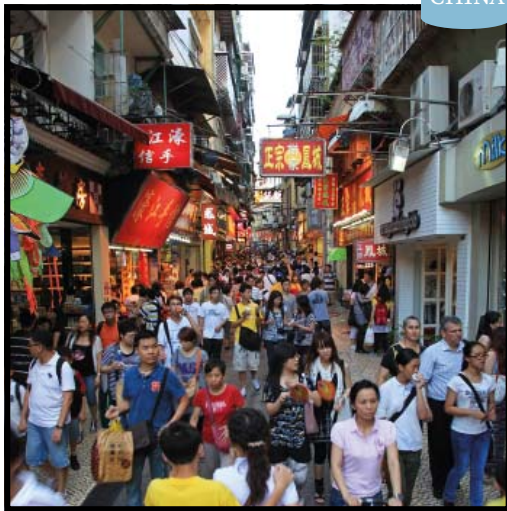
OPINION

BATH
TIME

What can international
spa operators venturing
into China learn from the
country's traditional spa
bathhouse offering?



LEE DAVID STEPHENS
MANAGING DIRECTOR
SOL SPA SERVICES



TRIPADVISOR.COM

In recent years, hundreds of millions of Chinese people have come out of poverty and hit the middle classes with money to burn. In turn, the growth of luxury five-star resorts is booming. These resorts, however, only cater to a very small percentage of the population (which still equates to millions of people), with the majority of the 'emerging wealthy' opting to spend hours in a traditional Chinese spa bathhouse instead.

Most Chinese cities are peppered with brightly lit five-storey buildings with the Chinese characters for spa – 水療 (water therapy) – above the door. These authentic bathhouses are a far cry from five-star resort spas and the differences are intrinsic to cultural behaviours. In the west, we like order, peace and quiet, health juices and alone-time in our spas. In the east, we like social interaction, noise, food and stimulation. The west deprives the senses for relaxation; the east bombards them for enjoyment.

Westerners visiting a Chinese spa of this type will be in for a surprise. Enter to be greeted by a gaggle of well-groomed, uniformed hostesses who will charge a nominal entrance fee to spend eight hours at the 水療, which will be deducted from any massage treatments you choose.

The first floor will typically be full of groups of entire families clad in bathrobes



Chatting loudly and socialising is typical in bathhouses

eating fried noodles at the buffet, drinking tea and smoking in their armchairs while chatting loudly and generally socialising. The second floor might have a variety of wet features – hydrotherapy baths, steamrooms and saunas – as well as steaming teapots, armchairs and the steady hum of chit chat.

The third floor will be crammed with the most comfortable lounge chairs designed for Chinese foot reflexology. And each chair will boast its own individual TV and in some cases its own ashtray.

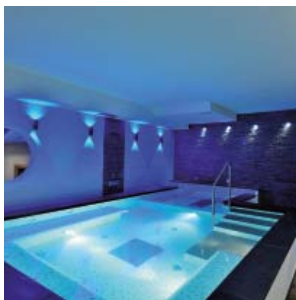
Floor four could be a mix of massage rooms with one, two or up to five massage tables in each. Some with TV, some without, mostly you will be clothed in the bathrobes or kimonos and the pressure point massage begins. Staff will chat lightly among each other while they take you through the phases of a gruelling tui na pressure point massage only to leave you on cloud nine, not quite sure if your euphoria is because the treat-

Traditional Chinese bathhouses can be found in brightly lit five-storey buildings

ment is over or if you are genuinely feeling the benefits. The fifth floor is a quieter place, somewhere to lie down and sleep, rest and switch off. Strewn throughout the floor are beds, loungers or tatamis in alcoves divided by curtains. The only noise that you are likely to hear is the hypnotic snoring of a distant patron. Spend as much time here as you like (or until your eight-hour pass runs out).

Westerners might expect to see a variety of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) treatments on the menu such as acupuncture, gua sha and ba guan. However, the Chinese typically leave these to medical doctors and don't associate them with their spa buildings. In fact, many local TCM medicines use animal parts such as ground deer antlers, which in the west would be considered a far cry from healthy, organic and Zen-like treatments.

As a western operator, you may read the above and think that it's completely wrong – noise and smoking in the spa? But this is perfectly fine for 1.3 billion Chinese citizens. They go to spa to feel better about themselves inside and out, the end result is much the same as that in the west, just the way that they get there is very different. ●



ITALIAN STYLE IN SPA SOLUTIONS



Huge floor-to-ceiling windows throughout the hotel and spa open up the stunning views to guests

Sands of time

THE OPENING OF THE OITAVOS HOTEL AND SPA, PART OF A PORTUGUESE BEACH ESTATE, CAME 90 YEARS AFTER IT WAS FIRST ENVISIONED AND CHALLENGES TRADITIONAL DESIGN CONCEPTIONS

Located in the sporting estate of Quinta da Marinha within the protected Cascais Sintra Natural Park on Portugal's Estoril coast, the family-owned Oitavos hotel and spa has a fascinating birth story.

"All you see around you – the golf course, the hotel, even the roads, trees and vegetation – are the result of a 90-year-long family project," says general manager Miguel M Champalimaud. "My great-grandfather Carlos Montez Champalimaud discovered this site in 1908 and bought 900 hectares (9sq km) of land here in 1920: when it was barren and dominated by sand dunes. His dream was to transform the wild and uninhabited landscape and establish a tourism and leisure resort here."

Partly due to delays caused by WWII, Carlos never saw his dream become a reality, but his work was continued enthusiastically by his son, Carlos Sommer Champalimaud, who created a vineyard and an equestrian

centre after the war. The project was then completed by Carlos Sommer's son Miguel (the father of Miguel M) who oversaw the design and launch of the Oitavos Dunes golf course (in 2001), a large health and racquet club (in 2004), and finally The Oitavos hotel and spa in September 2010.

90-YEAR-OLD DREAM

Carlos Montez would be proud of the results – the health club has 4,000 paying members, and the golf course has gained international recognition. And at the centre of the impeccably groomed fairways of the golf course sits the Champalimaud's prize possession – The Oitavos hotel and spa.

The hotel might have been first envisaged more than 90 years ago, but the final result – a somewhat otherworldly steel and glass structure in the shape of the letter Y – is anything but traditional. Designed by Portuguese architect and artist José Amaral Anahory, the 142-bedroom hotel took four years to design and three years to build

to ensure that it met the family's expectations. In addition, the investment totalled €40m (US\$51.4m, £33.1m), with funding coming from cash flow via other family businesses, added to the selling of plots of land in Quinta da Marinha for residential development and a bank loan.

Anahory was given a brief to "bring the outside inside" and to make the hotel take a backseat to nature – rather than dominate it. His solution was to use large floor-to-ceiling windows throughout to open up the view to the guests. Nowhere is Anahory's concept of creating bright, open spaces more evident than at the spa, which occupies the ground floor of the five-storey building.

LET THE SUNSHINE IN

"Natural light is definitely our unique selling point," says spa manager Rita Rosado. "Many spas, especially at hotels, are either underground, tucked in a basement or confined to a windowless space. Here we have opened the spa to the elements and, rather





The designer's brief was to "bring the outside inside" and to make The Oitavos hotel and spa take a back seat to nature – rather than dominate it



The spa journey is a smooth process – on arrival every member of staff knows who you are and what treatment you're having

THE CHAMPALIMAUDS



Carlos Montez Champalimaud, Carlos Sommer Champalimaud, Miguel Champalimaud and Miguel M Champalimaud (left to right)

THE OITAVOS HOTEL & SPA BY NUMBERS

- Hotel prices range from €275 (US\$353, £227) for a superior room to €1,380 (US\$1,773, £1,140) a night for a suite
- The domestic market accounts for 30 per cent of overnights stays
- 50 per cent of hotel guests come from central and northern Europe, with a large number of these arriving from the UK, Germany and France
- Number of staff at the hotel overall: 130
- Number of therapists: seven.
- Cost of a four hand massage: €175 (US\$225, £145) for 50 minutes, €270 (US\$347, £223) for 80 minutes
- Voya facials range from €89-170 (US\$114-218, £74-180) for 50 and 80 minutes respectively; while the 170-minute Land to Sea package costs €296 (US\$380, £244) and includes a seaweed bath, massage, facial and wrap

► than creating a dimly-lit space with warm tones, we rely on brightness, the nature and sun to help the healing process."

As a result, no matter where guests are in the spa – even the treatment rooms – they are treated to sweeping views across the undulating dunes and a breathtaking vista of the Atlantic Sea. This, says Miguel M, was always part of the plan. "My father knew the land – he grew up here – so he knew exactly where the best location for the hotel would be. When the golf course was designed, he had already identified this plot so it was left empty for the hotel."

The 800sq m (8,600 sq ft) spa has 10 treatment rooms and therapies include those by organic seaweed company Voya to highlight the relationship that The Oitavos has with its Atlantic surroundings. Due to its proximity to the ocean, the indoor and outdoor spa pools also feature seawater and are heated by the warm-air expelled by the hotel's ventilation system. A large relaxation area, a sauna and a steamroom complete the spa facilities. For the more active, there's also a large health and fitness suite adjacent to the spa with more than 20 exercise stations supplied by Star Trac.



The modern spa features 10 treatment rooms, a large relaxation area, a sauna, a steamroom and a health and fitness suite

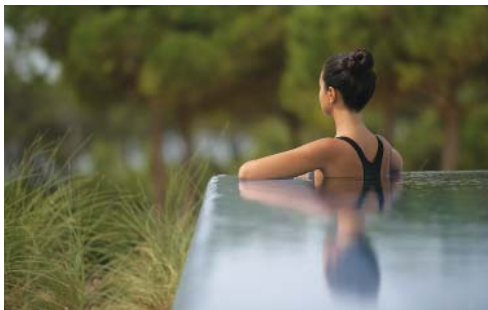
French skincare brand GERNétic is also used at the spa. In addition to a full menu of body treatments, facials and bath therapies, is the spa's signature four-handed massage.

TEAM WORK

Rosado has been working for the Champs-Élysées since 2004. Previously she was the spa manager at the family's health and racquet club, which has four treatment rooms. "I was lucky enough to land the role," she says. "It was very exciting to be part of something this big and new – especially when you got to see it all open for the first time."

To help with the hotel launch, the family appointed Seattle-based management and consultancy company Columbia Hospitality. The team – led by Stephen Roughley, who spent eight years as director of operations at JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort and Spa – took up residence for nearly two years, 12 months before the opening of the hotel and for the first 10 months of operating.

Within the spa environment, Rosado worked closely with Columbia's dedicated spa consultant, Melanie Silver, whose CV includes seven years as director of spa at Ritz-Carlton St Thomas on the British Virgin



The use of seawater in the spa pools reflects its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean

Islands. "The biggest pre-opening challenge was recruiting and establishing a great team," says Rosado. "It wasn't that there was a lack of talent – it was more to do with charting individual personalities and making sure they clicked with each other. I believe having a great team is the most important aspect of having a great spa. Each team member must

be clear about their own individual roles but also aware of what's going on around them. We want to be with our clients at every step of their spa journey and to achieve that I believe the team has to work as one."

Visiting the spa, it's clear to see this approach works. On arrival, every member of staff seems to know who you are and what ►



A new set of day packages is being launched in a bid to attract affluent locals to use the facility as a stand-alone day spa

- treatments you're about to have, creating a genuinely welcoming atmosphere.

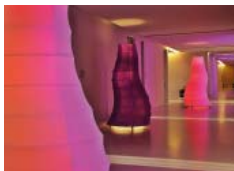
Alongside her ambition to make sure everything runs like clockwork, Rosado also wants her team to be spontaneous. "I always encourage the team to add little touches to treatments and to make the guest really feel that they are experiencing something unique. For example, a therapist might give a head massage to a guest who's having a seaweed bath to further ease away tension."

A WIDER AUDIENCE

The spa was drawn into the hotel plans at an early stage with the rationale that it was needed to complete the offer. "It was essential to embrace spa visitors and to make the experience at The Oitavos relaxing," says Miguel M. "The motivating factor was the possibility of having such a diversified offer that's inclusive of gastronomy, golf, a riding centre, the beach and a spa."

Early on, it was also decided that the spa would be an independent profit centre and although it features heavily in the hotel's marketing, Rosado says it's also actively marketed to affluent locals as a stand-alone day spa. To support this, a new set of day packages will be introduced, some of which will combine access to the spa with lunch at the hotel's award-winning restaurant.

Spa manager Rita Rosado likes everything to run like clockwork and the team is encouraged to make each guest feel that they are experiencing something unique



The spa is marketed alongside the hotel but remains an independent profit centre

As for hotel guests, in its first year the spa's capture rate has bounced around the 25 per cent mark – a figure that spa director Rosado is happy with, but one that she will work to improve. "We want to grow the capture rate by 15 per cent in the next year," she says. One key audience she's identified to help with this is business guests – 50 per cent of the hotel's customers – who are attracted by the spa's express treatments, such as the 25-minute Swedish massage. ►



Seaweed wraps by Voya emphasise the spa's location by the ocean



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The company aims to boost the hotel's occupancy rate from 45 per cent in the first year to 50 per cent capacity in 2012

If our concept and take on luxury proves successful, then I can't see any reason why we wouldn't replicate it in another place in some way

- According to Miguel M, the hotel's conferencing and corporate hospitality business has proven stronger than expected. So much so that the hotel will shut for a month at the beginning of 2012 to increase conference space by converting an unused space on the first floor.

However, this does not mean that the hotel's focus will change from leisure to business. "We want to make the split 60-40 in favour of leisure," says Miguel M, adding that the average stay for a leisure customer is currently four days compared with only around 1.5 days for business customers.

FUTURE HORIZONS

The overall occupancy rate at Oitavos was 45 per cent for the first year – which was according to the expectations set for the first 12 months. The target for 2012 is to increase occupancy to 50 per cent – a sign that the family does not want to run before it can walk. Although the target might seem modest, the family is only expecting to start seeing a return on their investment within the next 15-20 years.



Leisure customers enjoy longer stays at the hotel and spa than business customers

When questioned about future plans, Miguel M rules out expanding the hotel – but not the possibility of opening a second site. "There are no expansion plans for The Oitavos. This is the way it was designed and this is the way it will stay. As for a second site, at the moment we have no

plans for that either. We need to concentrate all our energy and efforts on making The Oitavos successful. But why not in the future? Why not? If our concept and take on luxury proves successful then I can't see any reason why we couldn't replicate it in another place in some way." ●



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Lying at the heart of the property, the spa is one of the largest and most prestigious in the Middle East

MYSTERY SHOPPER

TALISE OTTOMAN SPA DUBAI

The latest spa by Jumeirah has 42 treatment rooms and is one of the biggest in Dubai, but how does the experience measure up? Daniella Russell finds out



DANIELLA RUSSELL » DIRECTOR » DR GLOBAL FZC

The Dubai-based Jumeirah Group was appointed by Zabeel Properties in July to manage the Zabeel Saray. This new, luxury hotel – with its 405 bedrooms and 38 residences – is a tribute to the ornate palaces of the Ottoman empire and features hand-painted finishings and Turkish artworks and murals. It has been built on the beach and around a lagoon pool.

At the heart of the property lies the Talise Ottoman Spa which covers 8,000sq m (86,115sq ft) and boasts 42 treatment rooms and four VIP suites – making it one of the biggest in the Middle East. And only six months after opening, it has been crowned UAE's Leading Spa Resort in the 2011 World Travel Awards.

Jumeirah first launched its Talise spa brand in 2007 (see S807/2 p24) and there are now seven in operation. Overall, the group oversees 12 hotels worldwide and has 18 more in development. ►



The 405-bedroom hotel is a tribute to ornate palaces of the Ottoman era



The hammam's hand-painted ceiling is an amazing feature, but the room was too big to be heated efficiently

the visit

THE OFFER

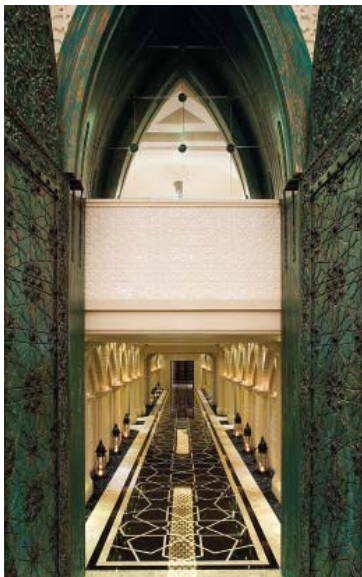
The spa is spread over two floors – one for men and one for women – each featuring thalassotherapy pools, various heat experiences by Thermarium, plus snow rooms, flotation tanks and hydrotherapy rooms. There are also three Turkish hammams. A fully equipped fitness centre and personal trainers complete the offer.

In December, a Talise Couples Spa was added to the mix. Built on a mezzanine level with a private entrance, the section is dedicated to couples and includes a hammam, sauna, whirlpool and steamroom, as well as two couples suites with saunas, whirlpools, showers and majlis (lounge areas).

The spa menu had facials, massages, wraps and rituals, but these weren't incredibly innovative and there was no recognition of product houses (Aromatherapy Associates and Kerstin Florian). The main signature treatments were the hammam experiences and my friend and I went for the 60-minute Royal Ottoman, which was acceptably priced at AED485 (US\$132, €101, £85).

THE BOOKING

Booking was a challenge as you can't do it online and the phone kept ringing out. After three days, I spoke to a very helpful spa assistant, Ahmad, who booked me in for that afternoon. Occasionally in Dubai, certain hotel spas cannot accommodate outside guests if occupancy is high, but with the spa being so large this wasn't an issue.



A map or good signage would help guests to navigate this huge spa



LOCATION AND ACCESS

There's no mistaking this stunning property that's situated on the western crescent of Dubai's Palm Jumeirah. The spa was also initially easy to find and the entrance, a regal corridor leading to huge wooden doors, was

truly dramatic. Yet it was a long walk and one of trepidation as I wasn't entirely sure I was on the right path. The hammam and treatment rooms can be used by clients with disabilities, but I would imagine that the wet areas would be difficult to access.

DESIGN

The spa is an architectural and interior décor delight and it's easy to see why the marketing material looks so good. It's stunning in all areas and the hammam is particularly amazing. But the long walk to reception and feeling of being slightly lost is a recurring theme. A map (or a compass!) would be handy as signage is poor and instructions on how to best use the facility, especially the thermal area, would be useful.

The biggest shock was the design of the changing rooms because there weren't any private cubicles. The UAE has a strict nudity policy and changing rooms are no exception to this. Two other ladies were also discussing this issue – both with us and between themselves – and without even a small space to discreetly hide away in, our only option was to change in the toilet.



The extremely narrow steps leading to the whirlpool could be a big health and safety hazard



The entrance to the stunning spa – a regal corridor leading to a reception area with huge wooden doors – is truly dramatic

CLEANLINESS

Overall the spa was clean and well-maintained and was only untidy in areas like the wet area where there were no linen hooks.

THE STAFF

The receptionist we first met, who was wonderfully dressed and very attentive, left the front desk and stayed with us until we met our therapists. Although it was nice to be guided the whole way, this indicated to me that there was a lack of spa attendants and during the whole three hours, I only saw two other attendants. Considering the size of the facility I would have anticipated no less than three – more likely five – to be on hand to help guests.

THE EXPERIENCE

The treatment consultation was brief – fill it the form if you have a problem, otherwise just sign. The changing rooms had ample lockers, so catering for large numbers of people won't be a problem, but sadly none

VITAL STATISTICS

Address: Jumeirah Zabeel Saray,
The Palm Jumeirah, Crescent Road
(west), PO Box 27722, Dubai UAE
Times: fitness centre –
6.30am-10.30pm; spa and
hammam – 9am-9pm
Cost: A 60-minute aromatherapy
massage costs AED485 (US\$132,
€101, £85) and a 45-minute facial
is priced at AED400 (US\$109, €83,
£70). Rituals range from AED825-
1,525 (US\$225-415, €172-318,
£144-266) for two to four hours.
Details: www.jumeirah.com
or +971 4 4530456 to book

of them had a big enough robe. Admittedly this is a consistent complaint I have – only slim, model-types go to spas do they? – and the slippers were also for petite feet, which I don't possess either. But, phew, the hammam wraps were OK! As the changing rooms were

“The biggest shock was the design of the changing rooms as there weren't any private cubicles. The UAE has a strict no-nudity policy and changing rooms are no exception”

quite dark, punching in the combination for the lockers proved tricky.

A quick five-minute session was enjoyed in the steamroom before being led to the spectacular inner sanctum of the hammam where we were laid out on a massive central heated plinth. Fatima, my therapist, was obviously very experienced and happily initiated her task, starting with a facial scrub and then removing the rest of the dirty skin from my body in slow, rhythmic strokes that were most soporific and never rushed – I just lay back and admired the most amazing hand-painted ceiling above me.

I love hammam treatments and compared with others, I felt the room was a bit ►

► too large and high and as the doors were constantly kept open the heat escaped. Another side effect was that everyone passing by outside could watch me naked on the plinth – upselling to some degree I suppose!

My favourite aspect was the soap massage, where soap is rubbed inside a pillowcase to create masses of suds that are squeezed out all over the body [and massaged in]. It's a truly wonderful feeling and this experience didn't disappoint. There are many parts of this stunning ritual, but Fatima completed them without informing me unless asked. In comparison, my friend was guided throughout and was given a towel to cover up with, unlike myself.

The end of the treatment was limited. I was expecting a sweet mint tea and warm blankets to help my body restore its temperature naturally. Instead, I was given iced water and the option to lay down.

Next, we decided to explore the wet area – a beautiful part of the spa that is an Aladdin's cave of exotic experiences, save for the snow room which didn't look as interesting as others I have seen.

Operationally, however, there is room for improvement. Climbing into the vast whirlpool was no easy task as the steps were ridiculously narrow – as there was no one around to check on guests, this could be a big health and safety concern. Also, we would have liked a tour of the area to find



After the spa treatment, the offer of a sweet mint tea would have complemented a lie down in the relaxation area

RIGHT TO REPLY

Paul Hawco, spa director, Talise Ottoman Spa

We always appreciate feedback, especially since we opened just a year ago and we strive to offer an exceptional experience. With regards to the variety of treatments offered, we continuously review our menu and have added new treatments recently, including a coffee peeling treatment and a hydrotherapy ritual. Regarding the changing rooms, we've already added three private cubicles. Concerning the lack of communication with the therapist, our colleagues receive ongoing training and we'll ensure that this is addressed. We agree that our spa-wear should suit all body types and have since ordered robes and sandals in various sizes, including large. Please accept our apologies if the experience was not thoroughly enjoyed. We hope to welcome Ms Russell back in the near future to provide an exceptional spa experience.



WHAT'S THE SCORE?

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Ease of booking | 3 |
| Facilities | 7 |
| Cleanliness/maintenance | 8 |
| Staff – Appearance | 8 |
| – Attentiveness | 9 |
| – Visibility | 4 |
| Experience/ treatment | 8 |
| Value for money | 7.5 |
| Overall experience | 7 |

out how to make the most out of it, but when we found a spa attendant she could only tell us about treatments. It wasn't until we were dressed and on our way out that we stumbled upon the thalassotherapy pools which looked especially enticing and we were disappointed to have missed out.

AFTERCARE

At the start of our visit to the spa, I noticed some retail cabinets at the back of the large reception, but it turned out that this was the first and last part of our retail experience. Maybe the aftersell is happening more with guests having facials – we just got a 'thank you for coming', with no mention of an upsell or even a return visit.

SUMMARY

My treatment was good, but could've been exceptional with more explanation for a first timer. This was not a language issue as Fatima was confident in her knowledge.

The property is stunning yet navigation could be improved with tours and instruction on how to use the array of heat and wet experiences. Operationally, it must be challenging to manage a huge facility, but I would surmise that the team are not well-versed in the guest journey or treatment flow.

However, I would return as the spa has many redeeming features such as the authentic Turkish hammam, thalassotherapy pool and stunning relaxation areas. ●



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GARY HENKIN

Over the past four decades, WTS International has morphed from a small, US-centric tennis services enterprise into a major player in the global spa industry. President and founder Gary Henkin charts the company's trajectory

RHIANON HOWELLS • CONSULTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS



Around 65 per cent of WTS' revenues are generated through spa management and consulting

Gary Henkin's path to global spa business leader has been a circuitous one. As a child, his most dearly held ambition was not to run a multi-million dollar company but to follow in his father's footsteps and become a doctor. It took him two years of medical school to realise his calling lay elsewhere.

After eventually completing a BSc, he spent the next few years indulging in his true passion: teaching tennis at country clubs in his native Washington DC, and playing competitively. It was this that planted the seed for WTS. "I was never a good enough player to make it on tour," he says. "But I'd seen so many failed operations... I felt there was a need for a more business-like approach to managing tennis and racquets sports facilities."

In January 1973, aged 28, Henkin founded a small company to provide turnkey management services to local tennis facilities. Its



The majority (80 per cent) of business comes from the US, but Henkin is looking to grow internationally to even out the split to 50-50 in the next two to three years

name, Washington Tennis Services, was apt but arguably unambitious and 39 years later, the moniker is no longer quite as fitting.

Now named WTS International, the privately owned company employs 2,000 people worldwide and, although it still offers tennis services, up to 65 per cent of its revenues are generated through spa management and consulting, with high-profile clients including Ritz-Carlton, Wyndham Worldwide and Trump. And while up to 80 per cent of its business currently comes from within the US, with the remainder from overseas, Henkin expects, "in the next two to three years for that to look more like 60-40 or 50-50."

ORGANIC GROWTH

So how exactly does a small tennis operator become a global spa business? According to Henkin, he wasn't initially looking to diversify. "For the first 16 years we were very focused on tennis," he says. "Then in the late 80s,

fitness facilities began popping up in hotels. And we felt that our approach – hiring and training great people, financial management, marketing and promotions, programme development, maintenance and retail sales – was applicable to a different space."

WTS' first fitness project was the opening of a 10,000sq ft (929sq m) health club within a hotel and office complex in Washington DC. Despite the company's lack of experience in the sector, it was a great success and proved to be a springboard to similar projects across the US.

Their move into the spa sector in the late 90s was similarly organic, beginning with the management contract for a failing spa and fitness centre at a small hotel in the US Virgin Islands. "Operationally and financially it wasn't the easiest start," says Henkin. "But we managed to turn it around in both areas. And with that we took on additional accounts in the US Virgin Islands, and ultimately back home."

Today, WTS projects range from opening hotel spas for Trump in New York, Chicago, Las Vegas and Honolulu to developing a proprietary spa brand for Wyndham Worldwide. Henkin adds: "We also have a whole portfolio of small to moderately sized spas, some of which have just two or three treatment rooms. A spa doesn't have to be big to be profitable, or a wonderful, relaxing space."

UNDER THE RADAR

Although WTS also offers feasibility studies, plus brand and concept development, its three largest service areas are design consultation, pre-opening and management. Yet in contrast with many spa operators, the company prides itself on operating under the radar. "From an operative standpoint, we actually become an integrated part of our client's [property]," says Henkin. "To the guest, we're invisible."

While WTS' overseas growth is driven almost exclusively by new-build spas, an ►



► increasing number of its US contracts involve taking on the management of existing – and often under-performing – facilities, which according to Henkin presents unique obstacles: “It’s more challenging not only because of design constraints, but also people constraints. You’re picking up the baggage of a failing operation and there’s a whole re-education process that has to happen. It’s one thing to scale a wall and leap over it, it’s another thing to run through the wall... and sometimes transitions are like running through a wall.”

What WTS brings to these operations is a focus on profitability that was lacking when they opened. “Spas were put into hotels and

resorts years ago mainly as an amenity,” says Henkin. “In today’s world, we hardly speak to a hotel or resort that isn’t interested in their spa making profit; and to make profit spas have to be operated as businesses.”

To make sure facilities see black ink, WTS tracks everything from average treatment prices and revenue per treatment room to capture rates. Percentage of revenue generated by retail is particularly important, says Henkin, and for hotel spas percentage of external traffic is also crucial. “The average length of stay in urban hotels is generally less than 1.5 days, and the challenge of getting those people to go to the spa when

their time is so precious is enormous,” he says. “So if you’re not proactively marketing to a non-guest clientele as well as internally, your spa may never be profitable.”

GLOBAL EXPANSION

For its first 35 years, WTS operated solely in US territory, and the decision to go abroad was initially one of necessity. “Because virtually all new-builds shut down in the US [in the economic collapse], it gently pushed us to test the waters overseas,” says Henkin. “It turned out there was a significant interest, and we’re now happily ensconced in places like Asia, Africa and the Middle East.”



High-profile clients include Trump (right), Ritz-Carlton, Wyndham Worldwide and the Fern Tree Spa at the Half Moon Bay resort in Jamaica (all other pictures)





As a reputable brand, WTS doesn't suffer from staff shortages and to retain them it focuses on CPD, including WTS University – a business-training scheme for spa managers

China, in particular, has quickly become a key market for WTS – in just over a year, it has opened a luxury day spa near Shanghai and has a further 11 projects in the works. "The market there is thirsty for a company that can be a one-stop shop for design, pre-opening and management," says Henkin. To be successful in the region, however, he is keenly aware of the need to be on the ground, and to this end the company will open a regional office in Shanghai early in 2012.

Elsewhere, the company has just launched its first spa in Australia – at Hayman, a luxury resort on the Great Barrier Reef – and also its first spa in Europe: the Acqua di Parma Blu Mediterraneo Spa at an exclusive yacht club in Sardinia. In coming months, WTS hopes to build its presence in Asia, Europe and Latin America in particular.

Helping to drive the company's global expansion will be a recently announced tie-up with HVS, one of the world's leading consulting and services organisations in the hospitality and leisure industries. Under the agreement, WTS will manage a new division called HVS Spa & Leisure Services in a straightforward strategic partnership – neither company is investing in the other, but while HVS benefits from WTS' spa expertise, WTS benefits from HVS' extensive global reach.

So far, so positive – but how is WTS coping with the staffing and other operational challenges that go hand in hand with rapid growth? "Yes, our spa service area is growing quickly," says Henkin. "But we have a long history in the leisure industry... so our

problem isn't not having enough people – we have more great people who want to represent us than we have jobs. We have a reputation for being a very solid, secure brand, which is very supportive of its staff. I think [that] has been the catalyst for the hundreds of applications we process each year." The company also recruits through recommendations from staff and clients, links with universities and participation in industry events such as ISPA.

Among WTS' initiatives to retain staff are training opportunities such as WTS University, a business-training scheme for spa managers. Uniquely, it also encourages its management staff to support each other through a proprietary online system known as the Knowledge Network. If, for example, a spa director is looking for a fresh approach to seasonal merchandising, they only need enter a question and, within minutes, their peers will have responded with best practice examples and ideas.

INDUSTRY SHAKE-OUT

As the spa industry continues to grow apace, especially with the advent of inexpensive franchise models (see S811/3 p22), Henkin believes market saturation is a real threat: "There is potential for an over-built situation, much as there was for many years in the health and fitness sector... Certain markets are seeing that even now [and] that problem will be exacerbated over time."

THE WTS FAMILY

Although spa is currently the largest and fastest-growing division within WTS, the company offers a varied range of other leisure services through a number of divisions. These include a tennis division (the smallest arm of the company), a fitness division, a lifestyle division delivering social, recreational and educational programmes to resort and residential developments, and a recently launched university and college division known as CREW (Campus Recreation, Enrichment and Wellness).

In this environment, he argues, there is an even greater need for spas to deliver more than just a promise. "Five or six years ago, revenue was up, margins were up and there was very little competition," says Henkin. "The economy was great and there was lots of order-taking. Today all that has changed. If you don't have viable marketing and programming, and great management and staff delivering great services all of the time, your spa will not make it. Some spas are going to go out of business... it's happening now."

Henkin is confident, however, that WTS spas won't be among the casualties. "I'm very blessed to [be supported by] a group of extraordinary people who work exceptionally hard," he says. "It's a joy for me to come to work, and I'm not sure everyone who's been in the same business for almost four decades can say the same." ●



Businesses in Thailand are only just starting to recover from last year's floods which caused THB1.4bn worth of damage

ASK AN EXPERT...

CRISIS CONTROL

Protests in Egypt in December are a sign that there's still political unrest in the Middle East. It is by no means the only country in the region that's fighting for democracy in the movement that's become known as the Arab Spring. Troubles first started in Tunisia in early 2011 and spread to Bahrain, Syria – where unrest came to a head again at the end of 2011 – Yemen, Iran and, most notably, Libya.

Yet as Egypt is one of the most popular Middle East tourist destinations, how is this unsettlement impacting on the hospitality industry? Have spas seen a dramatic downturn in custom and – if so – how are they counteracting this? Or, is it still business as usual despite what outsiders are seeing?

WHAT ARE THE KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN FACING AND HANDLING A CRISIS? WE INVESTIGATE

How spas communicate their message to the outside world – that it's still safe to visit or that circumstances may not be as bad as reported – is crucial when a crisis strikes. Hoshinoya Karuizawa, a wellness resort in Japan which lost its international audience after the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and radiation leaks, can testify to this.

But it's not just about handling the media – how you deal with staff is important too.

Making sure therapists are looked after and boosting staff morale will reflect on a company as a whole as well as the service on offer, says Samir Patel, managing director of Six Senses Spas, who's businesses are being directly affected by the Arab Spring.

It may be impossible, and unnecessary, to plan for every eventuality in a crisis, but what procedures can be put in place to minimise the damage to the facility, the staff and reputation? Forward thinking will ensure operators have the tools to cope better under pressure.

We ask operators who have been hit by a crisis about what happened, how they handled the situation and if it's really possible to turn a negative into a positive?

I've had my fair share of crises. I was close to the Al-Qaeda bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya in 1998. And in 2003 and 2008, I dealt with the aftermath of bombs that hit the Taj hotel [as vice-president of spa operations and development] in Mumbai, India. The one thing that comes up time and again is the importance of looking after people and your staff.

This is one of our core values at Six Senses Spas and something I've tried to stay true to during the Arab Spring in which six of my spas – one each in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait – have been impacted. When things erupted in Egypt, for example, my first priority was to make sure the staff had an escape route. We monitored the flashes of violence across the country to work out which would be the safest and quickest way to get them out.

Then on the other side, we also arranged for emergency visas so they could enter Doha and arranged apartments.

SAMIR PATEL

Managing director,
Six Senses Spas



very rare that I would make an executive decision on what to do next – I prefer to draw on group wisdom and encourage team members to come up with their own solutions. On a practical

level you're getting them to contribute ideas, to take up tasks and be responsible.

Individually, some of our spas, especially the one at the InterContinental in Egypt, have been badly affected by the political unrest in the Middle East. Yet we've reduced costs by relocating therapists and redirecting resources. And thanks to the exceptional performance of spas in other regions, we were above our EBITDA target in 2011.

In Egypt, we're now launching wellbeing retreats to raise the profile of the hotel. We're using the spa and wellbeing offering as the face of positive PR messaging and that's our way of dealing with the press. We would never put out a message to reassure customers that we're doing OK in a time of crisis as that would be counter-productive. As a global brand it's expected that we would provide the same high-level of service that we always do as long as the resort remains open.

Six Senses, an Asia-based resort and spa development and management company, currently has 14 resorts and 30 spas across the globe. Details: www.sixsenses.com

Some of our spas have been badly affected by the political unrest in the Middle East. Yet we've reduced costs by relocating therapists and redirecting resources

Our Hoshinoya Karuizawa resort has 77 villas and is situated north of Tokyo next to the Hoshino Hot Springs – the source of water we use in our onsen [traditional Japanese hot baths]. We opened in 2005 and in early 2011 were on target to double our number of international guests from 15 per cent in 2010 to 30 per cent.

But then the devastating earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in March and changed everything. Fortunately, we weren't directly hit, but our business was greatly affected – almost all reservations from abroad were cancelled and in just one month we lost ¥¥100m (US\$1.2m, €1m, £836,750) and our occupancy, which averages 82 per cent a year, dropped by 50 per cent.

Our immediate response was to shift our focus to the national market and as we're only one hour from Tokyo, people who were exhausted from dealing with the aftermath saw our resort as a place to escape to. We are surrounded by nature, have an abundance

KYOKO TANZAWA

PR manager,
Hoshinoya flagship resorts, Japan



in our hotel we donate ¥¥1,000 (US\$13, €10, £8) to help the children affected by the tsunami.

We kept updating people on the situation in Japan until the end of May. In June,

we started promoting the resort properly once more. We've been sending out direct marketing, with an emphasis on social network sites, and putting together attractive promotions for the resort. With the help of the Japanese National Tourism Office, we've also been hosting as many international media as possible on familiarisation trips.

Today, the number of our local guests has almost recovered, but there's still some way to go with the international market. We're hopeful that our marketing efforts together with word of mouth recommendations will help us to recover this lost business.

Hoshinoya Karuizawa (see S110/3 p34) is one of three flagship sites for Hoshino Resorts, which manages 28 properties across Japan. Details: <http://en.hoshinoresort.com>

of 'curing waters' and unlike in the city we didn't have any electrical problems.

Luxury was a taboo following a disaster of such magnitude, so we were modest with our publicity and promoted the fact that our resort was untouched and safe rather than pushing the pampering aspect. We based this on the official report of Karuizawa – the nearest town – which showed that radiation levels were low risk. We posted these details on our website, emailed them out on our newsletter and our travel agents helped to get this message across to our international guests.

We run another ryokan [a resort with onsen] near Fukushima and although it wasn't badly affected by radiation, we had to shut it down to provide a shelter for survivors. We've since set up a Save the Children campaign and for every guest who stays

The 2002 Bali bombing was devastating to us – within three days everyone had left the island and hotels went down to 3 per cent occupancy. It took Mandara Spa about a year to recover and we lost US\$11m (£781,000, £645,300).

There's no rule book on how to react to this situation. People say they advertise more, embrace staff and create incentives, but I'm not convinced they do this in reality. We certainly didn't create any special deals because there wasn't anyone to offer them to!

Our first action was to save costs. We trimmed back on expenses and cut about 20 per cent of our employees: those who hadn't been performing. Where we could, we sent staff overseas – it was a cost to get them there, but once they were there, they were off our books and generating money again.

As we were able to diversify, we weathered the storm well and although we didn't make money we broke even and no one's going to complain about that faced with the

JEFF MATTHEWS

President and COO,
Mandara Spa



situation we were in. Apart from the 2005 bombing in Kuta (which was no where near as bad) our business has gone from strength to strength in Bali, as well as in Asia and around the world.

We didn't have any procedures in place on how to handle the bombing because we just didn't think it would happen to us. And we faced the same scenario when we were hit by the tsunami in 2004 when nine of our employees lost their lives and five of our spas in Thailand and the Maldives were completely destroyed.

This time, our main priority was to take care of the employees' families who rely on the money their children send home. When our other spas [worldwide] heard about what had happened, we received an incredible US\$35,000 (£27,350, £22,600)

worth of donations. I was proud to tell this story to the press and that's how we turned the negative into a positive. From Bali, I also learned to be more forthcoming with the media by

openly explaining what had happened rather than just saying 'no comment'.

If you're a well-known brand, then you'll be judged on how you react. Yet as these are freak occurrences, it's impossible to plan for them. But from our experience we know what to do. Firstly, it's not to panic and to also ensure that the people who are in leadership roles, such as spa managers, have the ability to keep a level head and to make important decisions.

Secondly, it's to make sure your people are safe. To give employees an extra sense of security we might follow the example of other companies which after the 2002 bomb, flew their employees to Singapore so they spent a week in the real world to show they weren't in danger.

Thirdly, it's not to completely shut down the business because there are things you can do to diversify your costs.

Mandara Spa, the Balinese-themed spa brand, is a subsidiary of Steiner Leisure Ltd. Today, there are 80 Mandara Spas worldwide. Details: www.mandaraspaspa.com

There's no rule book on how to react to a crisis. People say they advertise more, embrace staff and create incentives, but I'm not convinced they do this in reality

The major floods in Thailand last year [from July to December] covered around six million hectares (14 million acres) and caused around THB1.4bn (US\$44m, £35m, £29m) worth of damage.

Devarana is the signature spa brand for Dusit International which has 14 hotels in Thailand. Although none of the Dusit hotels were directly hit, the properties in Bangkok and Hua Hin suffered the most in terms of revenue. They experienced huge cancellations from international guests and most occupancy came from Thai residents made homeless from the floods who received a special rate. Normally half of our spa customers are hotel/resort guests, so the drop in hotel occupancy had a big impact – in November our business dropped by 50 per cent.

Yet as Devarana has been operating in Thailand since 2000 and Dusit has been present since 1948, we have a good connection with the local community and this helped our spa business a lot.

WIPAWADEE SIRIMONGKOLKASEM

Managing director, Devarana Spa



We normally run a yearly marketing plan in our spas that's based around seasonal treatments. We decided to stick to this plan during the crisis rather than run discount promotions as we believe special rates are not the main factor when in comes to purchasing decisions. On the other hand, we felt that running hard discounts would affect our pricing strategy in the long run.

Dusit took this same stance when it launched a media campaign 'Reemerged, Renewed and Return' to encourage visitors to return to Thailand. And any campaign that's expected to help the hotel, will hopefully benefit our spas in the long-run too.

The month-long campaign which ran throughout December offered guests a food and beverage credit valued at 50 per cent of the room rates, but wasn't a direct

discount. It was communicated via press releases and online and got exposure in major publications such as the *The International Herald Tribune* [the global edition of the *New York Times*] as

well as on *TravelDailyNews.com* and *FT.com*. Dusit also reached 221,000 recipients via a direct marketing email blast.

Overall, Devarana has seen a positive impact on our business since the second half of December and it was even better in the first week of January. And, of course, part of this was directly related to hotel occupancy. The Asian market should come back just in time for the Chinese New Year on 23 January but I expect it will take longer to recover business from Europe and the US.

Devarana Spa was created as a luxury Thai-inspired spa chain for select five-star hotels within the Dusit portfolio. It currently has four facilities open in Thailand, one in the Philippines and another is due to launch in the Maldives in 2012. Details: www.devaranaspa.com

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POOLING RESOURCES

AS ONE OF ROTORUA'S MAJOR AND LONGEST RUNNING ATTRACTIONS, THE POLYNESIAN MINERAL DAY SPA FEATURES 25 THERMAL POOLS AND IS SOMETHING OF AN ICON ON NEW ZEALAND'S NORTH ISLAND

CHRIS McBEATH • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

In a landscape of bubbling mud pools and geothermal waters, Rotorua, New Zealand's only geothermal city, is one of the world's most unusual destinations. Known as Nature's Spa of the South, Rotorua's main claim to fame is its healing waters, which in the late 1800s helped transform the city into a fashionable health resort. Yet, surprisingly, Rotorua has remained remarkably undeveloped in the modern context of a spa resort, apart from the Polynesian Spa. Here, the spa experience still embodies a bathing-for-health ritual that's been part of the city's heritage for more than 130 years.

EARLY WELLNESS TOURISM

As wealthy Europeans discovered Rotorua's health-giving qualities, the New Zealand government was quick to recognise the potential of spa tourism and began investing in an

infrastructure that included bathhouses, promenades, a tea-house and natural geothermal features set amid ornamental gardens.

The Pavilion Bath was one such initiative. Built where the Polynesian Spa currently stands, the baths were (and still are) fed by two springs, the Rachel Spring, and the Priest Spring which famously healed the arthritic condition of a Catholic priest. Through the decades, the baths underwent several incarnations until 1972 when, as a rundown facility, the government leased them to the family-owned Polynesian Pools Ltd and they've been privately run as a family business ever since.

MODERNISING A HERITAGE SPA

Martin Lobb took over the helm of Polynesian Spa from his parents, as chief executive officer, 25 years ago. Having worked in various industries overseas, and armed with a degree in management, he's been

The thermal pools welcome around 300,000 visitors a year and are the most profitable part of the attraction, which also includes a 10-treatment room spa

instrumental in creating a product that's widely considered to be one of the world's top mineral spas. In a country where the spa scene is 20 years behind that of North America and Europe, that's no small feat.

"Our core product is the bathing experience," Lobb says. "It caters to approximately 300,000 bathers a year, so the pools will always be our main focus."

Running a mineral spa with such a rich heritage – part of the original building is registered by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust – is not without its challenges but the Lobb family has evolved the bathing experience into one of Rotorua's major attractions. Part of that success is the willingness to make significant investment in both operational systems and infrastructure – a NZ\$4m (US\$3m, €2.3m, £2m) redevelopment in 2007 nearly doubled the number of pools and also included refurbished therapy rooms and an upgraded café and retail area.

The Polynesian Spa currently has 25 thermal pools: 14 private pools, seven adult-only pools and four rock pools – landscaped with



There are seven adult-only pools which cost NZ\$21.50 per person



native New Zealand flora – each with their own price points (see p78). Each pool has a different therapeutic value, ranging in temperature between 38-40 °C and either fed by the Rachel Spring with its alkaline water for smooth, hydrated skin, or the Priest Spring with its more acidic waters that relieves tired muscles, arthritis and rheumatism – results of which are purely anecdotal rather than scientifically based. There's a separate family area with the spa's only freshwater, chlorinated pool for active children.

Maintaining mineral baths has its operational challenges, too. "The sulphur [water] leads to heavy deterioration and over the years, we've learned what does and doesn't work," Lobb says. "For example, we've given up using pool paint in favour of natural rock, and instead of galvanised nails, we've found that stainless steel is more durable."

Although saddled with higher-than-average maintenance costs, Lobb actually spends more on his staff contingent of 80. But both sides of the business are time consuming. "Essentially, we run a 24-hour operation,"



The 38-40 °C pools, have either alkaline or acidic waters offering numerous therapeutic benefits

“ A fashionable health resort in the late 1800s, Rotorua is remarkably underdeveloped in the modern context of a spa resort, apart from the Polynesian Spa ”

► says Lobb. "The Lake Spa Retreat is open 9am-8pm and the baths are open 8am-11pm. By day, the water must be cooled to a comfortable bathing temperature but in doing so, it's necessary to add an extremely low dose of chlorine to control bacteria and algae build up. At night, we do cleaning, maintenance and a complete change out of water.

"Water from the older pools is put into the lake and the pools refilled. In the 16 newer pools, we developed a heat exchange water recycling system that uses filters and geothermal heat to kill off bacteria before returning the water back into the pools. Because of this, we're able to limit our use of geothermal water – making us a far more sustainable operation."

In April 2011, the Polynesian Spa earned top honours with an Enviro Gold Award from Qualmark – an official quality assurance organisation, which recognises energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation and community activities.

AN IMPORTANT AMENITY

Although the Lake Spa Retreat will always be a secondary component to the bathing experience, it has evolved into an important amenity – and a profitable cost-centre – in its own right. With 10 treatment rooms, including two dual-therapy rooms and three wet rooms, the spa employs 12 full-time therapists as well as a spa manager. In high season, November through March, that figure often rises to 18.



The spa has become an important amenity and is a profitable cost-centre in its own right

"When I joined, my mandate was to give a wow factor to the spa menu," recalls spa manager Helena Keenan, who was formerly the spa operations manager at Hepburn Bathhouse & Spa in Victoria, Australia (see S809/3, p36). "Coming here enabled me to return home to New Zealand and allowed me to continue working in an industry I love – in a capacity that matched my experience. There are very few spa management roles here," she observes, referencing New Zealand's relative youth in the world spa economy.

The spa already offered a general spa menu, including its signature Aix massages – a treatment for joint and muscular pains that

originates from the French ski spa at Aix-les-Bains – but in just over a year Keenan has added pregnancy and aromatherapy massages, introduced signature mud body scrubs and wraps and created two facials. The retail area, too, carries more swimwear and lifestyle items as well as New Zealand-made, spa-related products such as GeoSkin Care and PureSource. In total, sales contribute about 15 per cent to overall revenues.

"As more of our guests are sophisticated, international and spa-experienced clients, recruitment and training has been essential," Keenan says. "All our practitioners are certified, most are remedial massage therapists."



POLYNESIAN DAY SPA COSTS

FAMILY POOL

ADULT: NZ\$14.50 (US\$11.30, €8.80, £7.30)

CHILD (FIVE-14 YEARS): NZ\$6.60 (US\$5.10, €4, £3.30)

FAMILY PASS FOR TWO ADULTS

AND UP TO FOUR CHILDREN:

NZ\$36 (US\$28, €22, £18)

PRIVATE POOLS (MINIMUM OF TWO)

DELUXE (WITH VIEW): NZ\$26

(US\$20, €16, £13) per 30 minutes

STANDARD: NZ\$18 (US\$14,

€11, £9) per 30 minutes

ADULT-ONLY POOLS

PER PERSON: NZ\$21.50 (US\$16.18, €13, £10.80)

LAKE SPA ROCK POOLS

ADULT: NZ\$43 (US\$34, €26, £22)

CHILD (FIVE-14 YEARS): NZ\$15.50

(US\$12.10, €9.40, £7.80)

EXTRAS

TOWEL OR BATHING SUIT

HIRE: NZ\$5 (US\$4, €3, £2)

LOCKER: NZ\$5 (US\$4, €3, £2)

DEALS

■ Local residents qualify for 30 per cent discount with purchase of NZ\$20 (US\$16, €12, £10)/year club membership

■ A Local Residents High Volume User monthly pass costs NZ\$43 (US\$34, €26, £22)

■ Groups of 15-plus receive a 15 per cent discount on entrance fee

LAKE SPA RETREAT SPA THERAPIES

30-MINUTE TREATMENTS COST:

NZ\$85 (US\$66, €52, £43)

60-MINUTE TREATMENTS COST:

NZ\$150 (US\$117, €91, £75)

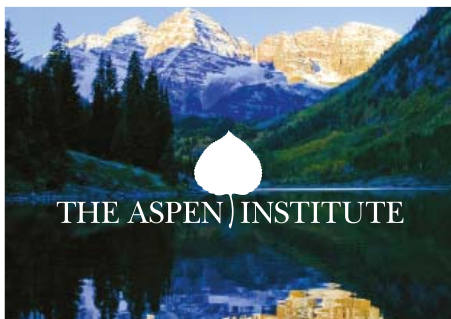
90-MINUTE TREATMENTS COST:

NZ\$200 (US\$156, €122, £101)

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Polynesian's main competitors are visitor attractions rather than spas, but a strong local resident programme helps to maintain a steady number of customers

► pists, but many have never worked outside of these environs. As I have a therapist and training background, I've been able to introduce a higher level of standard operating procedures for treatments and I recognise how to help individuals tailor their style to this new level of excellence."

MARKET MAKE UP

Of New Zealand's 2.4 million international visitors a year, half include Rotorua in their holiday plans. "We have a very young tourism product which appeals mostly to the active, independent traveller," says Gregg Anderson, general manager, Long Haul Markets, Tourism New Zealand. "Although figures have declined slightly in the last 18 months, the *Lord of the Rings* films helped keep our profile high and, with United Airlines launching non-stop flights between Houston and Auckland in 2012, the US is an important growth market."

In spite of a bumpy economy, the Polynesian Spa has fared well, because 50 per cent of its customers are independent travellers from New Zealand, with 20 per cent coming from Australia and China, followed by the US, UK and Europe. Consequently, most advertising dollars are spent in the domestic market, promoting the baths as an attraction in local guide books, travel maps and in all major visitor information centres. Tours make up the balance of the market mix, spe-

“ In spite of a bumpy economy, the Polynesian Spa has fared well, because 50 per cent of its customers are independent travellers from New Zealand ”



The freshwater pool is cooled to 30°C to make it more children-friendly

cifically from Korea and China where Lobb has just hired a sales representative in recognition that China is an ever more notable player in the tourism industry.

A considerable revamp of Polynesian Spa's online and mobile presence has been part of the marketing mix, including active participation in social media, use of quick response codes and links to spa therapy bookings and gift certificates. The website is availa-

ble in Mandarin, French, German, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

"The assumption is that because we're the only major mineral spa in town, we have no competitor – but the truth is quite the reverse," Lobb says. "We are thought of as an attraction, albeit a healthful one, but when the average visitor stays an average of only 1.9 nights [in Rotorua], there's a lot of competition for their time and money. That's why I'm thankful that 50 per cent of our business is from New Zealand – those travellers are easier to access and develop, and are more likely to come back." A strong local resident programme (see p78) also helps to level out the peaks and troughs that other visitor attractions often experience.

"I think the spa industry has a rosy future because of the way people live their lives, and it is why we continue to reinvest considerably," Lobb concludes. "The baths will always be our primary focus but as we develop the spa therapy side of the business, we are very well positioned to take advantage of a market in New Zealand that is going to grow very quickly in the years ahead." ●



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BOOMING BAKU

The capital of Azerbaijan, one of the world's largest oil producers, is proving hot property for luxury hotel and spa developers

The charge of international hotel brands into the Caucasus – the region situated between the Black and Caspian Sea – is heavily focused on Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan on the southern shore of the Absheron Peninsula. It's attracting the attention of Hyatt, Hilton, Fairmont, Marriott, Kempinski, Four Seasons and Starwood Hotels & Resorts – which are all drawn to this dynamic boomtown where ostentatious lifestyles and dramatic skyscrapers form the backdrop to an ancient walled-city that's listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Baku, which has a population of around 2 million, has a rich history as the capital of a country that has straddled the territories of competing Arab, Persian, Turkish and Russian empires over the last two millennia. It gained independence in 1991, following the fall of the Soviet Union and today global interest has been stimulated by its extensive oil resources – in 2007 and 2008, Azerbaijan was the world's largest oil producer. Modern living in the city has flourished, which gives

the ancient metropolis a cosmopolitan feel with a strong business tourism market.

TOURISM STRATEGY

Tourism is rapidly becoming an important part of the economy of Azerbaijan, although accurate statistics are illusive. Estimates by American Express suggest that in 2003-2004 the country was hosting more than 1 million tourist arrivals, mostly from near neighbour countries, such as Armenia, Russia, Iran and Turkey. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is currently working with the country's Ministry of Culture and Tourism to rectify the lack of statistics.

The ministry, established in 1953, is the government agency that oversees tourism development. Initially responsible for cultural preservation, its focus shifted over time to developing resorts until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Nagorno-Karabakh civil war in the 1990s, which crippled the fledgling tourism industry.

The sector began to pick up pace once more in the early 2000s following the 2002 *Mission*

Report on Tourism Marketing by the UNWTO, which successfully nurtured and whetted the government's appetite to develop international leisure and business tourism. On the back of this in 2004, Azerbaijan's Citizens Development Corps suggested a *Rapid Assessment Strategy* for tourism development.

Over the past eight years, the ministry has increasingly focused on creating an environment where international investment in tourism can flourish – including the building of core infrastructure and enhancement of hospitality skills and human capacity.

Today, its priorities are based on shaping Azerbaijan as an elite destination for spa and wellness tourism with a complementary strand focusing on religious tourism. The strategy has highlighted the Absheron Peninsula and, particularly the economically and vibrant city of Baku as the hub of development.

INVESTMENT SURGE

By mid-2000, there were around 100 hotels in Azerbaijan: mostly concentrated in Baku and the two other major cities of Ganja and Sheki.

ENUR SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



The Flame Towers (above) is a standout project in Baku; a 299-bedroom Fairmont hotel with an ESPA spa (right) will form a part of the development when the towers open in early 2012





The first Kempinski-managed property in Azerbaijan opened in Baku this December and another is planned for 2015

At the top-end, hotel standards were comparable to those in western destinations. These included long-established, locally-owned boutique hotels such as Hotel Meridian and the Diplomat. While early international chain arrivals included Hyatt followed by Radisson in the 1990s.

In the past five years, however, there's been an investment surge and 2011 was no exception. The 159-bedroom Park Hyatt invested US\$330,000 (€254,000, £211,450) on refurbishing its spa that forms part of the hotel's three-storey Club Oasis complex. The Armaiti Spa, still in its pre-opening phase, covers 310sq m (3,337sq ft) and features three treatment rooms. Hotel manager Kostas Batalas, is clearly inspired by the spa's development, recognising its "power to capture new markets and retain existing business".

December saw the opening of the 3,500sq m (37,674sq ft) European-style spa at Kempinski Hotel Badamar Baku. The new Badamar complex is one of the largest developments in the Caucasus region and boasts an entertainment and retail centre and seasonal aqua park, as well as the 280-bedroom Kempinski hotel. The spa features 20 treatment rooms – six of which are doubles – and a beauty centre. The product house is Elemental Herbology. A lap pool, steamroom, sauna, hammam and fitness studio complete the offering.

Recognising the city's potential, Kempinski has also signed a management agreement for a second site in Baku – the 221-bedroom Crescent Hotel: a glass, arch-shaped building that resembles a crescent moon. The hotel,



Hilton also arrived in Baku in 2011 featuring its first eforea spa in the region

designed by Korean firm Heerim Architects, will form part of the Caspian Plus development, which includes a further four buildings – three residential and one for office use.

Due for completion in 2015, The Caspian Plus will sit on the opposite peninsula to the equally impressive Full Moon Bay development (also by Heerim), which will feature the 35-storey Hotel Full Moon – built in a disc shape to look like the moon – as well as two separate residential apartment blocks.

Other new arrivals in 2011 included the 309-bedroom Hilton Baku with a 1,500sq m (16,146sq ft) eforea spa (see SB11/3 p28); and the 207-bedroom Sheraton Baku Airport hotel with a Gazelli Spa & Wellness facility.

This year is set to be equally as busy. The 175-bedroom Four Seasons Hotel Baku,

due to open in early 2012, is the setting for the 950sq m (10,226sq ft) Jaleh Spa which occupies a roof-top location and provides panoramic views of the city and sea.

Spa manager, Shawna Morneau, stresses the importance of the local market: "sixty-five per cent of our business will come from local and VIP guests taking advantage of our exclusive membership programme together with our unique VIP suite and private balcony."

Designed by UK-based Reardon Smith architects and Spa Developments Consultancy, the spa has nine treatments rooms, plus the VIP suite. There are also male and female areas, with a hammam, a steamroom and whirlpools by Barr + Wray, a fitness centre and a pool that's set in a two-storey atrium. Products will be supplied by Sodashi and Kerstin Florian. ►

► In January, Marriott is to make its debut with the launch of a 243-bed-room JW Marriott Absheron, also designed by Reardon Smith, in the heart of the city. The property will incorporate a health club and spa over three floors. The Absheron Spa will cover 1,700 sq m (18,300 sq ft) and include four large single treatment rooms as well as couples' suite. Products will be supplied by Anne Semonin and Charme d'Orion. There will also be a salon for hair-dressing, make-up and manicure/pedicure services; a thermal suite comprising a steamroom, a Rasul and a loofah room; a swimming pool and sun deck; and a gym with Precor equipment.

Also on the cards in early 2012, is the opening of the 299-bedroom Fairmont at the Flame Towers with an ESPA spa.

CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Despite the influx of international operators, Azerbaijan and Baku still face significant obstacles in developing their tourism economy – including environmental concerns as a result of the oil and petrochemical industries. But there have also been some big improvements – most notably investment in Baku International Airport and Azerbaijan Airlines to provide better links to western Europe and Asia by major airline carriers.

More than 35,000 people now work in tourism and degree programmes in tourism management have been established at Baku State University, Azerbaijan State Economic University and various vocational colleges and institutes. In September 2007, the Azerbaijan Institute of Tourism (AzTa) introduced a health, spa and wellness tourism specialism. In addition, it has agreed to cooperate with the American Hotel and Lodging Institute to develop the country's skill base.

AzTa is also taking other measures to increase sector service quality, which include the tightening of tourism industry standards, VAT allowances and allocating resources to tourism. While Abulfaz Garayev, the country's minister of culture and tourism, is urging existing operators to "send their employees on these [new tourism] courses" in order to meet international standards.

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Tourism marketing is a developing art in Azerbaijan and Baku, especially in terms of the positioning and branding of the country. It's expected, however, that international

hotel and spa operators will significantly contribute to improving brand awareness.

As a traditional cross roads between Europe and Asia and a meeting place of cultures, the country's heritage has worldwide appeal; and because it straddles 11 of the earth's climatic zones the country has extraordinary biodiversity and natural resources. Rural and eco-tourism have become interesting themes for recent development, with some projects being supported by international donor aid programmes.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism's priorities are based on shaping Azerbaijan as an elite destination for spa and wellness tourism

The arrival of globally-recognised hotel brands and an international-standard spa and wellness product in Baku is certainly helping the country to reposition itself as a high-class destination. It is an approach that has captured consumer and media interest, yet there remains more to be done to consolidate and create a rounded tourism offer.

Nonetheless, Euromonitor International's *Azerbaijan Report 2011*, unveiled in November, gives a positive outlook on the country's tourism sector that's driven by the revenues from the oil industry and sits comfortably in one of the world's fastest growing economies. According to the report, the glut of international luxury resorts around Baku appears to be modelled on Dubai with "extravagant,

The 950sq m Jaleh Spa, part of Four Seasons Baku, will open imminently and wealthy locals will be a key target market

futuristic, luxury hotel resorts including the Hotel Full Moon, Crescent Moon [Kempinski] and Flame Towers [Fairmont]".

The most extravagant project, says Euromonitor, is the concept planned for Nargin Island, a former communist-era prison. It's been reported online that the 15q km island, located 14km off Baku's coast, is to host a luxury, zero-carbon resort with 300 villas and a number of hotels. It will also include seven glass and metal structures modelled on Azerbaijan's northern mountain range. Finance for the development, known as Zira Zero Island, is said to come from the AvroCityHolding Group with the Denmark architectural firm Bjarke Ingels Group leading the design.

High levels of business travel and the seductive appeal of an ancient yet thoroughly modernised city, is an intoxicating cocktail in which to grow an innovative spa product. Although the high-yielding business and leisure travel constitutes a relatively small proportion of the 1 million or so international arrivals, there are markets for an interesting, quality, spa and wellness experience.

A number of Azerbaijani websites have reported that the country has extraordinary ambitions to grow international arrivals to a staggering 20 million in 30 years. This is unlikely to be achieved, however, at a time when the UNWTO is predicting global international tourism arrivals will grow from 1 billion in 2011 to 1.8 billion by 2030, who is to argue against Azerbaijan securing a proportion of this uplift? ●





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CLARINS

PILATES

PURE VS APPLIED

What's the future of pilates? Should it only ever involve the exercises designed by Joseph Pilates, or can his philosophy be applied while keeping the product moving with the times? We ask health and fitness industry experts worldwide

STEFANIA DELLA PIA
MERRITHEW HEALTH & FITNESS

The contemporary STOTT PILATES method has evolved from the original teachings of Joseph Pilates to include modern principles of exercise science. As we learn more about the human body, and discover new applications for pilates, it's important that we keep the original philosophy of the method moving forward and apply current research about the biomechanics of the body.



Once known as the secret weapon of dancers, over the years pilates has become popular as a form of functional fitness, and is now used by the general public for cross-training, rehabilitation, sports conditioning and general fitness purposes.

Our method caters to different body types and abilities by offering various preparatory exercises and modifications, as well as incorporating props. It's vital that we continue to enhance, develop and improve on the knowledge we've acquired to enable people of all ages and fitness levels to reap the benefits. However, we never lose sight of the foundations and the principles on which our method is based.

Della Pia is programme director, education & master instructor trainer at Merrithew – a Toronto-based company which operates under the STOTT PILATES name and develops and promotes pilates fitness programmes worldwide. Details: www.stottpilates.com





Equipment such as CoreAlign can, says Endelman, make for unique group programming options

"Matwork classes have brought the benefits of pilates to many more people", says Tanner

ALYSON TANNER PILATES FOUNDATION

As with most exercise systems, pilates has changed as scientific knowledge about our bodies has grown. In fact, even Joe Pilates' own practice changed over time.

The Pilates Foundation has developed an evolutionary approach to Joe's work. We teach the classic repertoire that Joe would recognise, but realise that most of our clients need to work through some evolved, adjusted exercises before they get there. The principles of his philosophy are central to understanding how the exercises should be taught, but we draw on modern thinking to adjust the exercises to make them accessible to almost every student.

As scientific knowledge increases, there will be new trends and directions in pilates. The beauty of pilates is that the fundamentals can be adapted and refined, learning



from other movement regimes to develop a range of exercise variations and approaches suitable for each individual body.

Commercial pressures are also important. Studio classes of one or two people using expensive equipment are fantastic, but the benefits are only available to a privileged few; matwork classes have brought the benefits of pilates to many more people. In the future, fitness centres and gyms are likely to invest in pilates equipment for group classes, providing the benefits of resistance work while still being commercially viable. Manufacturers are stepping up to the challenge by designing equipment that can be stacked and stored away.

Tanner is the chair of The Pilates Foundation which has been the governing body for pilates in the UK for 15 years. Details: www.pilatesfoundation.com

KEN ENDELMAN BALANCED BODY



What you're calling 'pure versus applied' pilates, we call 'classical versus contemporary', and many people feel very strongly about their particular approach. One side feels the original measurements and designs that Joseph Pilates made on his first-generation equipment were done for a reason and should be kept that way. The other thinks combining a current understanding of human biomechanics with the pilates principle is best.

The truth is there's merit on both sides. The important thing is how the exercise makes you feel: the end result should be experiencing the great 'mindful movement' benefits of a strong core and the increased flexibility that pilates provides. That's what Joseph wanted, so if one approach really resonates over the other for you, that's fine. It's why we carry lines of equipment for both.

In the future, we really see a 'mindful movement' fitness revolution approaching, with pilates as a central player. With the continued ageing of the affluent baby boomer demographic, and uncertainty in healthcare reform, people are taking their health into their own hands. But many can't take the pounding of weight-bearing exercise. So we're seeing fitness facilities come up with all kinds of incredible programming ideas like combining pilates with cardio equipment or props like kettlebells. In addition, we've been developing equipment – like our CoreAlign – that, while not pilates per se, combines strength training with a mind-body approach, which makes for a unique group programming option.

Pilates has also taken off in the world of physiotherapy, but there's a big difference between pilates for fitness and pilates for rehabilitation. If fitness facilities are offering any pilates-based rehabilitation services, they should be done by someone appropriately trained to handle those specific populations.

Endelman is the CEO and founder of Balanced Body, which is based in California and is one of the world's largest manufacturers of pilates equipment. Details: www.pilates.com

New equipment can keep pilates fresh, as well as enabling instructors to push the boundaries and help more people

GLENN WITHERS

AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY AND PILATES INSTITUTE (APPI) HEALTHGROUP

Questions have been asked by the public and the media about the validity and evidence behind pilates and I believe the profession has to become more accountable. Pilates effectively has two arms now – rehab and fitness – and we must provide more evidence of the benefits in both arenas. Training must also be delivered at an exceptional standard to guarantee professionalism.

The evolution of pilates to embrace rehab is in line with Joseph Pilates' original message. Analysing his 1947 book, *Return to Life Through Contrology*, the message is about making permanent life changes. That's been lost along the way, in favour of trying to find the perfect pilates body and perfecting a person's movement on a mat. The real challenge should be linking pilates exercises to functional change – a means of chronic pain medicine. That's what our method is all about, and rather than digressing from Joe's vision, it's in fact very closely aligned – just with a lot more evidence.

How does this translate to fitness centres in spas? Trainers need to ensure that they're adequately trained, and also that they focus on what guests/clients take away from the sessions, not just what they do in the sessions. Population- or age-specific classes designed to change lifestyle are also an option.

Of course, pilates is also a technique that defines and shapes the body, and this does not necessarily need to change. It just needs to be applied by suitably trained professionals.

Withers is physiotherapist and founding director for APPI. APPI is a provider of private healthcare and education in the UK. It developed its rehabilitation-based pilates programme over 10 years ago. Details: www.appihealthgroup.com



KEVIN BOWEN PEAK PILATES

Contrology – or, as we now refer to it, the pilates method – has been the subject of much discussion for years. There are those who claim that, if it's not taught exactly as Joe taught it, then it's not pilates; others feel that, if Joe were still alive, he would have evolved his teaching and technique.

Pilates has three guiding principles: whole body health, whole body commitment and breath. These principles – along with movement principles such as balanced muscle development, concentration, control, centering and precision – all work together to produce the goals and benefits of the pilates method: benefits such as improved co-ordination, strength, mobility, posture and quality of life. The pilates method offers health for life. In my opinion, it therefore



laid the foundation for the functional fitness craze of today.

Pilates participation has grown exponentially and internationally it's still experiencing strong growth. However, that growth seems to be

levelling off in the US. New fitness crazes that have rallied behind the success of pilates, using pilates terminology and references, may be diluting the message and importance. Fitness facilities would be best served by maintaining a strong commitment to pilates, with well-trained instructors who understand the depth and breadth of the method and who can champion long-term participation.

Bowen is director of education at Peak Pilates, USA, which provides turnkey solutions for the fitness, spa and rehabilitation sectors. It is committed to preserving the original Joseph Pilates method. Details: www.peakpilates.com

"The pilates profession has to become more accountable, whether in the area of rehab or fitness," says Withers

NIKKI CHRYSOSTOMOU TRANQUILITY PILATES STUDIO

The future of pilates is bright. Through innovation and experience, the pilates method and associated studio equipment has evolved to a higher level, incorporating scientific research and refined engineering techniques while adhering closely to Joseph Pilates' original principles.

Pilates is always evolving. Rings, rollers, bands and small balls have been around for years, and now new tools such as the Arc [a semi-circle shaped barrel with handles], Orbit [a padded board on wheels] and CoreAlign mean instructors can push the boundaries of where pilates can go and who it can benefit.



While the pilates community has become somewhat fractured over the years, it can unite and strengthen going forward around the twin themes of instructor excellence and client focus. By setting the highest standards in instructor training, equipment and continuing professional development, we will make our instructors the best they can be, which will enable them to carry pilates forward in order to enthuse and help more people.

Chrysostomou is the founder of Tranquility, a London-based pilates studio which also acts as a teacher training centre. Details: www.tranquility.co.uk



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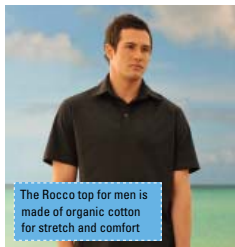
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We highlight
new spa uniform
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other key lines

UNIFORMS & LINEN



The Rocco top for men is made of organic cotton for stretch and comfort

JUST ARRIVED

ROCCO FOR MEN & AQUARI WOMEN'S WRAP – FASHIONIZER SPA UNIFORMS

The uniform: Fashionizer Spa Uniforms LLC unveiled two new styles – the Rocco top for men and the Aquari wrap for women – in its cotton performance fabric (CPF) line at the ISPA exhibition in late 2011.

What makes them stand out? The Rocco for men is a smart, short-sleeved, polo-style shirt in either black or white, while the Aquari wrap for women is a cross-over tunic with an adjustable, elasticised tie belt. Fashionizer's CPF comprises organic cotton and other fibres for stretch and comfort and a soil release treatment to help clean oil stains.

Company background: Fashionizer Spa Uniforms is the US affiliate of Fashionizer Couture Uniforms, a supplier of uniform solutions for 18 years within the hospitality, corporate, cosmetic, spa and retail sectors. It supplies Hyatt, Renaissance, Trump and Aspria spas, among others.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS: FASHIONIZER SPA

NEW FOR 2012

LINEN COLLECTION – SALONWEAR DIRECT

The uniform: The 2012 Linen Collection from Salonwear Direct features three tunics and practical straight-leg, drawstring trousers designed as an elegant and stylish option for spa professionals across Europe.

What makes the collection stand out?

The new collection features a smart and professional image, with clothing that is lightweight but durable and made from 100 per cent natural fabric for breathability and coolness. To fit in with the 'natural' style, the collection comes in a new tan shade although other colours are also on offer.

What's next? In 2012, Salonwear Direct will be redesigning its existing salon tunics with new trims and two new colours – turquoise and silver grey – to complement its current palette of hot pink, purple, charcoal, pin stripe, navy, black and white. The company will also donate £2 (US\$3.11, €2.40) to a charity of choice from every sale of its upcoming Ribbon tunics range.



The new linen collection features three new elegant and stylish tunics

Company background: Salonwear Direct has been supplying uniforms for more than 10 years and has been voted The Best Uniform Supplier for two years running at the UK's Guild Awards of Excellence. It is known for its "exceptional standard of quality and service".

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: SALONWEAR



The new towel range is available in nine colours and stays super soft

SHOWCASE

VIBRANCY TOWELS – BC SOFTWEAR

The linen: The Vibrancy range is a line of plain bath and hand towels that come in nine different colours – purple, pink, deep blue, chocolate brown, silver grey, black, beige, burgundy and cream. It complements BC Softwear's Serenity waffle towel collection to give spa operators a choice of textures.

What makes the line stand out? The towels have been designed with durability in mind and keep their colour – even

dark dyes are said to withstand intensive washing by busy spa operators.

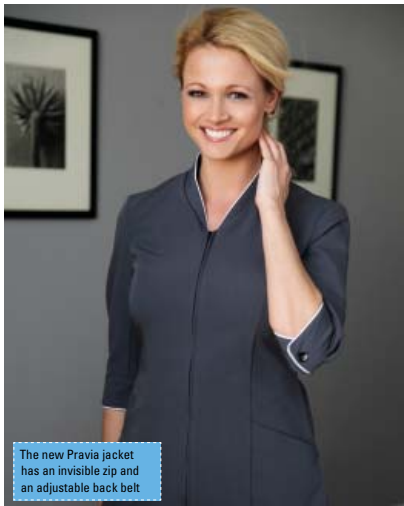
Other key features: The super soft towels have been created to stay softer for longer.

What's next? In 2012, operators can expect different sizes and colours in the Vibrancy and Serenity ranges. The company also plans to increase its bathrobe options.

Company background: BC Softwear supplies more than 200 spas including high-end UK destinations like Ragdale Hall, Coworth Park and Dolphin Square Spa.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS: BC SOFTWEAR

PRODUCT FOCUS: UNIFORMS & LINEN



The new Pravia jacket has an invisible zip and an adjustable back belt

JUST ARRIVED

PRAVIA COLLECTION - YEAH BABY

The uniform: A jacket with an invisible zip, the Pravia will create a professional image for front desk staff and therapists alike. It was first unveiled at the ISPA exhibition in late 2011.

What makes it stand out? It has a modern look and is made out of Yeah Baby's Solancia stretch fabric to allow freedom of movement and comfort.

Other key features: Pravia has an adjustable back belt which can

be tightened or loosened to flatter different body types. Colour options include black, white, tan, navy and chocolate; while piping around the collars and sleeves can be customised according to a spa's unique brand. Logo embroidery options are also available.

What's next? In early 2012, Yeah Baby will reveal its Sofia Collection, a wrap top for aestheticians to complement the Pravia. This will be followed by Roxy semi-fitted trousers to complete the look.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS: YEAH BABY



The popular sleeveless Yin top has a Mao-style collar and quality fabric

SHOWCASE

BONBON AND YIN - MONIQUE MATHIEU PARIS

The uniform: Just under a year old, the Bonbon and Yin tops are some of the most popular in the Monique Mathieu Paris collection. The Bonbon has a high waistline just below the chest and is considered the most fashionable and sophisticated in the range, while the Yin has a Mao-style collar, no sleeves and elastic fabric on both sides for added comfort.

What makes them stand out? The high-quality fabric is sourced from Europe and the design has the distinct touch of founder Monique Mathieu who was an apprentice dress designer for French fashion houses such as Givenchy. **Other key features:** The uniforms come in champagne colour as well as black and white. The fabrics include pique and gabardine, made up of 67 per cent polyester and 33 per cent cotton, so are easy to wash and clean.

What's next? Mathieu's Tibet uniforms will hit the big screen in 2012 - the range was selected for a spa scene in the Adam Sandler movie *I Hate You Dad* which launches in June.

Company background: Monique Mathieu uniforms are available worldwide and top customers include Thalga in France and Janssen Cosmetics in Germany.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS: MONIQUE MATHIEU

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JUST ARRIVED

2012 COLLECTIONS – NOEL ASMAR

The uniform: Driven by fashion trends, Noel Asmar has unveiled three collections for 2012, including pencil bottoms and two flattering tunics.

What makes them stand out? The collections have a flattering set-in, pin-tuck waist band and detailed stitching. Metal buttons and zippers have also been added for a new look.

Other key features: The uniforms are made with stain and wrinkle-resistant fabric that doesn't fade nor bobble up. The quality fabric also promises a long-lasting uniform. Various body shapes and sizes within staff make it challenging for spa directors to select one style to suit all. With this in mind, Asmar has added side hip vents for ease of movement, stretch in every garment and stocks xs to 5xl in most styles, with custom-styling and sizing available on demand. For brand continuity, a range of matching suiting options are available to concierge and front desk staff.

What's next? Asmar also offers hotel and medi-spa uniforms and plans to expand this part of the business in 2012. It is currently looking for distributors in Europe.

Company background: Noel Asmar prides itself on offering practical yet fashionable spa uniforms and founder Noel Asmar says: "Customers often comment on how great therapists look and spa directors get super feedback from their staff". It supplies operators such as Canyon Ranch, Fairmont Willowstream Spas, Four Seasons, Hilton, Hyatt and Ritz-Carlton, as well as product companies such as Aveda, ESPA and Decléor. In November, the company was awarded Best Spa Uniform Manufacturer for the third year in a row by *American Spa* magazine.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS:

NOEL ASMAR



The new tunics have a built-in waist band that is flattering for all sizes

RKF Luxury Linen supplies the new Spa My Blend by Clarins in Paris



SHOWCASE

WELLSOFT ROBES AND LINEN – RKF LUXURY LINEN

The linen: The WellSoft range includes bathrobes, plaids and blankets for relaxation areas and retail.

What makes it stand out? The WellSoft fabric, which was launched in 2011, is made out of 100 per cent fine polyester which has been blasted to give a soft touch as well as a warm, cocooning feel.

Other key features: As the fabric is light, it is easier and not so expensive to clean compared with heavier fabrics.

What's next? In 2012 it will debut its micro-cotton fabric range of table linen, bath towels, bath robes, slippers and mats. The fabric is made from a fine 100 per cent cotton and while thicker and fluffier than regular cotton it will also be light (and more economical to wash).

Company background: With its international presence, RKF Luxury Linen works with up-market hotels, spas, restaurants and golf courses as well as in the yachting arena. In the spa world, it has supplied companies such as the new Spa My Blend by Clarins in Paris (retail bathrobe pictured), Thalgo, Carita and SkinCeuticals. One of its best-selling items is an extra-large massage bed towel that has velour on one side and terry-towelling on the other, which RKF supplies in tailor-made colours and with bespoke embroidery.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS: RKF LUXURY

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Fun in Antonio Lupi's new bath

OiO, a fun new line of baths and washbasins by Italian firm Antonio Lupi Design, has been created to jazz up spa washrooms and suites. Made out of recyclable polyethylene, which offers both lightness and strength, the items in the range are available in translucent or coloured versions. All are free-standing and can be installed either indoors or out. They can also be fitted with an interior lighting system.

spa-kit.net keywords **antonio lupi design**



Dermalogica working Overnight

Dermalogica has introduced Overnight Repair Serum, created to protect, maintain and stimulate collagen in the skin. With argan oil to shield the lipid barrier and brown seaweed to fight free radicals, the formulation also includes the aromas of botanicals such as jasmine, rose, ylang-ylang, geranium, rosemary, cinnamon and neroli. The serum comes in a 0.5oz/15ml white glass bottle with a silver cap.

spa-kit.net keyword **dermalogica**



Sommerhuber ceremonial

New from Sommerhuber is the Healing Clay Steam Bath, described as a "ceremony for body and soul". The heat storage ceramic gives off long-wave infrared heat and this together with healing mud or foam forms a combination designed to nurture the skin, purify the body and stimulate the metabolism. The Steam Bath is available in 19 different glazes and can be supplied in a range of sizes.

spa-kit.net keyword **sommerhuber**



Remodelled by Silhouette-Tone

Silhouette-Tone's new Skin Remodeling System is a non-surgical procedure that uses high voltage pulsatile currents to stimulate new collagen growth in the deeper skin layers. Benefits include the stimulation of cell renewal; the activation of neo-collagen production; the relaxation of lines and wrinkles; a tightening of the skin; and the restoration of muscle tone, all delivered together through a single treatment head.

spa-kit.net keywords **silhouette-tone**



Porcelanosa's new low profile

Porcelanosa has introduced a sleek, contemporary-looking range of bathroom furniture. For large and small spaces, the collection is available in a choice of colours and finishes, plus a range of oak veneers. Based around a low-profile washbasin, low drawers can be combined with eye-level horizontal units and slim vertical cupboard doors, the grouping is completed with free-standing shelves.

spa-kit.net keyword **porcelanosa**



VisageH₂O unveiled by Carlton

The Carlton Group has launched VisageH₂O, a new development in microdermabrasion. The machine uses Aquabrad[®], a combination of high pressure air and water 'jetted' onto the skin. Like microdermabrasion, it aims to provide an effective anti-ageing and rejuvenating treatment, taking the natural process of skin renewal - which slows down with age - and hastening it.

spa-kit.net keywords **carlton group**



Indulge in Living Earth's Mystia

Living Earth Craft's Mystia™ mani/pedi chair is designed to provide a comfortable, relaxing and stylish station for hand and feet services. A TuckAway™ foot rest and TuckAway™ foot bath with a copper bowl provide convenience and add to the overall look. The chair features the company's Strata™ 4-inch memory foam cushioning system and also comes in a range of different upholstery options.

spa-kit.net keywords **living earth crafts**



Hydramemory reformulated

Italian skincare company Comfort Zone has reformulated its ultra-hydration product range, Hydramemory. As well as five new products – Hydramemory extra cream 24h, cream gel, fluid, serum and hydramask – the range features a key new ingredient in baobab extract, plus fresh packaging created to reflect the deeply nourishing and hydrating protection given by the Hydramemory range.

spa-kit.net keywords **comfort zone**



Electrical hot rock revealed

The Spa Rock is a new alternative to traditional hot stones. It is heated using electricity on one side, while the side handled by the therapist is cool. As one charge lasts up to seven hours, the rock keeps its heat. This means the therapist doesn't need to pause during the massage to obtain new hot stones and that their hands don't have to leave a client's body. Spa Rock is distributed by Universal Companies

spa-kit.net keywords **universal companies**



Klaifs reveals steam bath

For the first time, a modular steam bath with completely glazed walls is being presented by Klaifs. Created by Henssler & Schultheiss – an award-winning German design company – the D12 steam bath has a light and stable aluminium frame and thermally insulated glass elements. Natural stone seats can be added to enhance the atmosphere, plus a starlit ceiling or indirect lighting with variable colours.

spa-kit.net keyword **klaifs**



Rocking with Clap Tzu

Clap Tzu's WaveMotion Bodywork Table can rotate, rock and tilt, producing fluid movements to enhance bodywork treatments. The top – which locks into place for traditional massages – rotates 360°, in addition to inclining and tilting up to 7° in any direction. With each massage, the height-adjustable table gently rocks the client, offering the sensation of floating. The table is distributed by SpaEquip.

spa-kit.net keyword **spaequip**



Escaping into a book

Spa and wellness travel company Wellbeing Escapes has compiled a coffee table book (of the same name) designed as an 'at a glance' guide to holistic wellness practices. It contains insights into the latest spa and wellbeing trends; advice from some of the world's top holistic health practitioners; inside information on the world's finest wellness destinations; as well as a guide to wellbeing philosophies.

spa-kit.net keywords **wellbeing escapes**

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MAKING HEADWAY

A Swedish study shows that regular exercise is just as effective as drugs or relaxation therapy in treating migraines

This non-pharmacological approach [physical activity] may be an option for the prophylactic [preventative] treatment of migraine in patients who do not benefit from or do not want daily medication," wrote Dr Emma Varkey, lead author of a Swedish study published in the journal *Cephalalgia* in October.*

The aim of the research was to evaluate the effect of exercise in warding off migraine – a chronic neurological disorder characterised by moderate to severe headaches and nausea, which affects 10 per cent of people around the world.

Doctors use a variety of methods to prevent migraines, including topiramate – an anti-epilepsy drug – and relaxation exercises. While exercise is also prescribed, there has not previously been sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it works.

THREE-MONTH STUDY

Conducted by scientists at the University of Gothenburg, the randomised, controlled trial comprised 91 migraine patients aged 18-65 attending a headache clinic. All were women – the disorder is known to be more

prominent in females – suffering from headaches two to eight times a month.

The women were split into three groups. One-third were prescribed a daily dose of topiramate – slowly increased to the individual's highest tolerable level (with a maximum of 200mg a day). Another third carried out common forms of relaxation, breathing and stress-management techniques according to a recorded programme. The final group exercised on a static bike for 40 minutes, for three times a week, under the supervision of a physiotherapist.

Throughout the three-month study, the patients' migraine status, quality of life, aerobic capacity and level of physical activity were evaluated before, during and after their respective treatment.

SURPRISING RESULTS

The results show that migraine attacks decreased by approximately 75 per cent across all three groups and that there was no significant difference between them.

Commenting to Reuters Health, Dr Varkey said: "Topiramate is a drug of first choice that's shown great effects in studies. It was a bit surprising and very interesting that the change in the number of migraine attacks

was similar in all three groups. The only parameter where topiramate was better than exercise and relaxation was the reduction of pain intensity.

"On the other hand, the non-pharmacological options were free from adverse events and the exercise group increased oxygen uptake, which is very positive."

While women in the exercise and relaxation groups had no issues, eight women taking topiramate had side-effects – tingling, fatigue, depression, vertigo and constipation – and consequently three left the study.

Varkey told Reuters Health: "From a wider health-based perspective, it should be stressed that patients with migraine are less physically active than the general population, and that exercise has positive effects in terms of general wellbeing and the prevention of disease."

"Additional and larger studies are, of course, needed to verify our results and to gain evidence for exercise as migraine treatment, but our results are hopeful." ●

*Varkey, E et al. Exercise as migraine prophylaxis: A randomised study using relaxation and topiramate as controls. *Cephalalgia*. Vol 31, no 14, 1428-1438, Oct 2011.



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