

spa business



INTERVIEW

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Leading Starwood's spa roll outs

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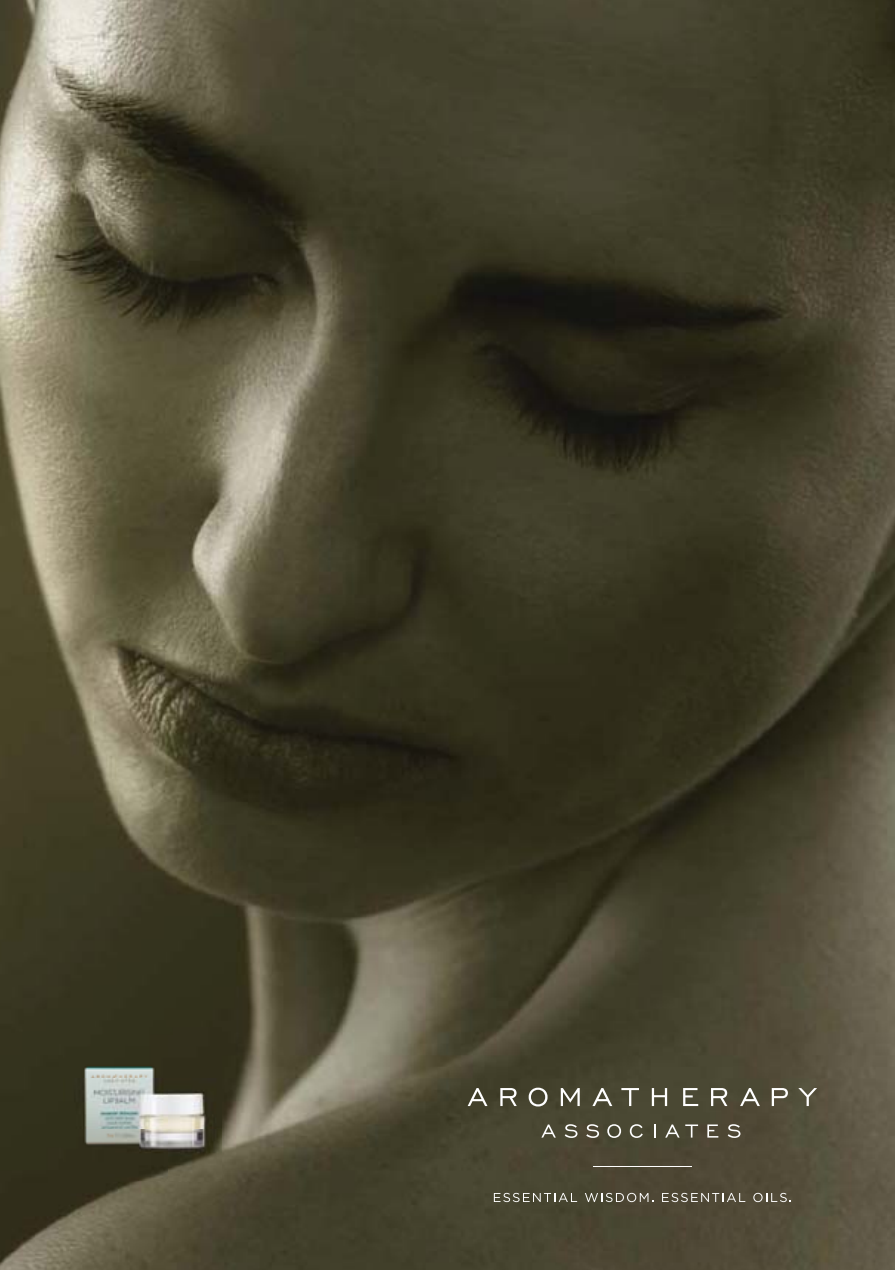
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ON THE COVER

Gaia Retreat & Spa was created by Olivia Newton-John and Gregg Cave (see p46)

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Exploring new priorities

If credible research could prove that spa treatments deliver measurable health benefits, 71 per cent of consumers say they would be 'much more' or 'somewhat more' likely to visit a spa.

This is one of the key findings of a new study by SRI International, *Spas and the Global Wellness Market: Synergies and Opportunities*, which was undertaken for the Global Spa Summit 2010. The sample was 1,077 consumers, while 319 industry contacts were also polled.

Because the rewards of proof could be this significant, the report says the industry should prioritise action in this area. It also suggests rigorously designed clinical trials would 'get the medical community on board' and give spas increased access to insurance reimbursement and wellness programmes funded by employers and governments. Operators need to make existing data available, while reaching out to the medical and research communities to encourage more studies to be undertaken.

In this issue we look at the challenge of proving efficacy (page 20) and ask whether a concerted drive could enable the sector to take its rightful place alongside other health services.

In addition to exploring this topic, the SRI report ranges widely across all aspects of the wellness sector, considering operational and investment strategies and policies.

At the heart of wellness lies the principle of prevention rather than cure – the age-old philosophy that underpins all the world's natural healing disciplines, but which is only now being acknowledged by the allopathic medical community.

Cash-strapped governments are realising they can't afford the drugs and medical intervention needed to treat the rising tide of obesity, diabetes and heart disease afflicting the world's aging populations and are looking for lower-cost alternatives.



At the heart of wellness lies the principle of prevention rather than cure – the age-old philosophy that underpins the world's natural healing and healthy living disciplines, but which is only now being acknowledged by the allopathic medical community

Preventative interventions, coupled with initiatives which keep people healthy from childhood, are now the absolute priority. In the health and fitness industry, the lobby on this has already borne fruit, with a number of wellness-related national programmes receiving government funding. The spa industry has yet to really join this debate, but there are great synergies if we choose to explore them more fully.

The seeds of change can already be seen: the SRI study found 82 per cent in the industry have taken small steps to 'respond to the wellness movement' over the last five years, with 91 per cent reporting these adjustments yielded a growth in revenue.

However, to make a serious impact on personal wellness, spa visits need to be a regular part of people's lives, rather than a treat. If we intend to make a difference, we need to reexamine the business model and find ways of making regular use of spas a reality for more than just the very wealthy.

Liz Terry, Editor
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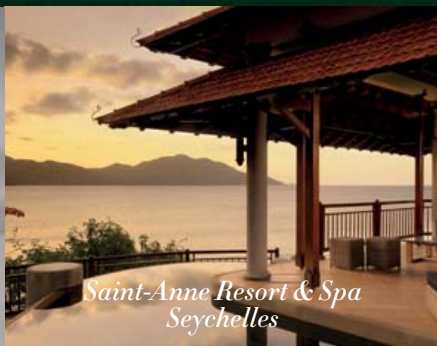


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PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/STEVIE COLE

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SARAH TODD • NEWS EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS



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Fluid produced by brown garden snails can reportedly be used to moisturise and protect damaged skin

Snail secretions in skincare

US skincare brand Bioskincream has found that a fluid ingredient produced by a species of the brown garden snail (known as *helix aspersa müller*) greatly aids skin softness. When stressed, the snail secretes a substance – *helix aspersa müller glycoconjugate* – to protect, moisturise, heal and renew its skin. The skincare company collects this substance in a method that doesn't harm the snail and stabilises it to use in products to protect and moisturise skin damaged by acne, injuries, photo-ageing or medical treatments.

explore further... • www.bioskincream.com

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

(American physician and writer, 1809 to 1894)

"MAN'S MIND STRETCHED TO A NEW IDEA NEVER REGAINS ITS ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS"

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76 per cent of customers repurchase Skin Authority products

It's no secret that spas struggle with retail, while follow-up calls after a visit are practically unheard of. However, with a reported 76 per cent of customers repurchasing its products, the US-based skincare brand Skin Authority seems to have made a breakthrough. Skin Authority, which sells its products through spas and plastic surgery clinics, has a call centre with 15 skincare coaches – trained and licensed aestheticians – who offer free advice to customers, even those who aren't already advocates of the brand. In addition, when customers visit a Skin Authority spa partner, they can opt-in to a home care programme where the coaches contact them to offer advice on products purchased and the results they should be seeing.

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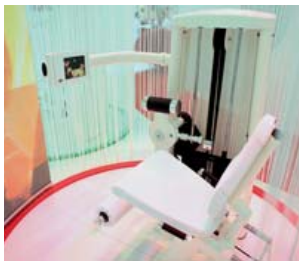
Spa in the treetops

Mustapha's Place hotel and bar in Zanzibar has launched a mini-spa with a difference. The Casuarina Spa is located high above the hotel among the casuarina pines and palm trees of the hotel's garden. It covers only 65sq ft (6sq m) and has one treatment room. However, there are now plans to add 215sq ft (20sq m) of space to make the area suitable for yoga and pilates.



The spa, reached by staircase, used to be an upstairs area of a hotel bedroom

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• www.mustaphasplace.com



BodySense[®], developed by scientist Jürgen Woldt, uses the TCM model to encourage muscles to move smoothly

Gym80's sensory fitness concept

A fitness concept which combines different sensory cues to encourage better workout results has been created by German gym equipment manufacturer gym80 International.

BodySense[®] is a series of pods with a piece of resistance equipment in each and a screen projecting sounds and visuals. The pods also combine stimulating haptic and olfactory elements.

The concept is based on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) where visuals, sounds and scents of the five elements have been allocated to different muscle groups to stimulate optimum performance. For example, red, or the element of fire, has been found to have an effect on the quads so this colour will be in the pods which feature equipment to help exercise the legs (see picture above).

Scientist Jürgen Woldt began working on the concept in 1981, after he observed people working out and his interest was sparked in the way muscles behave during movement.

explore further... • www.bodysense.de



Tabacón is leading Costa Rica's carbon neutral drive

At the forefront of Costa Rica's sustainability efforts, The Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort in Arenal, Costa Rica, has just become the first hotel in the country – and the second only worldwide – to meet the requirements of the Luxury Eco Certification Standard.

Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort was also certified as 100 per cent carbon neutral in May 2009 and is key to Costa Rica's continuing efforts to become the world's first carbon-neutral country by 2021.

In addition, the resort has introduced Tabacón Green, an environmental awareness programme for guests.

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BY 2021**

Mario Andretti (Indian-born, US racing driver)

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“IF EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL, YOU'RE GOING TOO SLOW”

Egypt's Taba Heights resort has unveiled what is reported to be the country's first ever salt cave.

The 100sq m (1,076sq ft) cave uses salt from the Dead Sea – the floor is covered in a thick layer of crystals and the ceiling has salt stalactites. As the air mixes with the salt it picks up traces of iodine, potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, bromine and selenium. Colour therapy lights have also been included.

**SALT
THERAPY
COMES TO
EGYPT**

A 45-minute session in the cave will cost US\$25 (€20, £16) and is intended to have a positive impact on mood and wellbeing. Salt therapy is also said

to promote health by aiding the treatment of dermatological diseases, nervous system disorders, metabolic disturbances, digestive tract problems, heart disease and illnesses of the respiratory tract.



The cave uses salt from the Dead Sea

explore further... • www.tabaheights.com

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

India's attempt to patent yoga moves is a step in the right direction

Colonel Minhas, principal,
Ananda Spa Institute, India

I support the recent announcement that an Indian government organisation is to patent yoga moves. News stories have reported that the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), a Delhi-based body, has filmed hundreds of asana yoga poses so that people cannot claim to have invented – and charge money for – fusion yoga styles.

I don't think it's a bad thing to bring about a government seal of approval and preservation of traditional yoga, from the country of its origin. Indeed, at the Ananda Spa Institute in Hyderabad we support the study and teaching of yoga according to Indian traditions (see SB08/3 p36).

You only have to look at ayurveda to see how diluted it has become from a global perspective and how it's lost its authenticity. Yoga could go the same way. It's an



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/ALEX FOX

India's government has filmed hundreds of asana poses in an attempt to patent them

ancient art that does not belong to any particular person, which means that it can be used by all, but no individual should be able to introduce a minor variation of it, package it attractively and then charge lots of money for classes or franchises.

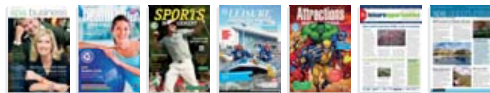
Although this move comes late – breaches have already taken place without being questioned – the effort by the TKDL is still a step in the right direction

to stop this commercial exploitation. And it may set the record straight for future generations as well as provide correct facts in industrial disputes.

However, I don't think the spa or wellness industries have anything to worry about: I am sure that yoga will remain open to all practitioners who want to make use of it and to benefit from this old wisdom of mankind. ●

"You only have to look at ayurveda to see how diluted it has become on a global perspective and how it's lost its authenticity and value"

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Consumer satisfaction counts, says Saari. All you need is a simple questionnaire to find out what you're doing right or wrong

Managers are out of touch with consumer needs

Susanna Saari, senior lecturer & ILIS project coordinator, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland

I was delighted to read Liz Terry's editorial in the last *Spa Business*, focusing on Coyle Hospitality's consumer preferences report (SB10/2 p5). She suggested that there should be further research to understand the differences between what customers say they want and what they use in reality. I fully agree. But the difference between manager and customer perceptions of the importance of spa services and facilities should also be considered.

I'm the co-ordinator of Innovations and Learning in Spa Management (ILIS), an EU-funded project that is developing virtual spa manager learning modules.

During 2009 we carried out lots of research to determine module content and one of the most interesting areas we looked at was the facilities and services that spa-goers value most. We asked 630 spa-goers, as well as 25 spa managers, to rate the importance of 30 guest facilities and services. Managers felt that the top 10 elements for guests were as follows:

- hospitable service
- pampering and relaxation treatments

- restful atmosphere
- location in an attractive environment
- comfortable accommodation
- professionally skilled staff
- diverse pool, sauna and steambaths
- diverse massage and physiotherapeutic treatments
- easy accessibility; and
- suitability for businessmen

However, the spa-goers told a different story. In Spain, the consumer ranked suitability for special needs, cost, special diets and diverse alternative treatments at the top. Key requirements in Poland were suitability for the physically disabled or sensory handicapped, suitability for seniors and sustainable spa operations. In Finland, spa-goers ranked pleasantness of public areas and suitability for families with children in the top 10.

Our most remarkable finding was that the managers did not always know what their customers value the most. It's hard to understand why any company would offer services or products without checking what their customer wants – all you need is a simple questionnaire. The customer can point out where you have and haven't met expectations and even suggest what you might do – so do use them as part of your service development team.

The ILIS virtual spa manager learning modules will be launched later this year.

Details: www.ilisproject.eu ●

Why should aquathermal experience manufacturers design spas for free?

Don Genders, managing director, Design for Leisure

Aquathermal experiences are a specialised and essential part of spas worldwide. The design and engineering that goes into creating these spaces is one of the most complex processes in a spa's development – so why then do operators expect manufacturers of such equipment to provide this service without charge?

I'm not talking about manufacturers of standard, off-the-shelf saunas and steamrooms – which do a wonderful job in presenting all the specifications and information that an operator could need – I'm talking about the larger projects with custom-made thermal cabins and pools. Cabins, be they saunas, steamrooms, rasuls or hammams can be made in almost any size or shape and all bespoke items have to be designed from scratch.

Some architects or interior designers do this themselves, but ultimately anyone trying to create unique wet spa areas will need the help of the specialist manufacturers. Yet we are constantly told that if we want to be considered for work, we should help the designer by providing the basic building service requirements for free, as part of our normal vendor support.

It's not as simple as providing basic information. We have to design the facility before we can work out these requirements – so effectively we're doing the designer's job but they're getting the fee!

It is my very firm belief that this knowledge and ability has a value to any project, a value that will be repaid many times over if our services are employed at the design stage and if we are treated as part of the professional design team.

Thankfully, major spa operators and designers, such as Four Seasons, Rosewood, Hilton, WATG and Blu Spas Inc, are beginning to wake up and employ the services of aquathermal manufacturers either directly, or as sub-contractors. They've realised that disaster can be avoided by good design, but that good design has a price tag. ●

news update



The spa rooms will be located in the rainforest at the base of a World Heritage-listed mountain

Rainforest Spa being built in St Lucia

The Jalousie Plantation Sugar Beach on the Caribbean island of St Lucia is to unveil its new Rainforest Spa in October 2010.

The US\$2m (€1.6m, £1.3m) spa will be situated at the base of the World Heritage-listed Petit Piton mountain, surrounded by a rainforest. It has been designed by Caribbean architects Lane Pettigrew Associates, in collaboration with the plantation's owner Roger Myers, and will have a strong Caribbean aesthetic with contemporary elements.

The central focus of the spa will be an open-air relaxation gazebo suspended over running water at the base of Petit

Piton along with six tree house treatment gazebos, which will be tucked into the rainforest. Other facilities available will include a wet treatment room, a beauty salon and a temascal (an earthen steamroom) warmed by volcanic spring water.

Product houses for the spa are still being researched, but the aim is to find a range which has a strong emphasis on organic and natural elements.

In June 2010, Julia Leone was appointed as the plantation's new director of health and wellness and brings more than 30 years of spa experience to the role.

Nicaraguan alliance for Grupo Mariana

The Grupo Mariana Family of Resorts and Wyndham Worldwide Hotels & Resorts have gone into partnership to create the US\$30m (€24.4m, £20.3m), 330-bedroom Wyndham Mariana Resort & Casino in Nicaragua. It will be one of the centrepieces of the Seaside Mariana Spa & Golf Resort development.

Located on the Pacific Coast, the 923-acre (374-hectare) Seaside Mariana offers more than a mile of beachfront and feature condominiums, villas and a 'town centre' with shops and restaurants. It will also include a destination spa, an equestrian centre and Nicaragua's first Jack Nicklaus signature golf course.

Raya Spa in Koh Samui due to open in August

The Sareeraya Villas and Suites, located on the northern end of Chaweng Beach in Koh Samui, Thailand, is set to open a spa this month.

Raya Spa will boast four spacious suites – two single and two Thai massage rooms for couples or individuals – each with a whirlpool and steamroom. There will also be a fitness area.

Treatments such as Thai, Chinese and Indian therapies epitomise the region's "modern Asian culture". The signature Royal Thai Massage is based on a more gentle technique that was designed to treat Thai royalty or the upper classes.



The two-storey spa has 12 treatment rooms

Roman-themed spa to debut in Puglia

Egnathia Spa, a luxury facility that has been inspired by the bathhouses of ancient Rome, is to open at a resort in Puglia, Italy.

Created by spa consultants Raison d'Etre (see SB06/3 p66), the spa will open by 2011 at the Borgo Egnazia Golf and Spa Resort, which sits between mountains and olive groves near the Adriatic Sea.

An initial development phase – a 63-bedroom hotel and 28 villas – was completed in May, while 72 townhouses will open by 2011.

A "celebration of Puglian architecture, history and tradition", the 19,375sq ft

(1,800sq m), two-storey spa will feature 12 treatment rooms. There will also be a wet area with a tepidarium, caldarium, frigidarium and two scrub rooms.

A mani-pedi area, barber shop, hair salon, meditation room, exercise studio, gym, café and bookshop will complete the offer.

The spa will utilise the citrus fruits native to the region: treatment rooms will be infused with their scent and lemon, lime and orange oils will be incorporated into a wide range of facials, wraps and scrubs. Other products will be supplied by Sodashi.



The Thermal Spa complex will boast a shower corridor that retains 19th century elements

Restored historical bath for Budapest

The €35.5m (US\$44.7m, £29.4m) Rác Hotel & Thermal Spa is to open in Budapest, Hungary, in the third quarter of 2010.

While the 67-bedroom hotel and restaurant are newly-built, the 8,000sq m (86,111 sq ft) Thermal Spa is a mix of new and old and includes refurbished parts of the Rác Thermal Bath – a UNESCO World Heritage edifice – that was once used by sultans and royalty.

The oldest part of the spa is a Turkish thermal bath (heated to 36°C) that was originally constructed in the 16th century and has been refurbished and updated with a Turkish hammam and café.

Elsewhere, a 19th century thermal (38°C) pool under a vast, 9m (30ft) high dome and an adjoining shower floor – an arched corridor with different types of showers and water features – have been rebuilt according to the original designs by the famous Hungarian architect Miklós Ybl.

Newer spa facilities include 13 dipping pools, a rooftop swimming pool, 21 treatment rooms and a Sauna World with Finnish, bio and aroma saunas, as well as two steamrooms and a salt and snow cave.

Spa consulting Alistair Graham and Horwath Consulting worked on the project.

Woodstock Inn to reveal US\$10m spa

Consultancy WTS International has released details of a US\$10m (£7.8m, €6.6m) spa which will open this September at the Woodstock Inn & Resort in Vermont, US.

Designed by New York's Asfour Guzy Architects, the 10,000sq ft (929sq m) facility will have 10 treatment rooms and indoor and outdoor relaxation spaces.

The spa will use organic products from Eminence, Naturopathica and Spa Ritual, while every three months a signature treatment using seasonal indigenous ingredients will be introduced. The 100-minute treatment comprises a body scrub and masques as well as a foot, scalp and body massage. The main ingredient in autumn is pumpkin; in the Deep Forest winter therapy will incorporate spruce and cedar oils; in spring maple and vanilla will be on the menu; and seasonal berries will be used in summer.



The spa covers 10,000sq ft and has 10 treatment rooms

Other amenities include a VIP Restoration Suite with a bathroom and oversized shower and private outdoor courtyard with a sauna, fire pit and hot soaking pool.

Michelle Adams was appointed as spa director in June 2010. She has 15 years' experience in premier resorts and most recently served as spa director for The Spa at Hotel Park City in Utah, US.

Steiner's inaugural Mandara Spa in Russia

Steiner Leisure's first Mandara Spa in Russia is to open in late 2010 as part of the Lotte Hotel in Moscow.

The 18,300sq ft (1,700sq m) spa will include a total of seven treatment rooms and will also offer a wide range of therapies from Elemis alongside traditional Asian treatments.

In February 2009, Steiner Leisure announced that it had entered into a 10-year agreement to operate a Mandara Spa at the hotel.

Boasting 304 bedrooms, the hotel is operated by the South Korean chain Lotte Hotels & Resorts, an affiliate of the Lotte Group, which is based in Seoul.

Eléa Spa nears completion on luxury Cypriot estate

Eléa Golf & Spa Resort near Paphos, Cyprus, will launch later this year. The luxury resort – part of the Eléa Estate development – will boast a boutique hotel and wellness retreat, 200 villas and 100 apartments and a 2,260sq m (24,326sq ft) clubhouse. A par-71 golf course designed by the UK's six-time major winner, Sir Nick Faldo, will be the centrepiece of the estate and is intended to put Cyprus on the map as a major European golf destination.



The pods are crucial to Elemis' retail areas

Elemis unveils double SpaPod in London

British skincare brand Elemis has unveiled its first double SpaPod within its retail spa concept in the Debenhams department store on Oxford Street – a popular shopping destination – in London, UK.

The SpaPod was first launched in 2006 and enables Elemis therapists to perform treatments on retail consumers.

The launch of a second pod at Debenhams will enable the Elemis team to have more flexibility for bookings and walk-in clients. Each pod features Smart Glass Technology, which goes from transparent to frosted at the flick of a button.



Facilities at The Oitavos include an indoor and outdoor seawater swimming pool and a sauna

September debut for Portugal's Oitavos spa

A new luxury hotel and spa called The Oitavos will launch near the Portuguese capital of Lisbon in September.

The Oitavos spa is situated among sand dunes and pine trees. It has a sleek, contemporary design and will boast panoramic windows that are intended to focus attention outdoors to its dramatic natural surroundings.

Facilities will include treatment rooms, an indoor and outdoor seawater pool, plus a sauna, steamroom and whirlpool. There will also be a spa garden area with a private cabana, which guests will be able to practice yoga in.

The spa has an ocean theme and its exclusive product house will be Voya – a company which hand harvests organic seaweed on the Atlantic coast of Ireland.

The thalasso theme will carry through to the treatments, which will include sea salt exfoliations and scrubs, a seaweed and algae wrap and a selection of different anti-ageing therapies.

The Oitavos is set within the Quinta da Marinha Original estate, which also offers a range of sports options including an equestrian centre, a health and racquets club and the Oitavos Dunes golf course.

New wellness concept introduced at LykiaWorld

LykiaWorld Antalya in Turkey has introduced a new wellness concept called LykiaVital.

The concept, which comprises a complete programme of specialist treatments, has been developed in association with the resort's Sanitas Spa; Flavius, a health service provider; and Interdentalia, a team of dentists.

From Flavius comes a range of services which focus on everything from detox, anti-ageing and cellulite treatment to smoking cessation and hair transplantation. Plastic surgery and rehabilitation packages are also available.

Interdentalia treatments include teeth cleaning, whitening and implant solutions.

The majority of LykiaVital treatments will be offered off site (with a free transfer bus provided). Guests will then return to Sanitas Spa to recuperate.



LykiaVital complements Sanitas Spa's existing offering

The Sanitas Spa & Wellness centre at the LykiaWorld Antalya opened in mid-2008 (see SB09/3 p62).

Covering 4,000sq m (43,055sq ft), the wellness centre includes 24 treatment rooms and specialises in ayurveda. It also includes an indoor Japanese spa area, a shiatsu massage room and a balneotherapy room with a Vichy shower.



Retail areas are key to the high street spas

UK's Sanctuary spa to rollout high street facilities

The Sanctuary Spa, one of the UK's most famous day spas for women, is to extend its brand by opening a series of facilities in principal shopping, or 'high street', locations across the country.

The first spa opened in Cambridge's Grand Arcade shopping centre in July 2010. The next two will be revealed in Richmond and Bristol.

Each spa will offer five treatment rooms – including two skin spa/medi rooms – manicure/pedicure stations and a relaxation area. There will also be up to 400sq ft (37sq m) of space devoted to retail.

Sicily's third Hilton opens with Klafs-equipped spa

Hilton Worldwide has launched the Hilton Giardini Naxos in Sicily, the third property on the Italian island to open under the Hilton Hotels brand.

Formerly known as The Russott Hotel, the property has been converted to a Hilton and operates as part of a franchise agreement with Russott Finance Spa.

The spa was designed and equipped by German company Klafs, while other facilities include a Hilton Fitness by Precor fitness centre and a swimming pool.

Occupying a prime beachfront location, Hilton Giardini Naxos enjoys panoramic views across the Ionian Sea and boasts its own private beach.

AW LAKE acquires Spa Synergy consultancy

Spa design and concept group AW LAKE* has acquired the Singapore-based consultancy firm Spa Synergy Pte. The acquisition will enable the company to offer a more comprehensive range of services and continues AW LAKE's expansion plans in 2010. Additions include a new training facility in Bali as well as laboratories and manufacturing facilities in New Zealand and China and an operational base in Hong Kong.

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The hotel will be located on a hillside olive grove and will rotate at a speed of 1.3 times per day

Rotating hotel and spa for Croatian island

The design for Europe's first rotating hotel, to be built on a hillside olive grove on Solta Island in Croatia, have been unveiled.

Masterminded by Richard Hywel Evans of Studio RHE in the UK, the multi-purpose resort – with a 120-berth marina – will be located 35 minutes by boat from Split.

The hotel sits at the centre of an infinity-edged swimming lake that cascades onto a hillside spa below. As it rotates, at a gentle speed of 1.3 times a day, guests will have a range of ever-changing views over the Adriatic Sea, the surrounding countryside and the remains of a Roman fish farm.

The Waterfall Spa will feature a water-walled reception as well as five treatment rooms that are surrounded by another shallow lake. The swimming pool will be roofed with reflective aluminium wings.

Hywel Evans says: "This is a stunning example of how exciting design can be. In the case of Solta Island, the need was simple: every guest should enjoy the breathtaking view and our design provides just that."

Studio RHE was commissioned by the Croatian developer The Profectus Group, which is currently in the final stages of signing off the project.

Spa opens at de Savary's restored US mansion

A spa has been unveiled at Vanderbilt Hall – a 100-year-old mansion in Newport, Rhode Island, that's been restored by hotelier Peter de Savary.

The intimate Vanderbilt Spa covers 3,160sq ft (249sq m) and was designed by Newport Collaborative, a local group responsible for many other the historic renovations in the Newport area.

The spa's opulent decor, featuring silk runners and gilded mirrors, was overseen by spa director Allison Schumann. Schumann previously worked with de Savary at the US-based Carnegie Abbey Club and Cherokee Plantation properties.

There are three treatment rooms, including a duet room featuring built-in cabinetry, luxurious furnishings and a fireplace.

Other facilities comprise indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a sauna, a range of



The spa and mansion (above) have an opulent decor

steamrooms and a gym with individual flat screen televisions, fans and iPod docking stations.

All face and body treatments at Vanderbilt Spa use the French Yon-Ka brand, while the natural nail care Spa Rituals line is also offered. Other equipment and products have been supplied by Universal Companies.

McCaffrey to strengthen Clarins' position in the US

Barry McCaffrey has been appointed to spearhead the opening of Clarins spa accounts within the hotel and day spa sector in the US.

As director of sales for the spa division, McCaffrey will be drawing on more than 20 years of experience. Most recently, he worked for Comfort Zone in the US, where he was responsible for its growth in corporate hotel and resort groups.

McCaffrey says: "I'm thrilled to be working with the team of experts at Clarins USA. Headed up by Jonathan Zrihen, CEO, there is a strong commitment to growth and development of this new channel for Clarins in North America."

AHLEI and ISPA's online risk management for spas

The American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI), the International Spa Association (ISPA) and ISPA Foundation have released a new online course. Called Risk Management for Spas, the course features a total of 10 modules and has been developed in collaboration with the Resort Hotel Association. It is offered through AHLEI's distance learning department on its e-learning platform.



The programmes will target older guests

Danubius improves its silver service packages

Danubius Hotels, one of Europe's largest spa operators (see SB05/3 p18), is expanding its range of wellness activities to meet the needs of its older guests.

While the offering varies from location to location, the programmes include a choice of fitness and wellbeing classes in everything from relaxation methods such as autogenic training or the Jacobson technique to stretching, yoga for seniors and Nordic walking.

Other possible activities include Meet the Spa Doctor sessions, lifestyle lectures and walking tours in the area.



Facilities include a 25m heated swimming pool with decking sourced from renewable materials

Graff Diamonds' Delaire Lodge launches

Graff Diamonds International (GDI) has revealed the latest property in its South African portfolio, the Delaire Graff Lodge and Spa.

The property – comprising 10 lodges and the spa – is located in a vineyard estate at the crest of the Helshoogte Mountain Pass, near Cape Town's two wine districts of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek.

The spa, which is also open to day visitors to the estate, consists of four treatment rooms, a heated pool, sauna, steamroom and gym. The product houses are Aromatherapy Associates, Mama Mio and Swiss Perfection.

The spa has been designed by UK-based David Collins Studio using locally sourced materials. Meanwhile, local horticulturist Keith Kirsten designed and landscaped the estate gardens to soothe the senses and complement the surrounding environment.

The architects for the property, Palm Architects from France, took special care to plan a spa that would minimise electrical consumption and save water. In addition, it used natural, renewable materials such as stone and wood throughout.

The founder of GDI, Laurence Graff, acquired the Delaire wine estate in 2003.

Aqua Sheko fish therapy spa debuts in London



There are eight stations and a deluxe 45-minute fish pedicure has been priced at £45

A fish therapy spa called Aqua Sheko has arrived in Kensington, London, UK.

Reportedly the first of its kind to open in the capital, the spa specialises in 'fish pedicures'. It features eight tanks of water which are home to garra rufa – a species of omnivorous carp that feed on dead skin cells.

Founder of Aqua Sheko, Karen Ho, says: "Fish therapy is an enjoyable and relaxing

way to remove a build up of dead skin and maintain smooth, good looking feet."

An Aqua Sheko deluxe, 45-minute pedicure, which includes 30 minutes with the fish and a 15-minute foot wash and massage costs £45 (US\$68, €53)

Fish therapy is popular in Asia (see SB10/p58), and has just been introduced in South Africa under the Doctor Fish™ brand.

DIARY DATES

4-5 September 2010

Sydney International Spa & Beauty Expo

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre

This event is hailed as one of the largest and most important trade gatherings for the spa and beauty industry in Australia.

T: +61 2 9422 2535

www.internationalbeautyexpo.com.au

12-15 October 2010

International Summit on Medical Travel, Wellness & Retirement

Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Philippines

The 2010 IMWell Summit is for healthcare, hospitality and travel industry leaders from around the world, as well as policy makers from different governments and agency bodies. All come together to integrate various healthcare delivery models, systems and global benchmarks for an efficient, productive and equitable delivery of healthcare across nations and societies.

T: +632 910 8030

www.philippinesheartofasia.ph

13-16 October 2010

Interbad

Trade Fair Centre, Stuttgart, Germany

The 22nd international trade fair for swimming pools, pool and bath technology, saunas, physiotherapy and wellness, plus a congress for the recreational and medicinal bath industry.

T: +49 711 18560 2591

www.messe-stuttgart.de/interbad

17-18 October 2010

Les Nouvelles Esthetiques

The Forum, Johannesburg, South Africa

A South African spa and beauty networking conference for decision-makers within the skincare, wellness and equipment industries.

T: +27 11 447 9959

www.lesnouvelles.co.za

15-18 November 2010

ISPA Conference & Expo

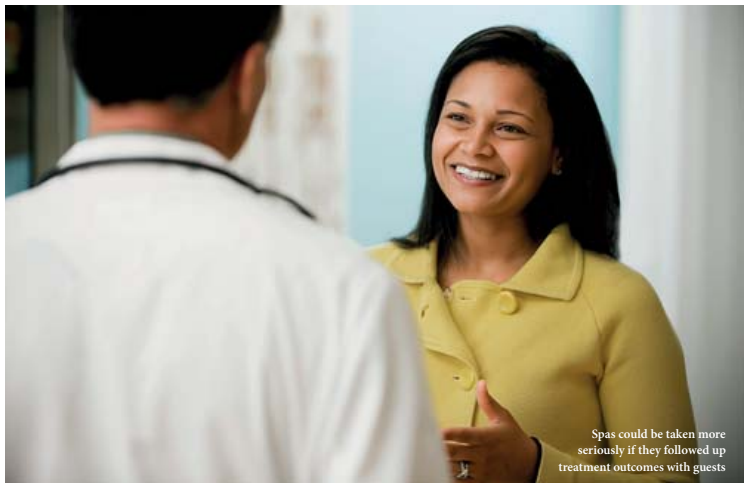
Maryland, Washington, US

2010 is the 20th anniversary for this International Spa Association event, which attracts thousands of global spa professionals. It will feature four days of speaker presentations on business strategy, leadership and management, alongside more than 300 exhibitors.

T: +1 859 226 4326

www.experienceispa.com

Everyone's talking about...



Spas could be taken more seriously if they followed up treatment outcomes with guests

Scientific proof

COULD A UNION WITH HEALTHCARE BE THE SPA INDUSTRY'S REWARD FOR BECOMING MORE SAVVY ABOUT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH?

KATH HUDSON » JOURNALIST » SPA BUSINESS

The spa industry prides itself on offering services that make a real difference to people's health and wellbeing. Yet recently it has come under fire for not backing up these claims.

This is bad news if you take into account SRI's new International Spas and the Global Wellness Market report, which found that 71 per cent of consumers would be more likely to visit spas if they knew studies had shown treatments to deliver measurable health benefits.

Sometimes services or products offered can be, at best, gimmicky or, at worst, dangerous. However, there are also some highly beneficial and credible experiences and treatments out there. So, how can the industry prove its worth? Should it commission targeted scientific

research into its practices and consistently follow up outcomes with clients? Or, is it not appropriate to conduct trials in spa environments?

Also, while big pharmaceutical companies can spend a fortune on proving efficacy, companies behind complementary therapies rarely have the budget to do this. Could the industry pool resources to create funding to support future research? Or would it be possible to create a database of existing studies – such as those that outline the benefit of massage, hydrotherapy and heat experiences – which could be accessed for free?

Providing evidence wouldn't just be good for the industry's credibility, it could also open up a whole new audience. A report by PricewaterhouseCoopers,

HealthCast 2020, shows that the global health industries will become unsustainable within 15-20 years, as they struggle to cope with the issues caused by an ageing population, stress, diabetes and obesity. Health systems need to focus more on encouraging healthy living or 'wellness' rather than managing illness. Spas already promote health so are ahead of the curve, if they can prove treatment efficacy.

Working with the scientific and medical communities could attract a huge number of potential clients, as well as new potential avenues for funding, from governments and private health insurance companies.

Is this tie-up with healthcare really possible? And how can the industry bring it about? We ask the experts...

The spa industry is perceived as frivolous and self-indulgent at a time when the global economy is austere. Secondly, its rather extravagant claims are frequently not evidence-based. Thirdly, and most significantly, it is not perceived as part of the healthcare system, which is a high hurdle.



DR KENNETH R PELLETIER

Clinical professor of medicine, the University of Arizona School of Medicine and the University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco

We don't have a healthcare system in the US, or globally, we have a disease management industry, so there could be the opportunity for the spa sector to be at the leading edge of true healthcare.

There are some areas of concern within the industry: certainly some extreme and questionable dietary practices. Some of the extreme fasts and dietary restrictions are not only questionable, but dangerous. The more invasive the procedures, the more you need clear evidence that they work, because it involves risks. For example, if colonics are not implemented properly they run the risk of perforating the intestinal tract, or other complications. It doesn't mean don't do it, it just means you need a certificate of efficacy and to follow up what happens.

"Some herbal remedies are worrying. Without analysis, you cannot know what the consequences will be. The axiom is that if something is powerful enough to work, it's powerful enough to have side effects"

The constituents and components that go into some of the herbal remedies are worrying. Without true analysis and disclosure to the individual of what they are taking, what the purity is and how standardised it is, you simply cannot know what the consequences will be. The axiom is that if something is powerful enough to work, then it is powerful enough to have side effects.

Rejuvenation injections is a highly questionable area [see SBo6/3 p30]. There's scant evidence that this works, whereas there is compelling proof that certain hormone injections cause cancers and changes in the immune system that are destructive.

There are two images portrayed of the spa industry. The negative perception is that it is selling whatever will sell to whoever is gullible enough to buy it. But, on the positive side, these are centres where health is the objective, with long histories of providing

therapeutic treatments. Although these centres need more scrutiny and documentation to back up their claims, they do seem to have real promise to create optimal states of health. If there was adequate documentation that tracked the intermediate and long-term outcomes of health claims, then the spa industry would be open to a different, and larger, global audience, especially the corporate market.

One of the first things the industry needs to do is to create a database for all spas to access, which draws upon the available global evidence of what works, what doesn't and what needs further research. There are now a number of delegates from this year's Global Spa Summit [see p38] who are working towards such a database and we hope to have initial components online by May 2011.

The industry could aid this process in many ways: by contributing funding, submitting reports for possible inclusion, or even by putting forward preliminary research on innovative new therapies being used.

Dr Pelletier is a medical and business consultant to corporations such as Canyon Ranch and Rancho la Puerta.

I think the spa industry needs to break out of the box of tourism and hospitality, and its luxury, pampering image and use existing research to engage with the healthcare and corporate wellness sectors.



DR MARC COHEN

Professor of complementary medicine, RMIT University, Victoria, Australia

it commonly invests in market research and feasibility studies, does not necessarily understand

in-depth medical research.

I really do believe and, based on the evidence which already exists, that spa therapies do have a positive health benefit. If this is clearly demonstrated to governments and health insurers, then the spa industry could be opened up for government subsidies and health insurance rebates and an expanded range of funding opportunities.

I think the industry is pivotal to what is needed globally, which is a total paradigm shift in the healthcare system from an illness model to a wellness model. The health arena is one of the biggest industries in the world, but the spa industry doesn't yet interact with it effectively. This is to the detriment of both sectors.

We know health systems around the world will become unsustainable within the next

15 to 20 years, unless they move towards a health promotion model that engages consumers and puts them in control. The spa industry already has this model.

The writing is on the wall for the health industry, with the ageing population and the growing pandemic of obesity, depression and diabetes.

The first hotel chain to come out with evidence-based spa therapies, because they've done specific medical research on their treatments, will have a major advantage over their competitors. Because we are in a crunch and the spa industry is feeling the squeeze, those competitive advantages are going to be really important.

As well as his post at RMIT University, Dr Cohen is the president of the Australasian Integrative Medicine Association. He is a medical doctor and has PhDs in Chinese medicine and biomedical engineering.

Despite regular spa-goers appreciating and understanding the short- and long-term health benefits, some regard spas as expensive havens for the pampered, overweight and bored elite. Some health professionals, especially medical doctors, regard spa therapies with mistrust and consider practices to be a placebo effect, or sometimes even dangerous.



DR GERALDINE MITTON

Medical doctor and wellness consultant

dients of products and the spa manager needs to have approved the products and services, making sure they adhere to ethical and professional principles.

The High Rustenburg Health Hydro destination spa in South Africa, where I was medical director, catered for up to 100 guests (with 120 staff) who normally stayed for a minimum of seven days on healthcare programmes.

Each guest was monitored on alternate days for weight and blood pressure, we also tested urine, blood sugar and body composition. People came with problems ranging from minor to chronic health and within a week there was a marked improvement, including a dramatic sense of wellbeing.

We were able to document a reduction in blood pressure, improved digestion, normalised blood sugar; and, for those who stayed longer, we could show that there were improved blood lipids and liver functions. Results over a period of 14 years were always positive, but I did not publish these findings

in scientific journals due to the stringent criteria required for research articles.

At Sante Winelands Hotel and Wellness Centre, also in South Africa, where I was spa director, we conducted corporate wellness programmes focused on stress reduction for female executives. Again, the results were uniformly positive.

I have seen the benefits of spa therapies first hand over 20 years. However, scientific proof with double blind placebo controlled studies was not possible in our spa environment. After all, our guests came to rest and relax, not to take part in clinical trials!

Following the Global Spa Summit, a number of us are collaborating on a journal which will present evidence validating the benefits of spa therapies. It will be presented in a language that can be understood by spa therapists and those in the industry.

Dr Mitton, based in South Africa, has more than 20 years' experience as a medical, wellness and spa director.

Some areas within spa practices do give me cause for concern. Promises of weight loss, anti-ageing and rejuvenation are often associated with products and treatments promoted to attract clients who will pay for a quick fix solution. Colon hydrotherapy is controversial and may cause serious problems if not administered correctly. Finally, some therapists give clients unscientific advice and incorrect recommendations.

Making sure all staff have recognised professional qualifications, and understand the benefits, contraindications and complications of therapies is needed to make the industry more credible. Each therapist needs to have a holistic knowledge of all the ingre-

If the spa industry was able and willing to engage in some form of transparent verification and validation of its work it would lead to a much greater level of credibility. For it to gain the support of scientists, it will need to begin monitoring outcomes, measuring change and duration of change, become accountable and demonstrate that results are being followed up. It will have to be wholly transparent. Some argue it should go one step further and be limited to offering only scientifically-verified treatments.

However, much of the spa industry's clientele is transient, so follow-up and outcome evaluation simply do not apply in the same way as would pertain to therapeutic intervention in clinical services environments.

There are a number of reasons why the scientific community is sometimes skeptical about alternative and complementary therapies. One reason relates to the tribal aspect of the functioning of human beings, whereby what is different or foreign is regarded as the enemy. Those who have



DR KIM JOBST

Editor-in-chief, the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*

spent many years training and learning about pharmaceutical drugs, biomolecular science and

the mechanistic view of life, can feel undermined and challenged by evidence that appears totally at odds with the prevailing biomolecular scientific paradigm.

I'm working with a group of people in the US on what I believe represents the boundary of so-called hard science and the more subtle world of energy to help to bridge the gap between these two 'tribal areas'.

Every scientist in the world must be aware of the fact that our world, and the entire universe, is governed by unseen forces which function precisely according to immutable laws. How, then, does one explain what happens in healing or intuitive diagnosis, whether biomolecular or not? Many physicians and scientists, as well as therapists, will tell you there are times when they put their hands on someone and somehow just

know things about the person: information comes to them as if by some sort of fusion. By utilising some of the new developments in biophysics and technologies – which can detect micro-current, electromagnetic field and electrical charge changes in living organisms – it will become possible to measure and visualise some of these currently inexplicable phenomena happening.

We are now working to utilise new technologies at the cutting edge of biophysics, such as different forms of laser, frequency specific micro-current systems and other electrical, electromagnetic and bioresonance frequencies for diagnosis and treatment as well as monitoring.

One might also question why the spa industry would want, or need, the approval of the scientific community. The true scientist must take heed that something has to be working, since the industry is very profitable and people don't spend their money unless they feel it is worth it.

Dr Jobst is a physician dedicated to healing and integrated healthcare, and is qualified in medicine and homeopathy, and trained in traditional Chinese acupuncture.

"Many physicians, as well as therapists, will tell you there are times when they put their hands on someone and somehow just know things about the person: information comes to them as if by fusion"

A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman's face, looking upwards and to the right. She has dark hair and is wearing a large, dark brown, textured flower headpiece. She is also wearing a dark necklace with circular elements. The background is a blurred, warm-toned interior space.

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Starwood Hotels & Resorts has over 300 spas in its portfolio, with 150 more in development. We talk to the woman shaping the brands and the man charged with overseeing the global growth of the spas



Mia Kyrigos & Jeremy McCarthy

Considering she has three existing global spa brands to look after, plus another two in development – oh, and a wedding to plan – Mia Kyrigos, the director of global spa brands and programming at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc, is remarkably calm.

In fact, she talks about creating a world-wide spa concept in such a matter of fact way that it's hard to imagine the work involved. "We call it a 'spa in a box,'" she explains. "I come up with everything from the initial idea and the design and development tools, to creating a menu and signature treatments and the marketing collateral.

"It does get easier. This year we're going to launch our fifth in-house concept and we've perfected our formula on how to create a brand. Now it's less about the stress and more about enjoying the process."

Starwood Hotels & Resorts, one of the world's largest hotel and leisure companies (see p28), has offered spas at its various venues for many years. However, it only

introduced its own in-house spa brands relatively recently. The first two, arriving in 2004, were Heavenly Spa by Westin and AWAY Spa by W. Then, in May 2010, the Shine Spa for Sheraton rollout was revealed; and by the end of this year, there will be another two: Explore Spa by Le Méridien and an in-house brand (still unnamed) for St Regis hotels. Today, Starwood has 56 existing branded spa solutions, with a staggering 78 more facilities on the way (see p26).

SPOTLIGHT ON SPA

The driving force behind getting these spa brands to market is Kyrigos, who says she's always had a passion for integrative health and wellness. "I come from a Greek/American family and my grandmother always had some sort of spa remedy for any ailment," she recalls. "Massage was something she administered to us when we were younger, plus I grew up in York Harbor, Maine, where tourism was the main industry."

After graduating with a Masters of Management in Hospitality Administration from

Cornell (see SB09/4 p52) in 2003, Kyrigos worked for Canyon Ranch and Exhale. She then joined Starwood in 2004 at a time when spas were becoming increasingly significant to the company. "Starwood had become focused on positioning its hotels as lifestyle brands and saw spas as a channel to do this," she says. "At that time, spas were also evolving from amenities to profit centres and the goal was give them more of a business focus. There was a bigger spotlight on spa"

In 2006, Kyrigos was promoted from senior manager to director of spa development, operations and marketing. But as in-house spas grew in importance, she was joined by Jeremy McCarthy, who helped develop the Heavenly Spa concept. He now oversees development and operations of the spas, while Kyrigos manages the branding.

Growing up in California, McCarthy always had a strong interest in fitness – he's been a cyclist, triathlete, personal trainer and martial arts instructor – and for 14 years at Four Seasons, worked his way up from supervising pools to opening and operat-

PERSONAL FILES

MIKA KYRIGOS & JEREMY MCCARTHY

What's your favourite book?

MK *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho
JM *Nonzero* by Robert Wright

What's your favourite film?

MK *Dan In Real Life*
JM *The Shawshank Redemption*

Where is your favourite spa?

MK Kirana Spa in Bali
JM Rancho La Puerta in Mexico

What's your favourite spa treatment?

MK reflexology
JM a shiatsu massage

What do you do for fun?

MK cook, entertain and workout (in that order)
JM surfing and beach volleyball

What's your favourite food?

MK Mediterranean or Asian, but a good dark chocolate trumps everything
JM Sushi

Who do you most admire?

MK My twin sister, Gina, whose daily work makes the lives of adolescents so much better
JM There are many people, it wouldn't be fair to single someone out

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

MK You regret the things you don't do, far more than those you do... so do them
JM Focus on what is important, not what is urgent



Shine Spa for Sheraton's philosophy is to help guests 'find their glow' and bright interiors (above) reflect this; the global concept was inspired by an existing spa in the Maldives (right)

ing spas for the group in various locations worldwide. Prior to Starwood, he oversaw the opening of the 43,000sq ft (4,000sq m) spa at La Costa Resort in California.

McCarthy explains how the pair split their responsibilities: "Mia and I work very closely together. She focuses on developing the tools, concepts and resources and works with the brand team; I work on implementing the concepts in the properties themselves. However, there's never a complete handover and we both assist each other when necessary."

ACTING FAST

The latest brand to be revealed by Kyricos and McCarthy is Shine Spa, an upscale four-star concept that will be rolled out across the Sheraton hotel portfolio as part of a US\$6bn (€4.6bn, £3.9bn) revitalisation campaign.

McCarthy says: "This was an additional step in our overall strategy, which is to have a spa concept for each of our hotel brands," he says. "We want to show our hotel owners that we have really thought about spa and that we have created something that we feel is a good fit."

Yet coming up with a concept for Sheraton has probably been the most complicated



process so far. Given that Sheraton had so many sites in the pipeline (65 hotels and 44 spas), it was initially decided to bring in a partner: the Denver-based consultancy Spatality, which had already created a four-star spa concept called Nectar (see SBo8/1 p22). Nectar was selected as the preferred spa brand for Sheraton, but in June 2009 changes in Spatality's company structure – including the move of its headquarters from the US to Thailand – meant Starwood had to re-evaluate (see SBo9/4 p14). The agreement was eventually terminated in early 2010.

Consequently, Kyricos had to come up with another solution – and fast. "It was the

fastest one we've ever done," she says. "We started in November and released it in May – let's just say I had a very busy holiday!"

As time was of the essence, building a relationship with another party was not an option. "I knew that no-one knew our brand better than us," says Kyricos. "Our research [on Sheraton customers] was still current, as was the input from each of our divisions – Asia, EAME (Europe, Africa, the Middle East), Latin America and North America – on what their particular spa needs were. And, fortunately, as this was the third brand we had developed, I already had an arsenal of spa resources I could use."

STARWOOD SPA BRANDS

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc has over 150 spas currently under construction. The majority of these are its in-house spa brands and preferred spa partners. These include:

SHINE – The global brand package for Sheraton's in-house spa brand was launched in May 2010. So far, six Shine Spas are open and work has started on 17 more

HEAVENLY – This in-house spa brand for Westin hotels was launched in 2004 and there are now 19 in operation and 20 in development
EXPLORE – Set to launch later this year, Explore Spa is the in-house spa brand that's been developed for Le Méridien hotels. There are seven Explore Spas in the pipeline
BLISS – Owned by Bliss World Holdings, which was sold to Steiner in 2009, Bliss Spas have been exclusive to Starwood W's hotels since 1996. There are 17 Bliss Spas in W hotels, three freestanding ones, and five more are underway.



All in-house spa concepts, including AWAY by W (above), will be adapted according to location

AWAY – The in-house spa brand created for W hotels in 2004. There are now five of these and 15 more are under construction
REMEDE – Launched in 2006, Remède Spa – also owned by Bliss World Holdings – is the exclusive spa partner for Starwood's St Regis properties. There are currently nine existing Remède Spas and 14 more are being built
ST REGIS IN-HOUSE – Starwood started creating a new in-house brand for its St Regis portfolio early this year and hopes to launch the first facility by the last quarter of 2010

Kyricos took inspiration from Shine Spa at the Sheraton Full Moon Resort & Spa in the Maldives, which had opened in June 2009. "I originally created Shine Spa as a branding solution for Sheraton's Asia-Pacific division," she explains. "It was a fantastic resort experience that was highly indigenous and it had a quality of service that we liked. It was the perfect example of something that could be conceptually aligned and offered globally, but also something that was flexible so that the brand could be further developed with a specific location in mind. After all, no one wants a cookie cutter spa."

FIND YOUR GLOW

The brand philosophy at Sheraton is that 'Life is better when shared'. With this in mind, Shine Spa will always have a signature treatment for two – whether that's for a couple, a friend, or relatives, says Kyricos. McCarthy points out that a staple feature will also be a communal post-treatment lounge where people can mingle and where guests are encouraged to leave notes on a 'reflection board' with a handwritten sentiment or thoughts about their experience.

Fundamentally, however, Kyricos says that Shine Spa "is for people who love life. This spa is designed to help people recharge while travelling. Where guests will find a warm, comfortable atmosphere that is both upscale and approachable. Shine Spa helps guests to find their glow and to have fun while they're at it."

In terms of design, this could lead to a decor that is inviting and comfortable, but that has a bit more sparkle or gleam to it; or it could mean making a feature of the vanity area in a locker room, where the guest has every amenity and accessory possible to help them face the outside world again.

The Shine Spa approach, she explains, will be flexible – open to operators of different locations to put their spin on it. But how does this work from a brand perspective?

"It's a Starwood proven recipe," explains Kyricos. "There will be five stages of the spa – arrival, pre-treatment, treatment, post-treatment and exit – and for each of these we've identified key design features and service results. But then the interpretation can vary. We've found this approach to be successful with Heavenly Spa by Westin."

FIXED FEATURES

Key touch points for Shine Spa include branded collateral such as the logo, signage and menu template and there will be five signature treatments. These will include a manicure/pedicure, a treatment for two people and a massage. There will also be a body treatment, which finishes with a gold-speckled lotion and a facial which is focused on oxygenating and rejuvenation the skin.

The treatments have been developed in conjunction with Shine Spa's preferred product partner Germaine de Capuccini (GdC); and every Shine Spa will carry the GdC range. "GdC has several different product lines," says Kyricos. "Once our spas have the essentials to offer the signature treatments, they have a lot of freedom to explore the other ranges that GdC offers. But some may also choose to augment the menu with a locally inspired and/or niche line."

In addition, a Shine Spa-branded amenities range has been developed for use in the vanity areas and hotel rooms.

McCarthy also points out that there are some operational stipulations too. The minimum size of a Shine Spa will be 2,500sq

GLOBALLY PREFERRED PRODUCT PARTNER OF SHINE SPA FOR **Sheraton**

GERMAINE DE CAPUCCINI SHARES WITH ITS PARTNERS:

- 45 YEARS INVESTING IN R+D+I, FORMULATING, TESTING, MANUFACTURING, CREATING PROTOCOLS AND OBTAINING INDEPENDENT CERTIFICATIONS.
- 25 PRODUCT LINES THAT INCLUDE MORE THAN 500 REFERENCES DISTRIBUTED IN FACIAL TREATMENTS, BODY TREATMENTS, MEN'S SKINCARE, SOLAR PRODUCTS, ORGANIC SKINCARE, COSMECEUTICALS, ETC.
- MORE THAN 70 DIFFERENT TREATMENTS AND PROTOCOLS IN THE UNIVERSE DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE SPA: "SPERIENCE".
- STOCK, TRAINING PROGRAMMES, CUSTOMISED TREATMENTS AND MARKETING SUPPORT THROUGH OUR NETWORK OF EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTORS PRESENT IN 83 COUNTRIES WORLD-WIDE.



GERMAINE^{DE} CAPUCCINI

ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL COSMETICS

STARWOOD HOTELS & RESORT WORLDWIDE, INC.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts (SHR) was originally created in 1995 by real estate investment firm the Starwood Capital Group (SCG), and was also known as Starwood Lodging. Since its inception SHR has been listed on the New York Stock Exchange – although its brands such as Sheraton and Westin have been serving guests for more than 60 years. In 2000 SCG exited its investment in SHR.

Today, SHR, which is headquartered in White Plains, New York, is one of the world's largest hotel companies and as of end of 2009, it owned, leased, managed and franchised 979 hotels, with approximately 292,000 rooms in around 100 countries. It employed over 145,000 people and had revenue of US\$4.8bn (€3.7bn £3.1bn).

* These numbers are estimates and may change

STARWOOD'S NINE HOSPITALITY BRANDS INCLUDE*:



ST REGIS BANGKOK, THAILAND

ST REGIS – luxury full-service hotels, resorts and residences (19 existing properties, 25 in development)



TURNBERRY RESORT, SCOTLAND

THE LUXURY COLLECTION – luxury, full-service hotels and resorts (73 existing properties, 11 in development)



W BOSTON HOTEL & RESIDENCES, US

W – luxury and upscale full-service hotels, retreats and residences (35 existing properties, 26 in development)

- ▶ fit (2325 sq m) and there will be at least four treatment rooms. "It's not an exact formula," he says. "But most of the time we have found that you have to have four revenue generating areas to make it worthwhile."

Despite all of these key touch points, however, is the brand strong enough for customers to identify when there's so much room for interpretation? Kyricos says: "I go back and forth on that. The goal is to have customers recognise Shine Spa. But our overall job is to enhance the experience of the hotel and if people come away saying they've had a fantastic time at a Sheraton spa then I think we've achieved our objectives."

LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES

So far, there are six Shine Spas open – the original in the Maldives, two in China and one in Vietnam, Georgia and Slovakia. It is expected that 12 more will be open by the end of 2011, mostly in China, although other existing Sheraton spas will possibly be converted sooner.

While Kyricos and McCarthy both maintain that there is a time and a place for third-party spas at Starwood, having an in-house brand brings certain advantages. McCarthy says: "As an luxury hotel company, our owners expect us to have a spa

brand. From a guest experience standpoint, hotel guests really feel like the spa is an integral part of the stay and that it's a good fit. It's also easier to manage an in-house spa – simple things like having the hotel concierge recommend the spa to putting up a sign, or adding the spa menu to the hotel room welcome pack are more straightforward. This ultimately helps the business too."

However, there are also challenges, especially when – as with Kyricos and McCarthy – you're rolling out multiple brands across many countries on limited resources. Kyricos says: "I think sometimes our management philosophy is a little different. We've just opened our 1,000th hotel this year – we are never going to have a centralised spa team that's big enough to support the businesses ourselves. So we have to rear talent and management in our hotels to be capable of developing and operating our future spas."

McCarthy adds: "My strategy is to create development, design and operational tools and guidelines so spas can be as self-sufficient as possible. It's also about leveraging the power of our group. I look at ways that our spas can learn from each other, so it's not necessarily just me assisting every single spa. Right now, we're looking at exchanging lead therapists in Thailand and India so they teach each other new modalities."

Finding staff can be tough in places such as India and China where modern therapist training is limited, especially training which also incorporates English, he says. As Starwood is so big, one way they get around this is to recruit from other established properties within its portfolio.

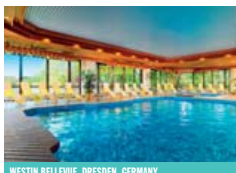
McCarthy says they're also possibly looking to work with Himalayan Healers – a training organisation, which aims to help Nepali people from the lowest social orders to become well-rounded, international-standard therapists (see SB07/2 p44).

When the properties are really remote, however – such as in smaller Chinese cities – McCarthy's other strategy is to leverage the partnership with GdC. "Because of the scope of work they're doing for us, we can ask them to support a project – even though it might be outside of their normal realm of operations," Kyricos says that this also applies to SpaEquip, Starwood's globally preferred spa procurement partner.

DOUBLE VISION

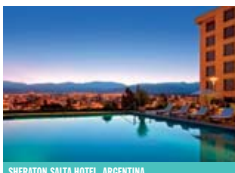
The strategy of leveraging and teamwork, is set to continue as Kyricos and McCarthy work towards launching two more in-house spa brands for Starwood this year.

The first is Explore Spa, which has been created for Starwood's Le Méridien proper-



WESTIN BELLEVUE, DRESDEN, GERMANY

WESTIN – luxury and upscale full-service hotels, resorts and residences (171 existing properties, 35 in development)



SHERATON SALTA HOTEL, ARGENTINA

SHERATON – luxury and upscale full-service hotels, resorts and residences (398 existing properties, 65 in development)



ALOFT BOLINGBROOK, ILLINOIS, US

ALOFT – select-service hotels (there are currently 42 existing Aloft hotels and 19 more are in the pipeline)



LE ROYAL MERIDIEN BEACH RESORT & SPA, DUBAI

LE MÉRIDIEN – luxury and upscale full-service hotels, resorts and residences (103 existing properties, 14 in development)



FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KOENIGSHOF, GERMANY

FOUR POINTS – select-service hotels (there are currently 154 existing Four Points properties and 35 more are underway)



ELEMENT DALLAS FORT WORTH AIRPORT NORTH, US

ELEMENT – extended stay hotels (there are now seven existing Element properties and five more in development)

“We’ve just opened our 1,000th hotel and our centralised spa team will never be big enough to support each business. So we have to rear hotel management that’s capable of developing and operating our future spas”

ties. Kyricos says: “Le Méridien wanted to offer a new perspective on spa, which is what they’ve done with their hotel brand. So we’re looking for something that’s a bit more unexpected, vibrant and engaging, where laughter will be encouraged. Explore Spa will be about a discovery of something new.”

Explore Spa is expected to make its debut at Le Méridien Pyramids in Gaza, Egypt, in October, with the next spa at Le Méridien Oran Hotel & Convention Centre in Algeria to follow in January 2011.

The second in-house spa brand to come to market will be for Starwood’s St Regis resorts. The impetus for creating this brand came when Starwood sold its spa company Bliss World Holdings (BWH) to Steiner Leisure for US\$100m (€67.4m, £60.3m) in November 2009. BWH owns the Bliss and Remède spa and skincare brands, which are the exclusive partners for Starwood’s W and St Regis resorts, respectively. While this will

continue to be the case, Starwood needed to develop an in-house option for St Regis (AWAY Spa had already been created as an in-house option for the W brand).

Kyricos says: “Bliss and Remède have an established portfolio in our hotels that we’re very happy with. Who owns them is not really a concern right now because it doesn’t feel like we’ve separated families.” Nevertheless she says some owners just “don’t want to work with a third party or prefer that seamless integration that comes from an in-house solution”.

The new St Regis spa brand will, according to Kyricos, fit with guests who are the most discerning of all Starwood customers – “generally the wealthiest, the most well-travelled, the most educated and who have access to the world’s finest luxuries”.

The inaugural St Regis spa at the group’s Lhasa Resort in Tibet will open by the end of 2010. The concept will only go into new-builds and the rollout will be relatively slow.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Just as with existing spas, all new facilities will be tracked for performance such as overall revenue and profit, with revenue per available treatment hour being a key indicator. Yet McCarthy says there’s no magic number that spas have to reach.

“With so many different types of spas, in different countries with different currencies it’s difficult to compare benchmarks,” he says. Instead, each property is responsible for driving the revenues of the spas, which are considered independent profit centres.

What is of more concern from a corporate level, however, is maintaining brand quality. Currently McCarthy is working on a detailed spa inspection programme – this will cover key elements such as hygiene, and branding for particular concepts, as well as customer service and the service culture. The aim is to introduce this in 2011, with each spa being visited a minimum of once a year.

Kyricos agrees that it’s all about continuous improvement. “Each new project is an opportunity to do better than we did before. Will we create another spa brand? It’s hard to say. We will have a portfolio of five spa brands at the end of the year, and I think that’s all we really need. But one thing’s for sure... we never say never.” ●

SUPPLY & DEMAND

The Middle East has some beautiful spas, but are they attracting enough customers? We compare and contrast two early 2010 surveys on the region to find out

LEONOR STANTON • CONTRIBUTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS



The growth of the spa industry over the last decade or so, and its importance to the hotel industry specifically, has attracted the attention of some of the major accounting firms. In 2007, PKF introduced its US Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry benchmarking survey (SB10/2 p30). In the Middle East, in 2009,

Ernst & Young (E&Y) launched its Spa Benchmark Survey of hotel spas in Dubai. This year, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is the latest to join in with its Dead Sea Spa Benchmarking Survey in Jordan. Both E&Y and PwC wish to expand their surveys to other countries in the Middle East. According to PwC's partner and Middle East

leader Mohammad Dahmash, "the spa industry is growing in the Middle East. Hotel operators now consider spa facilities an important component of their overall offer."

So, bearing in mind this interest from the accounting firms, how is the spa market in the region bearing up and what advice can be given to spa operators?

THE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The E&Y survey is based on 16 hotel spas, equally split between the beach and city areas in Dubai. Nikita Sarkar, the report's author, says this covers "over 95 per cent of the sample segment of luxury and five-star hotel spas". The PwC survey is based on three hotel spas on the

shoreline of the Dead Sea in east Jordan, covering around 75 per cent of the luxury market in that destination. Both surveys focus on 10 revenue-based metrics, including revenue per treatment sold, per treatment room, per therapist, per treatment hour as well as the utilisation of treatment rooms and therapists. Two other revenue sources are analysed – fitness memberships and retail. The hotels were also asked to report on the proportion of hotel versus non-hotel customers which use the spa. The results of both surveys are directly comparable, as they analyse the same 10 performance indicators.

TREATMENT ROOM REVENUE AND UTILISATION

Overall, spas in Dubai hotels achieved a revenue per available treatment hour (RevPATH) of US\$21 (£17, £14) in the first quarter (Q1) of 2010, while the spas in hotels in Jordan's Dead Sea region achieved a RevPATH of US\$16 (£13, £11) between January and April 2010. In both locations, this represents only 20 per cent of the average treatment revenue per treatment sold. This would suggest that the businesses are under-performing and that there is great room for improvement. Unlike metrics that are based on the number of treatment rooms, or square feet, this is based on different operating hours per day in different establishments, which may consequently differ between seasons and is not a fixed variable.

A more robust metric is the daily treatment revenue per treatment room. In the E&Y survey, this metric shows that the beach hotel spas (see Graph 1 on p32) outperform those in the city of Dubai (see Graph 2 also on p32); while the beach hotel spas achieved an average daily treatment revenue per treatment room of US\$258 (£202, £169) in Q1 2009 and US\$287 (£225, £188) in Q1 2010, the spas in Dubai city hotels achieved US\$217 (£170, £142) and US\$228 (£179, £149), respectively. Annualised, this represents a

It's suggested that operators need to keep good staff – in the downturn labour was cut and many spas were caught out when demand picked up in Q4 2009



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/© LIV TRIS-LARSEN



range of around US\$80,000 (£62,900, £52,500) to US\$105,000 (£82,600, £68,900) revenue per treatment room. This is significantly above that achieved by the three hotel spas in the Dead Sea region in Jordan: the PwC survey shows that the average daily treatment revenue per treatment room in the first four months of 2010 was US\$133 (£89, £74) or just under US\$49,000 (£38,550, £32,150) on an annual basis. Given that the sample is based on the leading hotels in Dubai and Jordan's Dead Sea area, this would appear to be relatively low.

The low daily treatment room revenue could be down to poor utilisation levels of treatment rooms – in beach hotel spas in Dubai the utilisation of available treatment rooms hours was around 25 per cent in 2009 Q1, increasing to 27 per cent in 2010 Q1. As expected, this is higher than in Dubai city hotel spas where in 2009 Q1 utilisation was at 21 per cent, increasing to just over 23 per cent in 2010 Q1. Though low, Dubai nevertheless outperforms the Dead Sea hotel spas in Jordan, where the utilisation level for January to April 2010 was 19 per cent. These results suggest that presently, the spa market in the Middle East is not very buoyant – although it's difficult to state this as comparative data from before 2008 is not available.

According to Sarkar from E&Y, the relatively low utilisation level of treatment rooms in the Dubai hotel spas "shows that there are opportunities for performance improvement. It is clear that big and fancy structures were developed in Dubai and in the future perhaps there will be greater focus on more detailed feasibility studies of hotel ancillary facilities, such as spas. Due diligence on such facilities should be undertaken as if they were independent profit centres".

MARKED IMPROVEMENT

On the positive side, the E&Y study shows a marked improvement in the performance of hotel spas in Dubai in Q4 of 2009 (compared to Q3 2009), and the improvement continued into Q1 2010. A

Presently, the spa market in the Middle East is not very buoyant, although there has been a marked improvement in nearly all KPIs since 2009 in Dubai hotel spas

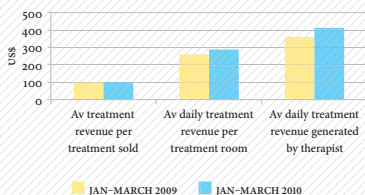
comparison of the Q1 2009 and Q1 2010 key performance indicators in Dubai shows improvements in nearly all metrics; the E&Y survey authors say that "aggregate revenues for Dubai hotel spas in Q1 2010 were 45.5 per cent higher than spa revenues in Q1 2009".

Sarkar stresses that "2009 was an outlier, given the financial crisis – although we hadn't launched our survey in 2008, we were collecting data and the revenue levels for that year were definitely some 10 per cent to 20 per cent higher than those of 2009". She adds that, hoteliers and spa operators discounted during 2009 which led to price-based competition. Spa operators have found it difficult to recover from the discounting of 2009, as this is the only metric which has remained more or less static between 2009 Q1 and 2010 Q1.

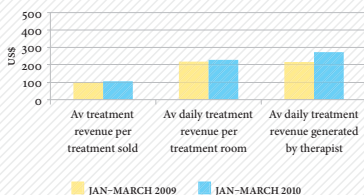
GROWING STRONGER LOCALLY

One positive outcome of the downturn, however, was that, like many other countries, Dubai spa operators targeted the local market much more than they had done previously. At face value the numbers don't reflect this – the actual proportion of non-hotel guests booking spa treatments decreased between Q1 2009 and Q1 2010 from 46 per cent to 39 per cent for all hotels in Dubai. Yet this proportional decline is to be expected if you take into account the recovery of tourism to Dubai (and a growth in hotel guests) and the significant increase in spa revenues between the two periods – as overall revenues increase, some elements may grow more than others, but this doesn't mean segments which grew at a slower rate declined. ►

GRAPH 1: DUBAI BEACH HOTEL SPAS



GRAPH 2: DUBAI CITY HOTEL SPAS



- In Jordan, although Amman is only 45 minutes away, the PwC survey authors concede that there is a "lack of affluent local population in the immediate area surrounding the Dead Sea". Consequently, only 10 per cent of treatments were booked by non-hotel residents between January and April 2010, making these spa operations vulnerable to any downturn in hotel occupancy levels. However, the authors believe that operators could do more "to improve visitation from the local population".

ADDITIONAL REVENUES

Two other revenue sources are considered in the surveys – fitness membership and retail – that the authors believe should be promoted further. As a proportion of total spa revenue, fitness revenue in Dubai declined between Q1 2009 and Q1 2010, but this still represents around 34 per cent to 46 per cent of spa revenue, depending on location. Considering the overall increase in revenues, the proportional decline is again to be expected.

Spas in hotels in the Dead Sea area in Jordan derive no income at all from fitness memberships. Yohaan Freitas, senior manager – advisory services, at PwC says that this is due to "the lack of mid-to-high income households in the Dead Sea area".

Overall, retail represents between 7 per cent and 13 per cent of spa revenue, depending on location – this includes spas in hotels in both Jordan and Dubai. Both surveys suggest that there are further opportunities to make more of this revenue source. PwC's Dahmash confirms this: "at approximately 8 per cent of total revenue, retail remains an under-capitalised revenue stream".

Based on their findings, the E&Y report authors believe spa operators need to concentrate their efforts on maintaining quality staff – because of the downturn in demand in 2009, a number of operators trimmed expenses, notably labour costs, and were then caught short when demand suddenly picked up in Q4 2009.

A QUESTION OF PROFIT

Neither the E&Y nor the PwC studies consider costs or profitability levels in their benchmarking surveys. Yet taking into consideration the utilisation reported in the surveys and the consequent average treatment room revenues, investors certainly might be interested in the potential profitability levels.

For example, it's not until speaking to E&Y's Sarkar that we find out that "although selling prices might be lower in spas Dubai hotels,



In Q1 2010, Dubai beach hotel spas outperformed city hotel spas in terms of daily treatment revenue per treatment room, yet city hotel spas generated more revenue from fitness memberships

than say in New York, labour costs are lower than those in the US or Europe", thus resulting in reasonable profit levels.

Further, PwC's Dahmash stresses that spas are now becoming an integral and expected service in the luxury hotel market. It's not just the profitability of the spa itself that is important, but the effect the spa has on the hotel's performance. He says: "Spas are an anchor component in these luxury hotels and especially in the Dead Sea, where the attraction is the sea, the salt and the different treatments associated with the Dead Sea. Profitability of the spa operations cannot only be measured in terms of the departmental profitability, it's also critical to note the effect that the offer has on room occupancy and average achieved room rate levels of the hotel operations."

PwC's Freitas adds: "Profitability is a key issue particularly for developers and we may consider it in future once we explore this sector a bit more." However, accounting consistency will be necessary before it will be possible to benchmark profitability. ●

For a free copy of the E&Y Spa Benchmark Survey on Dubai hotel spas, email paul.arnold@ae.ey.com or nikita.sarkar@ae.ey.com.

For a free copy of the PwC Dead Sea Spa Benchmarking Survey, email yohaan.freitas@ae.pwc.com.

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Naked communion

Japanese hot springs – onsen – are a way to break down barriers and for people to get to know each other in a relaxing atmosphere. David Minton shares his account of the country's traditional bathing experience

DAVID MINTON • DIRECTOR • THE LEISURE DATABASE COMPANY



Onsen is a term for hot springs in Japanese and for most Japanese people, onsen is not only a regular part of their life but also a respite from it. Perhaps it's a little like how many of us think of spas in the west. As a volcanically active country, Japan has around 3,000 onsen fed by natural hot springs, with another 14,000 individual springs scattered all over the mainland and the many islands.

For thousands of years onsen have played a major part in Japanese culture and lifestyle; the history and etiquette are closely related to the sento (public bath). Onsen use naturally hot water from the country's geothermally heated springs while the public baths, in comparison, are filled up with heated tap water.

The legal definition of an onsen states that its waters must contain at least one of 19 designated chemical elements such as radon and metabolic acid and be 25 °C or warmer.

Traditionally, men and women bathed together at the onsen but single-sex bathing has become the norm since the opening of Japan to the west during the Meiji period between 1868 and 1912.

The Tombo-no-yu (left) at the Hoshinoya Resort is an open air hot spring with mountain views



Today onsen play a central role in Japanese tourism and many have become destination resorts focused on peace, quiet and beauty. During my visit to Japan, I tried out four different types of onsen and discovered how they stood out in the marketplace.

ZERO-CARBON ONSEN

Lots of resorts serve a special evening meal to complement onsen and I experienced this, alongside tranquility and stunning scenery, at the Hoshinoya resort at Karuizawa which is just 71 minutes west of Tokyo on the Shinkansen bullet train. I exited the train station to a land of rolling hills covered in lush greenery where the tops are hidden in mist, 1,000m (3,280ft) high.

Since their discovery in 1914, the Hoshino Hot Springs, located at the foot of the active volcano Mount Asama, have relieved fatigue for many, but now a new showcase for Japanese onsen, culture and lifestyle has opened. Hoshinoya resort won the first Japanese Ecotourism Award in 2009 and is now working on being one of the first zero-carbon hotels in the world; and the onsen in this unspoilt setting – which uses naturally heated water and materials such as cypress wood, marble and granite – is no exception.

The first thing that helped me to forget about the stresses of the city life was the electric buggy that took me to a simple yet modern wooden-framed room overlooking a series of lakes and rivers along a valley. Natural waterfalls nearby helped to generate some of the hotel's green electricity. I found myself floating further away from all the trappings of western society as I slipped into my day-time yukata (robe) and headed for the onsen.

Japanese people often talk of the virtues of hadaka no tsukiai (naked communion) for breaking down barriers and getting to know people in the totally relaxing atmosphere of an onsen. It rep-



The Hoshinoya Resort at Karuizawa, 71 minutes from Tokyo, won an Ecotourism Award in 2009 and is working on being zero-carbon



The Benten no Yado Itsukushima (above) is a traditional inn which has a simple, yet high-end offering with magnificent views (below)

resents an opportunity for the Japanese to melt down the hierarchical nature of society through mutual nakedness and intimacy. My freshly laundered yukata was removed and stored in a beautiful wicker basket which just sat on an open shelf – security at this onsen, like all public places I visited in Japan, was not an issue. In return, I picked up a small modesty towel, slid open a door to the male cleansing room and began my 'naked communion'.

All around the room there were bathing stations equipped with shower taps, where you're required to squat on a wooden stool and wash your hair and body with great vigour. After the washing, there's a rinsing process where you wash away all traces of soap – entering the onsen while still dirty or with traces of soap on the body, is socially unacceptable.

My small towel, not much bigger than a face cloth, provided a modicum of modesty as I walked between facilities. From the washing area, I immersed myself in the first indoor hot tub before moving to the Tombo-no-yu: an open air hot spring which had spectacular views of the mountains. Relaxed already, I moved onto a series of meditation baths which had been designed to stimulate all five of the senses. Bath Hikari in the light and Bath Yami in the dark provided a unique environment where time just sped away as I happily floated about. The magic of the experience continued over dinner where every dish was presented as a stunning work of art.

A TRADITIONAL OFFERING

Not all onsen are as modern as the one at the Hoshinoya resort, but it seems all are unique. On the island of Miyajima, less than an hour from the city of Hiroshima by water taxi, I sat in an onsen and took in the magnificent views of the torii gate which marks the entrance to the Itsukushima Shrine – a national treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site. By day the torii gate appears to be floating in the water

Onsen represent an opportunity for the Japanese to melt down the hierarchical nature of society through mutual nakedness and intimacy

at high tide, while at night the shrine and the gate are illuminated and surrounded by walkways over the water that are lit with stone lanterns. This was the setting for Benten no Yado Itsukushima: a ryokan (traditional Inn), which reflects the traditional Japanese way of life that is still so deeply ingrained in contemporary culture. The rooms were very simple with tatami-mats on the floor, a bath made from local hinoki cypress wood and a futon that goes down at night. This ryokan has been built into the hillside along with a simple wooden onsen which provides the most perfect peaceful reflections across the bay before I was served a dinner of fresh seafood. I later read that the view from the onsen has been ranked as one of Japan's top 10 sights – a judgement with which I have to concur.

FROM THE FUTURE

On the way back to Tokyo I had one more stopover planned; and although it didn't get the views like those on Miyajima, I did get to follow in the footsteps of the famous at the Yamaha Tsumagoi resort – a venue of choice for the rock band Queen and a previous training ground for the Japanese football team. Yamaha, the Japanese music



The Itsukushima Shrine entrance

PHOTO: TORII GATE SHINTO

PHOTO: © 2010 BENTEN NO YADO, ITSUKUSHIMA - ONSEN



LaQua (left) is an urban spa in Tokyo; parts of the Yamaha Tsumagoi resort are traditional, while the onsen (right) has a futuristic feel

giant, owns two resorts and Tsumagoi is a multi-purpose site just outside the western city of Kakegawa. The resort, which is set in a quadrant, with long drapes flowing down the buildings, has an imperial feel to it. While the resort had a traditional setting, the onsen was more futuristic – the entrance to the hot springs, with automatic sliding doors and a delicate lighting scheme, gave a sense of walking into a Ridley Scott sci-fi movie. All the pools had artificial waterfalls with thermal waters and nearby were linens and towels so soft that you wanted to linger longer. The special evening meal needed some translation to begin with, but it was such a culinary delight that I was actually thankful of social media sites where I could share my views with friends across the network.

URBAN ONSEN

Back in Tokyo, I found that the urban onsen had been designed to transport me back to the experiences I'd had in the countryside. At LaQua, the spa zone in the Tokyo Dome City development, the

natural waters bubbled up from the Koishikawa Hot Springs just 1,700m (5,577ft) underground. The promotion of the qualities of the water was more up front in this city onsen, where many notices informed me of the benefits of the waters. The therapeutic and thermal properties of the waters are intended to help with poor circulation, shoulder discomfort and neuralgia and they are also believed to benefit the skin.

LaQua operates over five floors that are all interconnected to the Healing Baden Zone – the main area of water and outdoor space on floors eight to nine. LaQua is billed as a “first class space for healing” but on the night I went it was full of corporate groups whose bosses wanted to go and take to the waters before an evening of eating and drinking with colleagues.

Of the 3,000 onsen in Japan, no two are alike. Yet the use of natural and unique design features, coupled with meticulous attention to detail and customer focus, means that every visit is one to remember and recommend. ●

According to **Hirokazu Iida**, president of Shuei Wellness Co in Tokyo, there are three distinct types of onsen. These include a small number of city onsen, which are frequented by families, friends and business colleagues who “bathe together, laugh or talk loudly and afterwards have a party with beer and food”. In comparison there are onsen at traditional Japanese inns (ryokans) which are more focused on relaxation and are split into budget or high-end facilities. There are also stand alone onsen, in a natural setting, points out **Tae Kawasaki**, president and founder of The Day Spa based in Osaka.

Yoriko Soma, the president of SpaFinder Japan, elaborates on the positioning of ryokans. “Onsen ryokans used to be central to Japanese tourism, but in the 80s switched to cater to corporate guests. Since the downturn, however, such ryokans and mass-market onsens are dwindling and these traditional offerings

What role do onsen play in the Japanese wellness industry?

We asked four key professionals in the Japanese spa industry to give their take on onsen and how they fit into the country's spa market

are reinventing themselves.” While onsen and spas have traditionally been separate – bathing in onsen is an old custom in Japan and spa facilities didn't come onto the scene until international operators launched there in mid-2000 – Soma says that high-end ryokans with onsen are beginning to offer spa treatments.

Tomonori Maruyama, chief researcher at the Mitsui Knowledge Industry who has closely observed the spa market in Japan agrees that

many onsen ryokans are becoming “reincarnated as small luxury hotels with very healthy Japanese food. Some of them have unique wellness programmes focused on Japanese nature, culture and ingredients or provide traditional therapies such as shiatsu, acupuncture and moxibustion. These new ryokan spas act as cultural ambassadors now.”

Kawasaki says the mix of onsen and spas is a good one: “It is our nature to receive a body massage after bathing in an onsen, so it is the perfect combination to have a spa treatment area at ryokans with onsen (ryokan spa).” She says that these facilities would typically attract domestic customers and they're especially popular with families, couples and groups of females. However, the new high-end ryokan spas are now attracting more international guests – but she admits that the lack of bilingual staff and information is a barrier that needs to be overcome if this market is to grow.

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The Bosphorus Bridge (left); this year's hosts, GSS board member Susie Ellis and SpaFinder board member Josh McCarter (above)

HOT TOPICS

We look at the key trends and highlights from the 2010 Global Spa Summit in Turkey

Turkey sits at the crossroads between Europe and Asia; and Istanbul, with its European and Asian quarters connected via the iconic Bosphorus Bridge, was the ideal setting for a worldwide gathering at this year's Global Spa Summit (GSS). Top executives from the spa industry all came together with a view to solving shared problems and discussing ideas and opportunities for the future.

Held at the Çiragan Palace Kempinski, the 2010 summit was a sell out: it reached its 250-delegate limit and had representatives from 40 nations, the widest reach in its four-year history. It was also interesting to note an increase in the number of delegates who weren't directly related to the spa industry, with executives from the medical, fitness and tourism sectors.

Despite the economic downturn, a live audience poll showed that the spa operators

are regaining confidence – 32.1 per cent of delegates estimated that their total profit for 2010 will be 'up significantly' compared to 2009 and 42.1 per cent estimated that it will be 'up somewhat'. In addition, the majority (51.3 per cent) said their business had expanded since May 2009 while only 18.4 per cent had downsized. Overall, the feeling was that a full, global economic recovery – where the economy would reach those levels enjoyed before the recession – would occur in 2012.

In 2009, there was talk about a merger between medical and spa tourism or 'wellness tourism' (see SB09/4 p35). This year, the focus was on the need for scientific proof, a topic outlined by keynote speaker Dr Ken Pelletier, a US clinical professor of medicine. If spas are to leverage their relationship in medical circles, they need to prove the efficacy of their services (see p20).

There was also recognition of the importance of 'wellness,'



Top spa executives come together with a view to solving shared problems and discussing ideas for the future



SAVE THE DATE

The 2011 Global Spa Summit will be held on 16-18 May in Asia

A toast to the GSS (above) with board members Jeff Matthews from Bali and Marc Cohen from Australia, centre, and Joe Gutierrez and Paul Lehr far left and right from Pritikin Longevity Center in the US; networking with top spa professionals is a USP of the summit (right)

or a complete approach to providing prevention, rather than treatment, for illness. While this has been at the core of spas in Europe for hundreds of years, a global trend of wellness – covering everything from conventional and alternative medicine, nutrition and fitness to spas, pampering and personalised health – is now gaining momentum. It was revealed that the worldwide wellness industry is poised to break the US\$2tn (£1.57tn, £1.32tn) a year barrier – according to results from a GSS-commissioned study by SRI International.

Other important pieces of research included the latest benchmarking statistics for luxury US hotel spas by Smith Travel Research (see p42), Coyle Hospitality's insights into consumer buying patterns (see SB10/2, p61) and PricewaterhouseCooper's study on spas in the Dead Sea region (see p30).

An emerging theme for 2010 was social media – are spas doing it well, where can



they improve and what are the trends? Social scientist Marc A Smith, has outlined his keynote session on this topic on p41.

Ideas for thinking outside the box were given by Edie Weiner, who specialises in future research for business and some delegates on p40 have shared their highlights from her talk. Meanwhile, Philippe Bourguignon, CEO of Revolution Places gave his predictions for 2025 – imagining that China has joined the US as a super economy, Chanel

has created a drinkable perfume and Nestle and Shiseido have launched a snack which can change hair colour. He also suggested that 'the home' could be a new channel for spa investments outside of hospitality and healthcare. All ideas to think about in the future.

To find out more about any of this information visit the Global Spa Summit website – www.globalspasummit.org – where transcripts for all keynote speeches and copies of presentations can be accessed.

What was your top takeaway from the

“The SRI International research on wellness confirmed to me that the future of spas will be to integrate complementary medicine, fitness, nutrition and more advanced beauty to create a wellness approach which will offer longer lasting results. As a result of the GSS, we'll also be working on our wellness tourism strategies for the spas we create.”

Anna Bjurstam, managing director, Raison d'Etre

“I realised just how intrusive the web can potentially be and the apparent willingness people have to share all kinds of information. What also caught my attention is that the medical profession is now using the word ‘spa’ to introduce holistic and alternative health practices. This is a paradigm shift in the concept of spa and now we [MOHG] are adapting our strategy to ensure we're clear about our services and philosophy.”

Andrew Gibson, group director of spa, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group



The summit was attended by 250 delegates from 40 countries

“My take home message was the term ‘mash-up’ – we're now seeing that the spa industry serves as a melting pot for previous disparate sectors such as complementary medicine, medical and wellness tourism, fitness, healthy eating, anti-ageing, workplace wellness and preventative and personalised health. When converged, these sectors form a US\$2tn wellness industry.”

Dr Marc Cohen, professor, RMIT University

“My thunderbolt moment came when Marc A Smith and Edie Weiner talked about cloud-mining and the possibility that different sources of information can come together to tell rich stories of people's habits and lifestyles. This information gathering is still unexplored in our industry and has great potential but also ethical issues that need consideration.”

Sheila McCann, director of spa – brand quality, Shangri-La International Hotel Management

“A major topic that spoke very powerfully to me is how critical it is for our industry to jumpstart initiatives to gather the mounting medical-based evidence that shows that numerous spa/wellness approaches work and to then communicate this to consumers and make it easily accessible to the spa and the healthcare industry. So far, our industry has been far too conservative in broadcasting its claims. Dr Pelletier really brought this message home to me in his keynote speech.”

Susie Ellis, president, SpaFinder Inc.

► **S**ocial media has become a major force, as people search for services or discuss choices online with friends. Building a social media presence is now as important as traditional marketing so, if you don't already have them, create your Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Foursquare accounts today, if only to listen to what your customers – or competitor's customers – are saying about you.

Once you've done this, more active engagement involves linking, blogging and replying to people talking about you. While this can be costly in terms of time and expertise (new staff may be needed), you should join these conversations because they'll take place whether you contribute or not. And there are also rewards – you can access customer opinions more cheaply than through focus groups and with higher participation rates than surveys.

Identifying key contributors in relevant conversations is the primary task of a social media strategy. Building a relationship with these central figures gives you greater reach

SOCIAL MEDIA, SENSORS & SPA

Following his keynote speech at the Global Spa Summit, social media expert Marc A Smith tells *Spa Business* readers how they can get the internet to work for them

MARC A SMITH • CHIEF SOCIAL SCIENTIST • CONNECTION ACTION CONSULTING GROUP

and builds brand champions – the independent voices that can make (or break) you.

Get networking

The science which enables us to understand how all this works – social network analysis (SNA) – is an arcane area of research that has traditionally required advanced maths and computing skills. Luckily, analysing and

visualising networks is becoming easier and easier with new software.

I work with the Social Media Research Foundation, whose primary project is to create a network overview, discovery and exploration add-in for Excel – the NodeXL Project for short – a free and open extension to the familiar spreadsheet. Using NodeXL, it's easy to collect the network of people

2010 Global Spa Summit?

Futurologist Edie Weiner was one of this year's most popular keynote speakers

“Edie Weiner said that the second most used currency in the world is ‘points’ – customers want value and recognition: spas need to create loyalty programmes based on a point or credit system. This is just one example of how we’ll be using her presentation to re-evaluate and improve our business.”

Jeff Matthews, president and COO, Mandara Spa

“Philippe Bourguignon’s talk about the future was very thought provoking, specifically, the fact that we don’t innovate with the changing needs of our clients – hotels keep selling connecting rooms rather than villas for example. This applies to all industries, including spas, and it’s so true.”

Dzibordi K Dosoo, CEO, Allure Africa

“Jan Freitag’s session was fascinating and confirmed my suspicions that luxury treatment spend is down and that day spa/salon treatments are up as people are still coming for maintenance treatments.”

Brain Hunter, principal and owner, Mary Reid International Spa Academy

“I really enjoyed the two keynote speakers because they were futurists who gave an outsider’s perspective of the spa sector. However, the most important aspect of the summit for me is the ability to share information with colleagues at a senior level in a much more open format and this year was no exception.”

Susan Harmsworth, founder and CEO, ESPA International



“Edie Weiner’s view was unique. She mentioned that the retirement age will one day be 80 and not 65. We have to look into catering for these people, but this approach should be tailored to individuals rather than just targeting 65 to 80-year-olds in one big group. Price will also no longer be an issue. She suggested we review our spa menu to better suit the needs of customers.”

Jennifer Ng, director of business development, Spa Botanica

“I found the concept of health insurance claims very interesting, especially as healthcare costs are escalating. I can now see how spas could offer stress management and preventative programmes so that guests might claim these as part of health insurance. This will open up our market from mainly wealthy guests to a more mainstream clientele.”

Jeff Butterworth, wellness director, Jumeirah



who have been talking about you online. If you need to learn about a subject quickly, you can identify key people and topics and while search engines can only deliver lists of results, SNA can answer questions like “are there sub-groups of people talking about me and what are their interests?”

Not everyone who tweets about your brand is equally connected to other peo-

ple: some voices are louder than others. In a few clicks it’s possible to build a map of a community and see who’s at the centre of a particular discussion.

Networks come in many shapes and sizes. The ‘vertex’ count shows how many people are in the network. The ‘edge’ count indicates how many connections there are among them and the ‘degree’ count shows who has the most connections.

Some networks are shaped like a sphere, some are fragmented like thousands of shards and others are shaped like an hourglass, with relatively separate clusters. Some people act as the bridge, connecting two otherwise separate clusters. These ‘between’ people can be brokers or gatekeepers. Sometimes people are firmly at the centre of their core, but have limited connections to other clusters. Each plays an important function in the social media environment, and effective strategies need to focus on the cultivation of the right balance between different roles and engagement with people in critical locations on the graph.

Mobile sensors

More than three billion people carry mobile phones – many rich with sensors for location (GPS), motion (accelerometer), light (video) and sound (microphone) – meaning new data can now be added to the mix.

Phones also have devices that pick up radio tags like RFID and can measure heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, and even do glucose readings for diabetics. Health conscious, fitness-focused people are using these devices to track their workouts, with services like CureTogether, PatientsLikeMe, and products like FitBit. Meanwhile, people with chronic illnesses can monitor and measure their vital signs and record dosages and responses.

Social media has opened the door to millions of people broadcasting their vital signs to the world. How will spas respond when customers come to reception with terabytes of their own health and activity data and expect customised service in return?

Details: <http://smrfoundation.org> or <http://nodexl.codeplex.com>

TO SPA OR NOT TO SPA?

Jan Freitag points out why spa operators should be aware of misreading data including the latest Smith Travel Research results that he presented at this year's Global Spa Summit

JAN FREITAG • VICE-PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT • SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH



Mark Twain famously remarked about three sorts of lies: "Lies, damned lies – and statistics". This may be an odd way to start a discussion about data, but I feel that information presented here – and which I showed at the Global Spa Summit – has lent itself to many different, conflicting interpretations that spa operators should be aware of.

The focus of this survey is: does the mere existence or absence of a spa in a luxury hotel influence the performance of the hotel? To gather information, we called and surveyed 340 luxury hotels in the US – all from chains such as Four Seasons, St Regis and Ritz-Carlton – and asked whether they operated a spa or not.

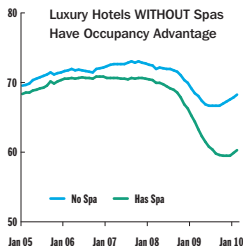
From existing and ongoing work with these hotels, we were also able to calculate the average daily rate (ADR), occupancy and revenue per available room (RevPAR). We then aggregated the data based on the two subsets: US luxury hotels with spas and US luxury hotels without spas.

Graphs 1 and 2 show the occupancy and the ADR for the two sets. Data is presented back to the beginning of 2005, so it includes the peak performance months of 2007 and the latest global downturn between fall of 2008 and fall of 2009.

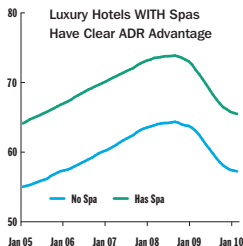
The data

On the surface, the interpretation of the data is straightforward. Luxury hotels that do not operate a spa seem to run consistently higher occupancies than those that run spas (Graph 1). For the beginning of the observation period, that difference was only slight, but the global economic downturn magnified the difference.

On the ADR side, however, the picture is very different. Luxury hotels with spas have – and had – a premium over those without spas (Graph 2). On an annualised basis, that ADR differential is between US\$55 (€43, €36) and US\$61 (€48, €40) and even as luxury hotel ADRs increased in 2006 and 2007,



*Occupancy, US Luxury Hotels, 12 MMA, 1/05 - 3/10



*ADR, US Luxury Hotels, 12 MMA, 1/05 - 3/10

the difference in ADR held steady. Today, as luxury ADRs are declining because of the global slowdown in luxury hotel room demand, the differential declined by around 10 per cent from 2005, but is still well above US\$50 (€39, €33).

The interpretation

Every time we present this data, spa developers and hotel owners are abuzz and inevitably ask: "So, if I build a spa I can expect a higher ADR?" The answer is – it depends. Our data

set only points towards a relationship, but not a causal relationship. In other words, is the ADR higher because the hotel has a spa? Or, has the hotel been forced to add a spa because of its higher prices? We cannot definitively say what begets what and our data makes no claim to establish that a spa leads to higher ADRs.

In fact, we did not control for any other factor, so maybe different questions need to be asked. What about the age of the hotel or its location? Just from cursory review, it seems that a majority of the luxury hotels without spas are in urban locations and those with spas are located in resort areas. Or maybe an explanation can be found in some other amenity.

In any case, this data has made its way into many a feasibility presentation as irrefutable fact that spas help performance. A closer reading of the evidence may suggest otherwise, simply because no true cause-and-effect relationship can be established. If nothing else, the data will hopefully lead to further discussion to assist hotel owners, spa developers and operators alike.



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Light Sauna

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Ice Cabin
Snow Cabin
Crystal Grotto
Frigidarium
Serial Bath

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OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN & GREGG CAVE

Following her fight against breast cancer, health and wellness is at the core of Olivia Newton-John's life. She tells us about setting up Australia's Gaia Retreat & Spa with her best friend

JENNIFER HARBOTTLE • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

Ask singer and actress Olivia Newton-John how breast cancer has affected her life and she'll tell you it didn't just change it, it helped her become the person she is today. "Cancer helped me get my priorities straight," she says. "I'm grateful for every new, healthy day I have."

In many ways, since discovering her breast cancer in 1996 and surviving it (she's been clear for 15 years now), the disease has defined Newton-John's life. She's become dedicated to spreading the word about the importance of early detection and in 2008 she launched a breast self-examination kit called Liv Aid, with a goal of distributing one million of them worldwide.

Others triumphs include the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, which is due to open in Melbourne in 2012, and the Gaia Retreat & Spa she co-owns in Byron Bay, both in Australia.

DREAM VISION

Newton-John never planned to set up a spa retreat. Back in 2004, one of her best friends, Gregg Cave, came to stay on her farm in New South Wales while he looked for a property to buy. The two stumbled on a rundown property set on 30 acres (12 hectares), which had once been a health retreat, then a wedding venue and a meditation centre. Newton-John says that even though the building was derelict, they were struck by its beauty: "The place took our breath away. The incredible spiritual feel and sacredness of the land hit us immediately and the energy was incredible."

NEWTON-JOHN WALKS THE TALK. SHE TAKES HER DOGS OUT DAILY, PLAYS TENNIS AND LOVES EATING VEGETABLES. REIKI IS ONE OF HER FAVOURITE TREATMENTS, BUT SHE NEVER MISSES THE CHANCE TO MEDITATE



That night, both Newton-John and Cave dreamt they'd bought the property.

"We imagined turning it into a holiday home for our friends, full of things we found most pleasurable, such as great food, a healthy lifestyle and free from stress and pressure," Newton-John laughs.

And so it was that Newton-John and Cave bought the property. Soon after, two other friends came in on the deal, with the four partners each having a 25 per cent share in the property. Between them, they decided to create Gaia Retreat & Spa, the only premise being that it had to be "somewhere they, themselves, would like to stay".

The retreat is set on 30 acres and is designed as somewhere that's stress-free, where people can eat great food and live healthily

MIXES OF BEAUTY

The four directors appointed Cave as the designer and project manager of the retreat – he had spent the previous 14 years as an art dealer and designer in Sydney. "Olivia calls my design 'barefoot meets Armani,' but I would describe it as 'mixes of beauty everywhere,'" says Cave.

In line with Cave's eclectic taste, Gaia Retreat & Spa is a mix of Asian, contemporary and Rococo influences "with little pockets of stuff thrown in here and there" – such as Philippe Starck-influenced curtains on day beds or an old British lantern which hangs in the main house.

Cave – who is now general manager – says that 40 per cent of the property was new-build, including a gym and the 747sq



The spa (above) has been designed with a mix of Asian, contemporary and Rococo influences and includes an outdoor Aboriginal garden room for two (right) offering treatments from Sodashi or Li'tya; a third of food comes from an organic garden onsite (left)



ft (69sq m) spa, which features nine treatments rooms and an outdoor, Aboriginal sacred garden room for two. Other buildings such as the main Kukura house – now with the reception, offices, kitchen, relaxation lounge, library and gift shop – and 20 villa bungalows, were completely renovated. Other facilities which have had an entire makeover include an outdoor saltwater pool, a spa bath, a sauna and a tennis court. The whole process took nine months, from design through to completion.

The treatments, which use local ingredients and the Australian products Sodashi and Li'tya, are extensive – they include facials, 13 different massages, body polishes, wraps and baths; and the spa specialises in alternative therapies such as facial acupuncture, an Australian flower essence consultation and an Esoteric Breast Massage.

Meanwhile, work is underway on new treatments which use ingredients from the

Amazon Herb Company. Newton-John married the founder of the company, John Easterling, two years ago and the pair have made it their mission to educate the public about the role of the Amazonian rainforest as the world's largest natural pharmacy.

With a commitment to rejuvenating guests, there's a wide selection of daily activities from early morning yoga, t'ai chi and meditation, through to group exercises classes and hiking and biking on the surrounding land.

Healthy, organic food – 38 per cent of which comes from the onsite garden and orchard – completes the offer.

WALKING THE TALK

Newton-John is the brand ambassador for Gaia Retreat & Spa, although Cave says this wasn't always going to be the case. "Initially, Olivia was going to be a silent partner because we wanted the retreat to stand up on its own and not be the 'Olivia Newton-

John retreat," he says. "But word got out and as Olivia showed herself to be such a great ambassador for all things health and wellness, we embraced the fact that she embodies everything Gaia Retreat & Spa stands for."

She certainly walks the talk: taking her dogs out for two miles every day, playing tennis frequently and saying she loves eating bowls of steamed vegetables from the organic garden. Reiki is one of her favourite treatments at the spa, although she never misses the chance to spend time with meditation teacher and counsellor Lani.

"Lani works from the heart, on the heart," says Newton-John. "She's helped me at times when I've needed someone to talk to and I know she is similarly there for guests. She's a very special person."

It was Cave, rather than Olivia, however, who introduced the aforementioned Esoteric Breast Massage two years ago. The 90-minute massage is the only one of its kind ▶

WE WORK TOGETHER

- in the world. The technique, which incorporates nurturing, circling strokes around the breast, is intended to help treat the side effects of painful periods, polycystic ovaries, endometriosis, bloating/water retention and menopausal systems. Olivia describes it as an "incredibly powerful massage for women."

Offering unique treatments such as this is one of the ways that Gaia Retreat & Spa stands out from its competitors. Choice and freedom are the others. "We're a choice retreat," says Cave. "You can come to Gaia and create the experience that is right for you, rather than having to do scheduled daily group activities." Having said that, however, one of the most popular activities is a group fitness class called Let's Get Physical – after Newton-John's hit song – and Cave admits that "some guests may be hoping that Livvy will be taking it!"

CARING FOR THE FUTURE

Newton-John describes Gaia Retreat & Spa as a humble place compared with other spa retreats. She says that while the directors only started out with a small budget, they've grown the retreat organically – adding things and doing it up as money was made. "You have to always keep improving," she says. "But we are known for our care and that's what I want people to go away with."

Cave is more forthcoming about the retreat's success – despite the downturn

PERSONAL FILES

OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

Favourite spa: Golden Door, Los Angeles
Favourite treatment: A hot stone massage
How do you relax? Play tennis, walk my dogs or write a song
Favourite book: *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert
Favourite food: Anything fresh and simple
What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given? From my mother's example, I learnt to have strength and never give up.

GREGG CAVE

Favourite spa: Six Senses Destination Spa, Thailand
Favourite treatment: Shiordhara
How do you relax? I walk my dogs on the beach every morning
Favourite book: *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown – I love adventure and I love Paris
What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given? It's a Deepak Chopra saying that Olivia shared with me – "You want it? Create it!"



Cave and Newton-John (above) teamed up to open the Gaia Retreat & Spa in 2005

there's been a return on investment and the partners are 100 per cent committed to the business and see it as a long-term project. He says: "I'm an owner of Gaia, as well as the person who runs it, so I have a vested interest in making sure that the wellbeing of our guests comes first."

Currently, four new luxury suites are being built; but although there is room to expand further – only two of the 30 acres has been developed – the directors are adamant that they don't want anything bigger as it could lose its heart.

As if to compensate for this, Cave says they are considering a rollout of Gaia Retreat & Spa-inspired day spas across Australia.

But although a couple of hotel chains have approached them to expand the brand, they've decided to take control themselves. The first day spa is due to open in 2012.

As for Newton-John, she says her life's focus remains on health and wellness and that contributing to the world in a positive way is what keeps her well. She continues to raise funds for the Olivia Newton-John

GAIA RETREAT & SPA BY NUMBERS

- 80 per cent of guests come from Australia, 15 per cent from the UK and Europe and 5 per cent from the US
- The female to male ratio of guests at the retreat and spa is 70:30
- 38 per cent of guests are repeat visitors – some are on their eighth visit
- Average occupancy is 72 per cent
- The average length of stay is seven days
- A two-night Revive package costs AU\$913 (US\$802, €631, £526)
- Gaia Retreat & Spa has 65 employees, 35 of whom are therapists
- A 90-minute Hot Rocks Relaxation Massage is priced at AU\$195 (US\$171, €135, £112)

Cancer and Wellness Centre Appeal and it is her dream that in addition to traditional treatments, cancer hospitals of the future will set new standards in offering complementary therapies focusing on meditation, relaxation, massage, art and music, nutrition, exercise and aromatherapy.

Longer term, Gaia Retreat & Spa still features very much in her plans also. "It's still my favourite place to be – the place I love to go the most. Maybe in the back of our minds, we're creating somewhere we'll retire to with amazing organic gardens, food and incredible friends." ●

R O B E R T D . H E N R Y
a r c h i t e c t s



Robert D. Henry Architects (rdha) was established 15 years ago as a full-service firm that has focused on spa design within a hospitality context. The firm creates architecture that can be perceived through the five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. RDHA has highly experienced professionals who are able to guide clients through the entire architectural process. Rdha translates client's needs into cost effective solutions with a sensuous design while taking a leadership role in the timely delivery of design.

NEW YORK UNCOVERED

High-end spas require a clear point of difference to survive in Manhattan's crowded marketplace. We check out the latest openings to assess how they're competing

THE SETAI WALL STREET

Developed in partnership between The Setai Group and a subsidiary of Zamir Equities, The Setai Wall Street consists of over 150 residential condominiums and luxury amenities including a members-only club. Open to residents, members and the public, other key facilities include a 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) spa and fitness centre that debuted in February. Designed by Robert D Henry Architects, managed by American Leisure, and located on the third floor of the 34-storey building, The Setai Spa cost US\$7m (€5.5m, £4.6m) and offers a separate male and female AquaGrotto – with a whirlpool, an aromatherapy steamroom and a Finnish sauna – a tea lounge, two couples' suites and eight therapy rooms. The generously sized Fitness Studio also has a yoga and pilates studio.

"The Setai New York is the first to bring a five-star spa to lower Manhattan, specifically the financial district," says spa director Steven O'Neal.

THE EXPERIENCE

I received a courtesy email from The Setai Spa reminding me to come at least 20 minutes ahead of my treatment to enjoy the AquaGrotto. Yet there I was, wishing the clocks would go back so that I could spend at least half an hour in the serene hydrotherapy facilities, which were kept immaculately clean by attendants who offered cucumber water, fresh towels and face cloths.

VITAL STATISTICS

The Setai Club Spa, 3rd Floor,
The Setai Wall Street, 40 Broad
Street, New York, NY 10004
www.setaiclubnewyork.com

Opening hours: 9am–9pm on Mon–
Fri, then 10am–8pm on Sat/Sun

Popular treatment: The 90-minute
Couples Massage at The Setai
costs US\$425 (€335, £280)



The US\$7m spa was designed by Robert D Henry Architects and opened in February 2010



Testament to the success of The Setai Spa's overall design was the way in which low inset lighting, warm Brazilian walnut and hues of red, gold and chocolate have been harnessed from the lobby onwards to slow guests down.

There was an Asian sensuousness to the interiors but elements such as vertical slatted ladders in the lobby evoked Manhattan too. In the changing rooms, generous-sized lockers included plenty of hangers, a jewellery bag and two types of slipper, while even workout clothing and disposable bathing suits were available.

As with every part of the journey, a member of staff was on hand to escort guests to the next step, in this case the tea lounge where drinks, truffles and macaroons were served pre- and post-treatment. I was then collected for my signature facial by a genuinely warm therapist who directed me to a treatment room with a noticeably large and comfortable Oakworks table and a dropped ceiling panel which added a feeling of intimacy to the elegantly designed space. The comprehensive facial was enhanced by an eyebrow pluck and thermal wax treatments for the hands and feet. Although my therapist mentioned products that may improve my skin, she explained that she would leave a small selection at reception for me to view or leave as I chose.

THE SCORE

Facilities: 10/10
Staff: 10/10
Treatment: 9/10
Cleanliness: 10/10
Value for money: 8/10
Overall: 9.5/10

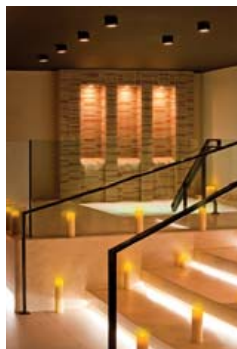
The five-star spa's amenities include two couples' suites (above) and a separate male and female AquaGrotto (right)

THE BUSINESS STRATEGY

Spa manager April Tidey says the menu is pared down to avoid confusion, but that therapists are trained to customise treatments with a variety of techniques. June Jacobs, Dayna Decker and Hommage are some of the brands used and retailed at the spa, but private-label products have been sourced for signature therapies.

Such a big spa will require constant marketing and Tidey says different programmes are in place with the building's concierge and companies operating in the area. Having a sought-after restaurant in the same complex also helps generate traffic, and there are external signs at street level highlighting the public facilities. O'Neal points out the location is a highly visited tourist spot, which also benefits from "an interesting mix of trendy urban professionals, banking executives and high-net worth individuals that make up the condominium residents."

While members of the public can book treatments, automatically gaining access to the AquaGrotto, there is the option of a US\$100 (£79, €66) day-fee for the Fitness Studio, half of which is redeemable against a spa service if booked for the same day. A dual-tiered monthly membership ranging



from US\$230-480 (€180-380, £150-315) is available with benefits including access to the fitness facilities and classes, AquaGrotto and complimentary spa services.

O'Neal says projected return on investment for the spa is three to four years. During my visit, on a Saturday, the facility seemed very quiet with just one drop-in and two ladies who'd heard about The Setai through word-of-mouth. While business clearly needs time to build up, the spa has an appropriately high level of design, service and attention to detail that should appeal to the discerning clientele it is targeting. ▶

THE SURREY

Unveiled in November 2009 following a US\$60m-plus (€47.4m, £39.4m) transformation, The Surrey has been upgraded to a five-star hotel that is reflective of its Upper East Side neighbourhood, evoking the ambience of a residential townhouse with its contemporary artwork and Art Deco-inspired design accents. Developed by Denihan Hospitality Group, the 190-bedroom property features a new 2,500sq ft (232sq m) spa, costing US\$2m (€1.6m, £1.3m), located on the second floor and aimed at hotel guests and day visitors. Designed by Lauren Rottet, The Spa at The Surrey comprises three treatment rooms, two spa suites, a manicure/pedicure room and relaxation area.

THE EXPERIENCE

If hadn't been reviewing The Spa at The Surrey, I would have been fast asleep, succumbing to the 70-plus strokes involved in my Kodo massage, part of a body ritual by Australian brand Li'tya. Spa director Cheryl Jacobs explained how the energy-based work would affect my nervous system, but nothing prepared me for the euphoric floating sensation. The generously proportioned spa suite was decorated in tones of grey and white, the



temperature was right, the facilities were spotless, Aboriginal music played in the background, and my therapist Carrie checked regularly but unobtrusively on my comfort.

From the outset, I was impressed by the staff. Having been greeted by Carrie in the reception, designed to resemble a living room, I was invited to select a tea and recline in the relaxation area. Post-treatment, Carrie responded to my dozy state by avoiding talk of products and I was offered chocolate and water – thoughtful finishing touches.

THE BUSINESS STRATEGY

Jacobs' concept focuses on personalised treatments – guests can book in hourly time increments to allow for customisation on the day. There is also a concern for privacy – there is no communal changing space; rather each room has its own shower, comfy armchairs, a safe for valuables and a hand-painted oak armoire for clothes.

By cutting out features such as a heat experience, I felt as though my time was spent effectively, either through direct ther-

THE SCORE

Facilities: 8/10

Staff: 10/10

Treatment: 10/10

Cleanliness: 9/10

Value for money: 9/10

Overall: 9/10

The spa focuses on personalised treatments, while privacy is also key

apist contact or relaxing in the dual temperature-control shower.

The privacy element is an important selling point

for the spa, which is aiming to build repeat local custom and attract international guests with the promise of something different. "As a small city spa, we want people to feel at home rather than vulnerable because they have to change or walk around in their robes in front of others," explains Jacobs. "We also want to respect their time by delivering no-fluff, results-driven treatments."

Booking is completed by phone only so that any questions about the straightforward menu can be answered in person. Although the team prefers to know what a client is after in advance, treatments are customised thereafter. Jacobs selected to work with Li'tya and Darphin because both brands are new to the Upper East Side.

There is tough competition from Sense Spa at The Carlyle nearby, but The Surrey has been targeting the neighbourhood with email blasts, letters and promotions in magazines. Hotel guests are informed of spa services upon check-in and there is ample literature in the room. While Jacobs says it is too early to discuss return on investment, she believes the individualised experience combined with accessible prices will set this spa apart. My time there confirmed this, although during busier periods traffic will have to be managed to maintain the ambience of this discreet Manhattan hideaway.



The US\$2m, 2,500sq ft Spa at The Surrey was designed by Lauren Rottet



VITAL STATISTICS

The Surrey, 20 East 76th Street,
New York, NY 10021

www.thesurrey.com

Opening hours: 9am-8pm on Mon-

Fri, then 10am-7pm on Sat/Sun

Popular treatment: Customised massage in 60-/90-/120-minute increments. Sixty minutes costs US\$150 (€118, £98).

ANDAZ WALL STREET

The third Andaz property to be opened globally by Hyatt Hotels Corporation and the first in New York, this hotel developed by The Hakimian Organization was unveiled on 1 February. It occupies 13 floors of a freestanding 42-storey building in the financial district with residences built above. The hotel's design is by the Rockwell Group, including the 800sq ft (74sq m) SPA based at concourse level, which comprises a lobby and two treatment rooms, one installed with a shower and toilet. Krista Carucci, manager – corporate spa operations at Hyatt, has been instrumental in developing the results-driven concept that aims to maximise the time of clients who are on the go.

THE BUSINESS STRATEGY

In homage to the hotel's location on Wall Street, the SPA offers a treatment menu divided into Shares, a range of therapies available in blocks of 15, 30 or 45 minutes; and Stocks, a collection of massages, facials and body treatments lasting from 60 minutes upwards. A 15-minute express session can be booked on areas of the body that need work. Additional services such as suit steam, shoe shine and a copy of the *Wall Street Journal* are provided on a complimentary basis whatever the length of treatment and take-out lunch can be ordered for \$US15 (£12.60).

The theory sounds like a good fit for Andaz's target audience who comprise gentlemen of the stock exchange, clients from corporate companies and local residents. But is it possible to deliver a 15-minute treatment effectively? "It works because clients

VITAL STATISTICS

Andaz Wall Street, 75 Wall
Street, New York, NY 10005

www.andazwallstreet.com

Opening hours: 10am-6pm on Mon,

10am-7pm on Tue-Fri, 12am-8pm

on Sat, 11am-5pm on Sun

Popular treatment: 30-minute Neck, Back & Shoulders Massage is US\$70 (€55, £46)



THE SCORE

Facilities: 6/10

Staff: 8/10

Treatment: 8/10

Cleanliness: 9/10

Value for money: 8/10

Overall: 7.5/10

Treatments are divided into stocks (an hour upwards) and shares (in blocks of 15, 30 or 45 minutes)

are asked to identify the area of the body that needs attention or how they want their skin to feel after a facial," says spa manager Holly Byerly. "In 15 minutes, we can cleanse, complete a natural enzyme treatment and moisturise the skin for a purifying result, for example."

THE EXPERIENCE

I had difficulties locating the spa since there was no signage in the elevators, I was reassured that this was being rectified and that staff will be trained to inform hotel guests about the spa upon check-in. While the design was undeniably soothing – neutral tones meet dark oak floors and sea-foam glass walls – it felt like an anticlimax after the visual excitement of other public areas in the hotel. Two therapy rooms also seemed limited for a 253-bedroom property, but the decision was taken to devote available space to the treatment experience, rather than, say, a communal changing space.

Since I had the signature Luzern Oxygen Facial – the spa also partners with organic skincare line Red Flower from New York –



Byerly: "In 15 minutes we can cleanse, complete a treatment and moisturise"

I was invited to the larger of the two rooms, as are other leisure travellers, particularly those booking a package.

Holly was clearly an expert at working with Luzern—she discussed my skin knowledgeably before commencing the therapy that included a vitamin-infused blast of medical-grade oxygen. My skin was left feeling refreshed and tingling and I was given a prescription card recommending take-home products and a shot of chilled green tea.

Catering to a clientele with limited time, I have no doubt the SPA stands out with its tailored treatment menu, value for money and efficiency. However, I'm less convinced that the facility meets the expectations of international leisure travellers staying in a stunningly designed hotel.

NYC NEWS

▶ TRUMP SOHO NEW YORK

Following the April launch of Trump Soho New York, a US\$450m-plus (€355.5m, £296m) hotel-condominium project developed by Bayrock Group, Sapir Organization and Trump Organization, the 391-bedroom property is set to add a full-service spa in the third quarter of 2010. Found on floors seven and eight of the 46-storey building located on Spring Street, the 11,000sq ft (1,020sq m) facility has been designed by Anthony DiGiuseppe and will be managed by WTS International, which has been instrumental in developing the spa concept. Differentiating The Spa at Trump from luxury competitors in New York are separate hammams for men and women with adjoining wet therapy rooms. Other facilities include seven treatment rooms including a couples' suite, three spa suites, communal relaxation room, hair/nail salon, a refreshments and healthy snack bar, outdoor pool, changing rooms and gym.

An important element of the menu is that guests will be able to customise treat-

ments around one of five intentions: calm, balance, purify, heal or revitalise. "Everything from the type of tea to the touch and oil used in the therapy will reflect this intention," says spa director Leigh Smith. While there will be an assortment of traditional treatments, there will also be a Middle Eastern and Indian flavour – rasul clay therapy is available in the hammam and shirodhara in the wet rooms.

Smith is keen on promoting the hammam as an integral part of any spa visit and has devised introductory packages that include a complimentary session for every 60-minute therapy booked. As the hotel has 12,000sq ft (1,115sq m) of meeting space, group business, whether corporate- or leisure-based, will be targeted with special packages featuring the hammam.

The two-storey, 11,000sq m Trump Soho spa is to open in the third quarter of 2010

During the visit itself, one spa attaché will be assigned to each guest to guide him/her through the facility and deliver hot towels, refreshment and heated neck pillows. Indeed, Smith is keen on taking personalisation to another level by providing all visitors with lifestyle programming advice from fitness to product recommendations.

WTS has chosen a selection of spa brands including Kate Somerville, Tara Aromatherapy, Germaine de Capuccini for men and a private-label hammam product from Turkey. In line with the thermal facilities, the spa design will reflect exotic luxury, with sensuous, earthy tones acting as a backdrop for Turkish and Moroccan influences.



ALSO IN NEW YORK

INK48 DEBUTS SPA

Ink48, a Kimpton Hotel located in the Hell's Kitchen neighbourhood, opened a 900sq ft (83sq m) eco-friendly spa in May. Facilities at the 222-bedroom property include three treatment rooms all named after writing utensils in tribute to the building's printing press history. There is also a small changing room and an outdoor Zen garden. The spa was designed by the Rockwell Group with natural materials and earthy hues, while the menu was developed in consultation with US company Relax & Rejuvenate and includes Kerstin Florian products.

EXHALE ON PARK AVENUE

Slated for a September opening, the new 249-bedroom Gansevoort Park will boast a 4,000sq ft (370sq m) Exhale-managed spa comprising four therapy rooms, an infrared detox chamber, a manicure/pedicure lounge, a gym, a hair salon and a mind/body studio. The team working on the majority of the five-star hotel, architect Stephen B Jacobs and interior designer Andi Pepper, is also responsible for the spa design.

KASHWÉRE'S FORAY INTO SPA MANAGEMENT

Unveiled in August 2010 with design by Thierry Despont, The Chatwal New York, situated in the theatre district, features a 2,400sq ft (225sq m) spa operated by Kashwère. The soft goods brand supplies to luxury hotels, spas and retailers worldwide, but this is its first spa management initiative. The spa comprises three changing suites, three treatment rooms, a manicure/pedicure station, a relaxation area, hot and cold plunge pools, and a current-generating, saltwater lap pool. Treatments include non-invasive anti-ageing procedures such as oxygen facials and pulsed light therapy (see p78).



Joerg Demuth

40, president, THE ORGANIC SPA GmbH

Demuth was born in Karlsruhe, southern Germany, into a family of scientists: his mother is a master chemist and his father a chemical engineer. He graduated as a food technologist, specialising in cosmetics and detergents from FH Lippe. Demuth is a founding member of the European Committee for Organic and Natural Skincare Standards, the organisation that formed COSMOS – a landmark pan-European standard for natural and organic cosmetics – in September 2009. He also created and runs the Organic Spa, which manufactures the Anika Organic Luxury skincare line.

I first entered the spa business as a consumer and found the concept was a fabulous one. But, when I looked into the product ingredients, I was deeply shocked by the massive amounts of synthetics being used. So I decided to create my own concept with a purely natural, organic approach – something that I could pass onto my children with a good feeling. My aim remains to compete with more well-known brands regarding efficacy and results, but in a wholly organic way.



I often reflect on my life and sometimes wonder whether, if I had made different decisions, I would be where I am today. But, honestly, I always return to the same conclusion. I feel good, being where I am and what I am, as I follow my intuition and the flow in my life.



For most of my childhood, I used to love playing in our organic garden. One of my favourite things to do was mix and make magic potions. I used all the herbs I could find in the garden and, over time, I learnt more from my parents about the power of these herbs. Still today, when I'm out with my own children in a field or a forest, I'll show them the variety of herbs on offer, and pass on what I learnt about their scents and amazing range of usage in our daily lives.

I feel very fortunate to be able to be creative and work with like-minded people. Recently, my biggest achievement was to start my company at a time when the financial sector was in complete crisis. We survived because we offered exactly what the spa industry was looking for – a sustainable, green, luxury alternative. If we had been a standard cosmetic company, no-one would have been interested in backing us.

I consider myself to be an eternal student of life, always learning and evolving. If you carefully study our surrounding nature, like wind, water and plants, you get your inspiration. Listen to the world and you have the best mentor.

More people are becoming concerned about how products are created. Operators should consider fair trade as an option when they are sourcing their products. I am very excited about one of our latest projects in Bangladesh, where we help impoverished communities use their own resources to create skincare products, sell them and generate a better income for their whole community.

I am a big fan of the slow food movement and I am convinced that your taste becomes more sophisticated if your senses are in contact with all sorts of natural aromas and flavours earlier on in life. By developing a 'real taste', which is not spoiled by synthetic aromas or flavours, I believe the body can sense healthy food on its own.



Vital vitality



The centre was inspired by the heritage of Jurmala, which included mud treatments

We take a look at the International Wellness Centre in Latvia, where the approach is all about holistic wellness

Located in the beachside town of Jurmala, a short drive from the Latvian capital city of Riga, the Balans International Wellness Centre has been fully open for just over a year following the launch of its boutique hotel in June 2009.

The story of the family-owned operation began in 1998 when ex-table tennis champion Vadim Sokolov acquired a property which encompassed a bowling alley, a gym and a café as well as a public bathhouse dating back to the 1960s.

The first phase of the redevelopment was a revamp of the bathhouse. Carried out in 2001, the result was a Russian-style banya – a tradition deeply established as a weekly

ritual in the Russian psyche, with single-sex areas offering a hot room and plunge pool supervised by a specialist 'steam maker', treatments such as body wraps and detox massages and relaxation areas.

Then, in 2005, Sokolov bought the gym/café and bowling alley businesses, which had operated independently, and his daughter Alla Sokolova – who is a co-founder, stakeholder and board member – helped establish the Balans International Wellness Centre concept and brand, which would later also include a hotel, spa and restaurant. But there was, as she explains, "no unity between the various elements of the offering".

It was to the heritage of Jurmala that the Sokolovs turned as a potential source of this unity. Created in 1959 by the merging of seaside resort Rigas-Jurmala and hydro-therapeutic spa resort Kemerī, what is now known simply as Jurmala, had long enjoyed a reputation as a health destination. Indeed, archaeological findings suggest that Kemerī's sulphur springs were already being used for medicinal purposes in the 16th century, and by the early 19th century Russian tsar Nicholas I had granted funds for the creation of bathing areas. The resort's popularity continued to grow, even throughout the Soviet

HAND-PICKED PRODUCTS

THE BALANS INTERNATIONAL WELLNESS CENTRE USES TWO SPA LINES PICKED FOR THEIR LUXURIOSUSNESS, EXCLUSIVITY AND FITTING INGREDIENTS:

■ Created in Switzerland and packaged by Helena Rubinstein, Elier (Elier Unique) skincare products are nevertheless produced in Latvia, using mud and other ingredients sourced

locally. There are now plans to create signature Elier treatments and bedroom amenities.

■ The brainchild of Russian model Julia Lemigova, Russie Blanche is a lux-

ury line used to enhance the 'banya' experience. It comprises creams, masks, essential oils and scrubs, which are produced in France, but based on traditional Siberian recipes.



Facilities include a boutique hotel (left), a bowling alley, a restaurant, a gym, a spa (above) and a refurbished 1960s bathhouse



The spa menu includes the usual range of à la carte treatments and day spa packages, but the main offering includes locally-influenced treatments such as hydrotherapy, body wraps and amber stone massages



era when it was used as a training base for professional athletes and as a reward for top-performing citizens.

"We decided to draw on this heritage, delivering treatments that this area has long been famous for – mud cures, sulphur water bathing and so on – but with a modern feel and in a more luxurious environment," explains Alla, who is now general manager.

Holistic approach

With an overall investment of €6m (US\$7.5m, £4.9m), Amber Spa boutique hotel is certainly that. The 21-room property, designed by Zakman Design Studios, adopts a gentle, amber-influenced décor throughout. Meanwhile the spa – originally built in 2005 and refurbished in early 2009 – offers 15 attractive treatment rooms, a consultation room, a relaxation area, a pedicure/manicure area, sunbeds and a hair salon. Grouped together, the spa, banya, fitness facility and a swimming pool form the Balans Club.

The treatment menu includes the usual range of à la carte treatments and day spa packages available. However, the main purpose of the spa is to complement the rest of the Balans International Wellness Centre offering, with locally-influenced treatments such as hydrotherapy, body wraps and amber

A DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH

INITIAL CONSULTATIONS AT THE BALANS INTERNATIONAL WELLNESS CENTRE CONSIST OF SIX TESTS:

- **Applied Kinesiology:** uses manual muscle testing to examine how a person's body is functioning.
- **Prime Test:** blood tests for food intolerances, ensures the patient doesn't choose food that will harm their white blood cells.
- **Rhythm Express:** similar to a cardiogram, this

monitors the body's energy reserves, using heart patterns to assess levels of stress/environmental influences on a person's nervous system and organs.

- **Bach analysis:** kinesiology tests carried out on muscles are used to find the right essence to balance the emotions.

- **Musculoskeletal assessment:** The Paul Chek method assesses areas of strength, weakness and imbalance in the body.
- **F-Scan:** uses resonating frequencies to detect the presence of different bacteria, viruses and parasites, then zaps them at a precise frequency.

stone massages integrated into the centre's broader wellness programmes.

"Spa is too narrow a word and doesn't really reflect what we do here," says Alla. "What we're about is a wellness lifestyle."

It's in this area that all the pieces of the jigsaw start to come together, in a holistic approach to wellness and vitality that encompasses fitness (in the Balans Club gym), nutrition (including personalised menus in the MyLife restaurant, which opened in June 2008) and relaxation (in the spa and Russian banya).

All Balans wellness programmes begin with a consultation with a doctor and a personal trainer, comprising six diagnostic tests (see information box, above). From there, a bespoke six-week 'vitality' programme of fitness, nutrition and relaxation is put together for each client, working with the expert in-house team – including GPs, acupuncturists, kinesiologists, physiotherapists and nutritionists.

The first week consists of the diagnostics and a chance to practise the recommendations under expert supervision, with at least



two or three hours of spa treatments each day, one or two personal training sessions, and individually tailored meals.

The remaining five weeks of the programme can either be undertaken on-site or at home: recommendations are designed to be sustainable in real life, so clients don't simply slip back into their old ways. "We teach you to listen to your body so you make the right decisions, but redressing the body's vitality also makes it more capable of rebalancing itself if you occasionally make the wrong decision," says Alla.

"At the end of those five weeks, you either come back to us to repeat the diagnostics, or we follow up by Skype or email. The maintenance phase should be a lifelong thing."

Widening the net

"Some of our guests come to us specifically for the full Balans programme, but we realise that the 'International Wellness Centre' brand might not immediately appeal to as many people as some of the individual elements of our offering, such as the banya or the restaurant," she continues.

"We therefore view our business as having four different entry points. The membership-based Balans Club is our core business locally. We have about 550 members and three different membership packages (see information box, p57), all of which include the initial diagnostics, with basic recommendations on exercise, relaxation and nutrition. Members can then trade up to the full Balans programme if they have something specific they want to achieve.

"On top of that, every hotel guest is automatically a member of the club, with an opportunity to meet with the doctor and personal trainer for an initial consultation, as well as to enjoy all the facilities. They also receive a 10 per cent discount in the spa.

"And, finally, we have the restaurant and the bowling club, which gives us access to people who might not naturally come to us



The full six-week programme, including a week at the spa and hotel (full board) costs €1,500

BALANS INTERNATIONAL WELLNESS CENTRE BY NUMBERS

- Average hotel occupancy is 55 per cent
- An average hotel stay is seven days
- Nightly hotel range from 35 Latvian lats or LVL (US\$62, €50, £40) to LVL210 (US\$373, €296, £246)
- A 90-minute amber stone massage costs LVL38 (US\$67, €53, £44)
- Balans member packages range from LVL399 to LVL2,000 (US\$710, €563, £470 to US\$3,550, €2,800 to £2,350)

for wellness, allowing us to introduce them to the rest of our 'healthy living' offering.

"Every department has to be profitable in its own right. However, having so many access points broadens our reach."

Currently around 40 per cent of clients come for the full six-week wellness programme, often as a result of a word-of-mouth recommendation, but the objective now is to build on this, further developing the international client base to encourage more visitors from countries such as Scandinavia, Germany and the UK – at present almost half of all hotel guests come from Russia. "At just €1,500 (US\$1,900, £1,250) for the full six-week programme, including full board at the hotel and spa treatments for a

week, the offering is very good value compared to western Europe," says Alla.

"Our vision is to create an internationally recognised concept and brand here in Latvia, which we could then potentially roll out elsewhere. We're already being asked to build Russian banyas in Moscow, St Petersburg and Paris, and in the longer term we could consider franchising that part of the business out.

"It's been very tough launching the business in a recession. But I just felt we were on the right track and we now hope to break even by autumn 2010. The wellness industry is often considered to be young, but right here in Jurmala we have centuries of heritage. And now we're at a really exciting point." ●

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Setting Standards

ALL PHOTOS: BILL WANDERFORD

Back in the 60s, Thai massage got a bad rap. American soldiers used the term as a euphemism for sexual favours and, as a result, it became one of the most misunderstood wellness practices in the world. At least, until recently. North American spas have since embraced the concept alongside other exotic Asian therapies to help give menus a competitive edge. European markets, however, have been slower on the uptake and spa directors would do well to find out more about its benefits. Many Thais consider the practice to be an essential component of individual health, and although not the easiest modality for farangs (foreigners) – who may lack the cultural intuition – to learn, Thai massage is an excellent adjunct to a spa practitioner's existing bodywork skills.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION

Without doubt, Wat Po Thai Traditional Medical and Massage School (Wat Po TTM) in Bangkok is the mothership for learning Thai massage. The school sets the standards for Thai massage as we know it today. It was the first to earn approval from the Ministry of Education in 1955 and the Ministry of Health in the late 1990s, and a Wat Po TTM qualification is the minimum requirement for Thai

As the birthplace of Thai massage, the Wat Po School of Traditional Thai Medicine and Massage sets the gold standard for a wellness practice that is becoming a staple of spa menus worldwide. We find out more

CHRIS MCBEATH • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

nationals to practise in Thailand, especially in hospitals and rehabilitative centres. It's this recognition that sets Wat Po TTM apart from all other instruction on Thai massage and also represents the initial efforts to encourage licensed professionals in the country.

TRADITION OF WELLNESS

The school first opened in 1955 in Wat Po – one of the largest and oldest wats (temples) in Bangkok, which is located in an area covering 50 rai (20 acres) near to the Royal Grand Palace. King Rama I began restorations in 1788 and these continued through until 1851 and the reign of King Rama III, who turned the temple into a public centre of learning by decorating walls and pillars with inscriptions and diagrams on subjects such as history, literature and astrology. The one-room Thai massage school, which

still operates as a drop-in massage pavilion, taught techniques which comprise a combination of pressure point stimulation, kneading and assisted yoga-like stretches that in some instances appear almost chiropractic in nature. Practitioners use their hands, elbows, knees, heels, feet and body-weight to deliver the therapy unless they are of the rarefied few who practise royal Thai massage, a hands-only service once reserved for the royal family. It's believed that the Wat Po massage stands out because it is much deeper, and applies more pressure than other forms of Thai massage.

TODAY'S OFFERING

Like many temples, Wat Po was established on land donated by devout Buddhists – in this case, a Chinese family named Sae Tang whose descendants are still very much involved in the community. Among other businesses (see p63), they run the 44-bed drop-in massage pavilion – where a massage costs anything between THB150 (US\$4.60, €3.60, £3) and THB300 (US\$9.20, €7.30, £6.10) – four other affiliated Wat Po schools and were responsible for moving Wat Po TTM to its present location 10 years ago.

For such a cultural icon, Wat Po TTM is in an unexpected place. Tucked in at the end of dead-end alley that bumps up against the Chao Phraya River, the five-level building exudes no air of sophistication.

The open-to-the-street reception area languishes just beyond chipped marble steps; its tight quarters accommodate mismatched furniture, makeshift shelves for instruction materials and a small alcove retailing signature brands of oils, herbs and body care products. It's not exactly a prestigious welcome but none of this seems to matter. Wat Po TTM's reputation far outweighs its humble surrounds.



Wat Po massage stand outs from other forms of Thai massage because of its heritage and its harder pressure



The Wat Po temple (above) in Bangkok is reportedly where authentic Thai massage was born

Current facilities include the main floor registration area; a classroom for theory; two large practice rooms, each equipped with massage mattresses; a consultation room; and a rooftop cafeteria where students can eat for as little as THB20 (US\$0.60, €0.48, £0.40) per helping of rice, stir-fried vegetables, spiced pork and other Thai dishes. In line with the massage pavilion, all schools also offer massage services to the public.

A BROAD APPEAL

More than 10,000 students are welcomed at Wat Po TTM each year. Advertising is based solely on word-of-mouth, although there is a website – but this is somewhat confusing, often outdated and poorly translated. The courses have a broad appeal, with participants coming from all walks of life and ranging in age from 16 to 70. Almost a third are foreigners, who wind their way through the steamy back streets of Bangkok in search of what is widely considered to be a source of traditional knowledge.

WAT PO TTM CURRENT COURSES

Courses	Length of course & hours of study	Cost of course
BASIC COURSES:		
General Thai Massage	Five days/30hrs	THB8,500 (US\$260, €210, £170)
Foot Massage	Five days/30hrs	THB6,500 (US\$200, €160, £130)
ADVANCED COURSES:		
Professional Thai Medical Massage	10 days/60hrs	THB12,000 (US\$370, €290, £240)
Level II, Thai Medical Massage*	26 days/165 hrs	THB24,000 (US\$740, €590, £490)
Oil Massage & Aromatherapy	Five days/30hrs	THB6,500 (US\$200, €160, £130)
Infant & Child Massage	Four days/21hrs	THB5,000 (US\$150, €120, £100)
Woman's Healthcare Massage	Five days/30hrs	THB6,500 (US\$200, €160, £130)
Spa Therapy Body Treatments*	20 days/140hrs	THB22,000 (US\$680, €540, £450)
Facial Care and Massage*	Five days/30hrs	THB9,500 (US\$290, €230, £190)
Nail Care & Nail Art*	Six days/42hrs	THB12,000 (US\$370, €290, £240)
Ruesri Dat Ton*	One day/6hrs	THB2,000 (US\$60, €50, £40)

*available only at Chetawan Health Schools *this course can go up to 200 hours to provide more in-depth knowledge

Course content is the same for locals and foreigners alike and although the teachers only know some English phrases, the courses apparently have enough practical sessions so that language barriers aren't an issue. This is especially important since Wat Po TTM selects its massage teachers based on overall

knowledge, aptitude and experience rather than teaching in English.

This is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the Wat Po TTM faculty has grown from 10 to more than 100 teachers. And it is believed that this growth will continue as satellite facilities broaden their scope of courses.

Except for the advanced courses, there are no entrance requirements and with a student/teacher ratio of four to one, learning is intense and very hands-on.

Advance registration is preferred but it's not uncommon for international students to be accommodated on a drop-in basis; consequently during any given class, tutors might be teaching several levels to various nationalities. Beginners are clearly identified with numerous ink spots running up and down their limbs to illustrate the pressure points of the body.

DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE

Completing the General Thai Massage course is the aim for most registrants. The course covers 30 hours of practical and theoretical classes, which is taught over five days and costs THB8,500 (US\$260, £210, €170).

The five key learning areas include pressure points to release energy, massage techniques to relax muscles – Wat Po TTM teaches an especially deep method that relaxes nerves and readies the muscles for stretching – a reflexology-style foot massage, additional techniques for women and the application of herbal compresses to de-stress core muscle groups.

To pass, students must attend 100 per cent of the classes and are assessed via a practical test – although it's quite subjective and a teacher might choose to reject a student who doesn't seem to have the right attitude, focus, intuition, touch or academic grooming.



Pupils can eat at the onsite cafe for less than a dollar



INTERNATIONAL WAT PO TTM STUDENTS

"Thai massage has become a very stylish thing to do. I wanted to learn from the best and Wat Po is the top school, so I came to Thailand. You learn such a lot in a short time that it can be hard to remember. Surprisingly, language isn't an issue as everyone learns by watching and doing. It's a very practical course that's half fun and totally professional."

Christa Zschau, Ulm, Germany



Foreign students who complete the course earn a Certificate of Pride which recognises their acquisition of the basic concepts.

Thai nationals, however, must attend an additional two weeks of classroom theory which includes classes in physiology and anatomy as well as lessons focusing on the circulatory, renal and reproductive systems. This course content has been developed in association with Bangkok's Bumrungrad International hospital and the Ministry of Health and has added a degree of standardisation, as well as bringing a depth of knowledge to what is essentially still an intuitive, familial practice that is passed from one generation to the next.

Once this extra stage is completed, nationals earn a Certificate of Achievement – the equivalent to a college diploma, which enables them to practise in Thailand. Foreigners are welcome to attend theory classes for a higher certificate but all lessons are conducted in Thai.

Students also have the option to pursue the equivalent of a col-

"I was working in Malaysia with a friend who had just finished a course at Wat Po and really inspired me to give it a go. I'm already a practising massage therapist and it helps to have an understanding of anatomy. Thai massage is quite different to learn; it's going to be a great additional skill back home."

Andrew Funk, Melbourne, Australia

"Wat Po's fame is lore. I was coming to Thailand anyway so thought I would take the opportunity to learn a new skill. Thai Massage is just beginning to catch on in the UK so I hope to be at the start of the wave."

Chris Pimlott, Blackpool, UK

lege degree, but only at the Chetawan Salaya Health School where longer term, residential courses include Level II, Thai Medical Massage which covers aspects of traditional medicine and pharmacy, as well as spa therapies such as nail care and body treatments. There are also diploma-like courses in aromatherapy, herbal steam and oil massage remedies designed to enhance the school's key focus of Thai massage.

THAI PRIORITIES

While no financial subsidies exist to assist international students, Thai nationals can apply for grants from the school. Aid is generally reserved for those from villages too poor to support its own health clinic and applicants must not only be recommended by an outreach doctor, but also be endorsed by village elders. Students who receive free education are expected to return to the village with their newly-acquired and much-needed skills.

For other graduates, the Ministry of Health maintains a central job registry in conjunction with Wat Po TTM. Although overseas spa operators can access this resource by contacting the school, the registry's primary purpose is to keep Thai practitioners in the country in order to maintain the integrity of their craft.



The five key learning areas include pressure points, massage techniques, foot massage, techniques for women and herbal therapy



Courses also include theoretical lessons

This is an important point because as much as the Ministry of Health recognises the export value of Thai massage, it is aware of the dilution factor. For example, international spas might modify techniques with a softer, less intensive approach or introduce more pampering, flowing movements from other modalities such as Swedish massage. Equally, the growing popularity for Thai

BEYOND TEMPLE WALLS

Today, the Wat Po massage pavilion and massage school are operated by the Sae Tangs – a Chinese family whose ancestors originally donated the land.

Moving beyond the temple confines necessitated the parent company to change its name from Chetuphon (a term used only in association with the temple itself) to Chetawan.

The Sae Tang family is also responsible for creating affiliate Wat Po massage learning clinics called the Chetawan Health Schools. There are four of these: in Salaya, Tatieng and Chaengwattana on the outskirts of Bangkok and one in Chiang Mai, north Thailand. The additional schools allow

massage in a spa setting has seen a rise in guest injuries, such as bruising or disjuncted muscles, as young practitioners push their own boundaries of service delivery.

Consequently, the Ministry of Health's allegiance to Wat Po TTM comes with an understanding that the school is at the forefront of protecting the efficacy of traditional Thai massage. Certainly there are excellent

Thais to study closer to the communities they serve and at Salaya, they can also take extended residential courses.

Although other Wat Po massage training centres are springing up in locations such as Marrakech and in the Philippines, they tend to be organised by ex-Wat Po students using the Wat Po name, rather than having earned any official sanction.

In 1979, the Sae Tangs also set up Medicos, a company that manufactures and distributes spa products, many of which are available globally. These include Newsky, a line of consumer massage oils, creams, herbal compresses and scrubs; Benacqui skin and haircare products; and Lamenette, a range of massage accessories such as beds, pillows and traditional sauna tents.

Thai massage courses available outside of Thailand, especially those that incorporate anatomy and physiology, but they don't have the cachet of those from Wat Po.

And while Wat Po TTM's certificates are not recognised outside of Thailand by any formal organisation, they have a strong heritage and reputation which continues to draw in people from around the world. ●

A NEW RENAISSANCE

The Four Seasons Hotel Florence has built an Italian spa resort inside a perfectly preserved Renaissance palace; and with products from one of the world's oldest pharmacies, the celebration of Florence's past doesn't stop there



The Four Seasons Hotel Florence couldn't be more Florentine. For one thing, it's located in two Renaissance buildings: the 15th century Palazzo della Gherardesca, which boasts famous past owners including the Medici family; and the 16th century Conventino, a former convent. Both are situated in the 11-acre (4-hectare), 500-year-old Giardino della Gherardesca, Florence's largest private garden.

Then there's the 791sq m (8,514sq ft) spa itself, located in a third building, with big windows overlooking a pool and the garden's weathered trees. It offers treatments crafted by Tuscan-born spa manager Lucia Papalini and Florence-based Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, one of the world's oldest pharmacies. "The idea is to have Italian treatments and brands, and guests here are happy because they don't want shiatsu treatments and things you find in other parts of the world," Papalini says.

Following seven years of planning and construction, the June 2008 launch of this €120m (US\$151m, £100m) Four Seasons was an important one for Florence. Aside from preserving an historic city centre property, the project gave the city its first spa resort – previously the centre had only one day spa, SoulSpace. It has also provided

The US\$151m Four Seasons Hotel Florence is located in two Renaissance buildings, situated in the city's largest private garden

Florence with exactly the type of hotel previously lacking, according to PR coordinator Ginevra Brandolini d'Adda: before, Florence only attracted mass tourists, she says, but now it's attracting high-level tourists.

TIME MACHINE

Step into the lobby of the hotel, once the palace's courtyard, and original Renaissance details surround you; there are stuccos, frescos created by artist Agostino Ciampelli for the Medicis, and elaborate bas-reliefs – the property's most valuable artwork. The opulently-designed suites also boast various historical features including 19th century paintings, Chinese silk wallpaper and ceramic flooring.

Preserving these details and mingling them with the modern to create a five-star hotel wasn't easy. After the Fingen Group (an Italian conglomerate) acquired the property in 1999 from the country's metal manufacturing company Società Metallurgica, and chose Four Seasons as operators, a two-year development process began. While Four Seasons had design standards more applicable to contemporary buildings, the restoration of the listed property also needed to be closely supervised by government agencies.



Restrictions posed a problem for the spa's construction, says Filippo Calandriello, the Fingen project manager. The authorities needed a lot of convincing to excavate part of the garden for an underground changing room, sauna and shower area, but thwarted other plans. "Ideally we would have created a covered pool for guests in the winter and we wanted a much bigger spa with direct access to the main building through a tunnel, but this was impossible to create because we had to preserve trees and vegetation."

REALISING A VISION

The completed Four Seasons Hotel Florence spa is located in a two-storey building with a pillared façade, as well as a ground-floor

If the historic gardens and grounds weren't protected, the developers would have built a covered pool for guests to use during the winter

lobby and lounge designed in cream and black by Pierre-Yves Rochon. The look is sleek and contemporary, but accents such as statues and pillars add a classical Italian feel. On the second floor, light permeates the nine treatment rooms and one couple's suite, which all have floor-to-ceiling windows lined with white shutters.

Spa manager Lucia Papalini, who was recruited a few months before the hotel's opening, had the task of developing the spa from scratch. She was previously spa manager at Fonteverde Natural Spa Resort near Siena, but shaping this spa was her first experience of having complete control over a project. "At my previous spa, the owner and I worked closely, but he was the one that made the decisions. When I came here, they told me: 'Lucia, this is your tour, enjoy. ►

Manager Lucia Papalini, who developed the spa, wants people to say it is "the most beautiful they've ever seen"

- And they left me to do my job," she says. Papalini worked on creating a Florentine feel, choosing local alabaster for trays, dishes and bottles and even deciding the scent guests experience as they enter – a mix of Venetian potpourri and verbena oil. It was also her decision to name each treatment room after trees found in the garden.

For the spa's products, Papalini knew what she wanted as well – natural, traditional ingredients that had a Tuscan feel. So she approached Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, which has been making herbal products using ancient methods since it was established in Florence in 1612. Today, the small company has a shop and museum in central Florence, as well as shops around the world, but it had never created products for a spa before. "They told me 'these are the products we have, we don't want to do anything more at the moment,'" Papalini says. But she eventually persuaded them to prepare products for her exclusively.

Papalini worked closely with the company's chemical technician director for three months on these. She asked for a powder from nuts of the cypress tree to be used in a scrub that is now one of the spa's most popular treatments. Other creations include a scrub made a powder from the iris flower – an emblem of Florence – for the spa's signature treatments. While the use of natural products like these mean results are not as quick as when chemicals are used – for example, facials last for 75 minutes – this was the only way for



Four Seasons Hotel Florence by numbers

- The hotel reached 100 per cent occupancy in July 2009, one year after opening
- The hotel, which has 116 rooms and suites, employs 250 staff
- The spa has a capture rate of 25 per cent
- The spa has up to 13 employees, depending on the season

Papalini. "In our spa, you don't need to think about technology," she says. "You can think about an ancient noblewoman who would have taken a bath with these products."

PROUD MOMENTS

The spa and its treatments have proved popular – though it's mainly marketed to Four Seasons Florence clientele, 15 to 20 per cent of visitors are external, with other local hotels booking appointments for their guests. Having launched in 2008 amid the economic crisis, the spa isn't profitable on its own yet, but Papalini expects that it will be in a year. In the meantime, she's looking to attract more external guests for the slower winter months through gift cards for treatments, and by promoting the spa to locals who are increasingly visiting the hotel restaurant for its new Sunday brunch.

In terms of competitors, there's the five-star Il Salviatino in nearby Fiesole – a €50m (US\$63m, £41m) resort which is currently developing a Devarana Spa by Thai company Dusit International. But this isn't a worry, Papalini notes, as it's a completely different concept with its Asian-themed treatment menu.

Papalini's proud of the spa she's built, and speaks about her work with an undeniable passion; one of her strongest memories is about what happened after the spa's very first treatment. "It was a father, a mother and a daughter – Americans – and they gave us a really high tips and were so complimentary. They loved the concept," she recalls. "The proudest moments are when the guests tell you 'you did a great job'. I want them to come out saying that this is one of the most beautiful and interesting spas they've seen." ●

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL & RESORTS – NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Four Seasons currently has around 40 projects in the pipeline. New and upcoming developments include:

Four Seasons Hotel Beirut – Launched in December 2009, this 230-bedroom hotel features a spa with seven treatment rooms, a VIP couples' suite with a private

whirlpool, an outdoor terrace and Mediterranean views.

Four Seasons Resort Vail – When this Colorado resort opens in mid-2010, it will feature an Alpine spa with 13 treatment rooms, including two for couples, and treatments especially designed for high altitudes.

Four Seasons Private Residences Denver – An urban condominium which will offer a spa and salon when it launches in third quarter of 2010.

Four Seasons Hotel Marrakech – Set for a late 2010 debut, this 140-bedroom hotel will boast a full-service spa, steamroom, two

large heated swimming pools, a plunge pool and a fitness centre.

Four Seasons Hotel Hangzhou at West Lake – Also launching in late 2010 and one of a number of Chinese projects in the pipeline, the hotel's spa will feature Asian therapies, an indoor swimming pool and an outdoor heated pool.

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Serbia is one of the richest sources for natural, therapeutic waters in Europe. Its lands have been blessed with around 500 springs of different curative mineral waters. It is also home to 40 'banjas' – the word for Serbian spas and also the name for the resorts which have developed around the springs. Now the sector is gaining international attention with privatisation of its state-owned banjas. So, when did spa tourism begin in Serbia, how has it developed, and what are the opportunities ahead?

WELLNESS WATERS

Ancient Romans, as far back as the 2nd century, used Serbia's mineral and thermal waters for curative and relaxation purposes. But the majority of banjas weren't officially noted by the state until the late 19th century.

Depending on their geological composition, the springs were cold, warm and even hot; barely or highly mineralised; enriched with various chemical substances and oligo elements; or even contained curative radioactive waters. Other features included medicinal gases and muds.

The springs were used to treat multiple illnesses (see below) as people bathed in them, drank the waters or inhaled their vapours and they were all in beautiful environments surrounded by forests, meadows and orchards.

Over time, accommodation was added to enable people to 'take the waters' and the cen-

SOMETHING ABOUT Serbia

There's great promise for medical and wellness tourism in Serbia, a country that is a rich source of healing waters and where privatisation of its traditional spas is gaining momentum

tre piece of the complexes were institutions or hospitals which used the waters for treatments. Parks, hiking trails, swimming pools and hotels completed the offer.

A number of banjas were also situated in high-altitude areas – typically 450-1,500m (1,470-4,920ft) above sea level – where the oxygen-rich air led to those institutions establishing their reputations for curative powers, as well as making excellent training grounds for sports people.

The popularity of the banjas was at its peak between 1914 and 1945 and visitors came from all over Europe to enjoy the waters and

for treatments. But after the formation of the former Yugoslavia, spa patronage became more internally focused. This situation continued until the end of the troubles under Milošević's rule. Over the past 10 years though, Serbia has re-emerged as a strong tourism destination once more.

SPA RESURRECTION

A USAID programme based in Belgrade, the Serbian Enterprise Development Project 2003-2007, designed to strengthen the competitiveness of Serbian businesses, played a strong role in helping to resurrect the

BANJAS OF NOTE

The springs in Serbia can treat a plethora of diseases including those related to the cardiovascular system, respiratory organs, the gastrointestinal tract, the pancreas, locomotion apparatus, the kidney, the metabolism, gynaecological illnesses, neurological conditions, the consequences of trauma and the skin. Some banjas of note include:

■ **Vrnjačka Banja, central Serbia.** This spa town has seven mineral springs, four of which are used in medical treatments, with one – the topla voda – hailed as the only spring in the world to exactly match the temperature of the human body (36.5°C). Its Merkur Institute, with thermal baths and a wellness centre, specialises in treating diabetes and obesity. Other hotels



The Merkur Institute at Vrnjačka Banja in central Serbia treats diabetes and obesity

boast more modern spa facilities. Details: www.visitvrnjakabanja.com

■ **Banja Koviljača in the north-west.** Hailed as Serbia's oldest spa town, Banja Koviljača has numerous sulphuric and iron-bearing thermal springs. It has a Specialised Rehabilitation Hospital, with the Kovilje



Banja Koviljača boasts a Specialised Rehabilitation Hospital and a wellness centre

wellness centre, and treatments include hydrotherapy as well as manual, underwater and vibro-massage. The hospital includes a Children's Rehabilitation Department. Details: www.banjakoviljaca.rs

■ **Sokobanja, east Serbia.** The thermal mineral springs of Sokobanja range from



In 2005, Serbia's National Tourism Strategy identified spas as a key asset for tourism development, so the sector was given the same consideration as employment, education, trade and the environment

To attract international tourists, many hospitals, such as Merkur Institute (above), are adding new wellness centres

interest in Serbia's spa sector as a critical economic and tourism asset.

SEDP tourism advisor Ana Ilic, with international consultant Sue Warren from London, identified that banjas should be a key element of Serbia's tourism offer. They saw the potential to develop the banjas into wellness-focused destinations in line with contemporary trends for spa tourism. This

contrasted with the internal view that the institutions were primarily healthcare providers for Serbia – and were treated as such by law – rather than as places to attract a new market of international medical and wellness tourists.

Under an SEDP training programme, more than 15 Serbian spa directors and professionals visited contemporary spa complexes in Slovenia and Italy. As a result, some directors changed their views to develop new wellness offers for healthy people to complement their traditional therapies for sick people, thus expanding new potentials for health and leisure tourism.

At the same time, Serbia's new National Tourism Strategy also identified spas as a key asset for tourism development. This strategy, since passed into law, ensured that the spa sector's requirements were given the same consideration as other areas of public interest such as employment and education, trade, investment, and environmental protection.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Today, about 37 per cent of all tourism in Serbia is spa-related, according to the Serbian Spa Association – the umbrella body for the industry which champions spa standards and development, and the sector's profile abroad. Figures from the association and the National Tourism Organisation of Serbia, show that there are 64,000 beds dedicated to

spa tourism, with an extra 7,500 beds available in the medical spa facilities.

Domestic tourism is strong. In 2008, the banjas attracted 366,000 national tourists, which represented 60 per cent of all overnight tourism stays in the country. By comparison, there were only 23,000 international spa tourists.

One key strategy to boost international visitors is to attract medical tourists from abroad by taking advantage of Serbia's abundant curative natural resources and its legacy of medical expertise and to integrate them with a contemporary spa offer, quality hotels and a range of fitness, beauty and relaxation services – all bundled up in the beautiful environment of the traditional banjas.

An initial step towards this was first made in 2008, when the government approved privatisation of 13 of the country's main banjas. Privatisation progress has been slow due to debates over property rights and the fact that the banjas straddle health, economic and tourism jurisdictions. However, with tourism a rising star for Serbia and international interest in investment in Serbia increasing, spa tourism is poised to relive and even surpass its former glory days. ●

Additional guidance for this feature was provided by Terry Stevens, managing director of spa, leisure and tourism consultancy firm Stevens & Associates.



Sokobanja, in the east of the country, has springs ranging from 28 to 45.5°C

28 to 45.5°C, some of which are used the town's 16th century Turkish baths or in treatments and the swimming pool at the Sokobanja Specialised Hospital. The town also features a hospital which focuses on lung diseases on Ozren mountain. Details: www.soko-banja.rs

MUSIC TO MOTIVATE



Kate Cracknell looks at the impact of music on exercise, and at ways in which operators can create the optimum musical environment for fitness areas

KATE CRACKNELL • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

Music is integral to a spa's atmosphere, yet how many operators pay attention to the tunes that are played in their fitness area?

If you want to get the best results from a workout, you need to listen to the right music. Most of us recognise the power of music to boost flagging mental and even physical energy levels. For those who need more scientific evidence, there's a wealth of research indicating benefits that range from improved control of blood pressure to better adherence to exercise programmes.

But how can we quantify the benefits? Are they purely psychological or does music somehow have a physiological effect? And how can operators ensure

that people are exposed to the right music – music that will ensure they get the most out of every workout?

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Dr Costas Karageorghis is a name with which many in the fitness industry will be familiar and we've written about him in *Spa Business* previously (see SB06/1 p120). Based at Brunel University, UK, Karageorghis was lead researcher on a 2005 study that established the ability of music to increase sporting performance by up to 20 per cent.

The study also found that listening to songs of the right tempo and content before and during exercise could reduce tiredness by diverting the mind from fatigue, act as a stimulant, and improve

When creating group classes, Les Mills always picks the music first and then designs the choreography and exercise to go with it

people's ability to acquire motor skills. Unrelated studies have observed activity in brain regions that control movement, even when people are simply listening to music without moving any parts of their bodies – a finding which, according to Harvard Medical School neuroscientist Mark Jude Tramo, shows that "music is as inherently motor as it is auditory".

Elsewhere, a study by the School of Psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson University in the US found that obese women subscribing to a cognitive-behavioural treatment programme had higher levels of adherence – as well as twice the weight loss at the end of 24 weeks – if they listened to music during the exercise-based part of the treatment, compared to those who exercised in silence.

BPM AND HEART RATES PM & HEART RATES

The relationship between heart rate and tempo was found by Karageorghis' team



Weight training needs upbeat music as sedative tracks can decrease strength significantly

PHOTO: LES MILLS



to be key – fast tempos being best for high intensity exercise and slower music better for recovery and stretching.

In fact, according to Shaun Egan, UK head trainer at global exercise class specialist Les Mills: “The music comes first, then we devise the choreography and the exercise programme from there.”

By selecting songs based not only on their ability to entertain but also for their beats per minute (BPM) and structure, Egan says it's possible to ensure “a range not only throughout the whole class, but also varying intensities within each track, providing an interval-based workout that helps participants achieve more in the same time period compared to steady-state training. The music is key to encouraging them to work harder – its impact as a motivator is massive.”

Dean Steer, producer and manager of FP Music – the music division of the fitness trade body FitPro – adds: “A key advantage of pre-mixed music over a general iPod play-

list is the phrasing: when music has been mixed into the 32-beat blocks, the class is continuous, which keeps the heart rate of the class at the right level for the correct period of time – there's no gap between tunes where heart rates could drop.”

However – in his article *The Effects of Music on Exercise?* (*IDEA Today*, 1994) – Len Kravitz PhD, a researcher at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, points to some “conflicting results” in the scientific evidence regarding the effects of music on exercise performance.

He states: “A review of studies indicates that heart rate tends to only moderately follow the music.” Indeed, he quotes a 1991 study in which subjects walking or jogging on a treadmill had longer times to exhaustion when listening to slow, soft music than when listening to loud, fast music.

“Research is unclear at this point as to the physiological effects music may have on exercise performance,” Kravitz adds.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Kravitz also suggests that music of any kind can in fact lead to a moderate increase in heart rate, thanks to the emotional effect of music. However, this in itself has an application, as he explains: “One valuable way an aerobic fitness instructor can use music in the teaching arena is as a pre-class stimulus. The majority of studies suggest that music may significantly increase respiration rate and moderately elevate heart rate, preparing the student for the anticipated workout.”

Not only that, but: “Although performance may or may not be enhanced by the addition of music, subjects regularly report that they felt their performance was better with the music accompaniment. Therefore, music may directly improve a person's enjoyment of the physical activity, leading to greater exercise compliance.” Indeed, in research conducted by music licensing companies PPL and PRS, 80 per cent of all gym users questioned said workout music makes ▶

- ▶ them more likely to enjoy themselves when exercising.

When it comes to resistance workouts, Kravitz refers to previous studies measuring grip strength and observes that "listening to sedative music decreased strength significantly when compared to stimulative music and silence. However, no statistical significant difference was seen between stimulative music and silence", Kravitz warns that, as sedative music may actually decrease a person's muscular fitness potential training ability, those in charge of fitness suites in spas should be mindful of the types of music guests are exposed to when using strength equipment. It may be worth considering that, at least in this area of the facility, no music at all may be the best option for exercisers.

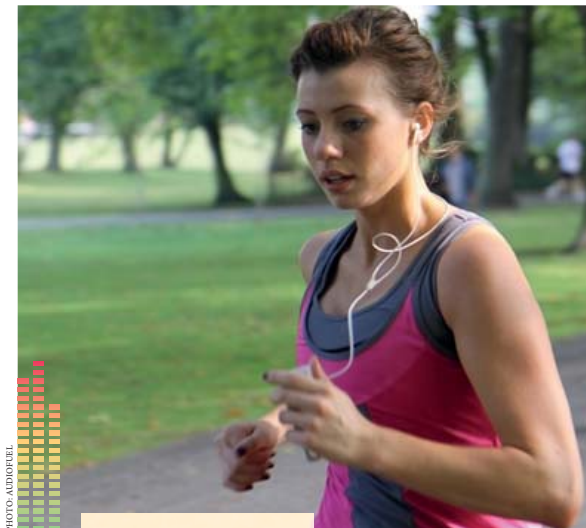
Researchers will no doubt continue to debate the science – whether music has a proven physiological effect leading to better results, or whether it simply boosts enjoyment of, and therefore adherence to, exercise. Either way, getting the right music mix certainly seems to have a role to play in fitness facilities. However, with Karageorghis' research suggesting that taste is a major factor, operators must cater for the musical preferences of, if not everyone, then as many people as possible. So how can they do this?

IN-HOUSE MUSIC: DAYPARTS, DEMOGRAPHICS AND ZONES

"A Nielsen study commissioned by Zoom in 2009 showed that 83 per cent of people working out noticed our in-house music TV programming", says Alex Peacock, MD of Zoom Media – owner of ClubCom, the entertainment and customised messaging solution for fitness centres. "The study also explored how people use their fitness facility, where they spend their time and how long they're in certain areas, helping us meet their entertainment needs during their visit."

"It's impossible to provide the perfect selection for everyone, but understanding the average age and typical user demographic at any given time of day allows us to provide the most relevant mix of music, tailored by day-part and on a site-by-site basis."

"The aim is to provide a varied, carefully structured mix of music that includes songs guests are happy to listen to in a fitness envi-



According to the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America, the optimum tempo range for burning calories is 118-122 BPM

ronment, even if it's not typical of the music they would listen to at home."

Peacock adds that spa operators, especially those who offer fitness memberships, could follow the lead from health clubs. "We can provide customised 'Vote for Your Music' website portals for each of our customers: members are asked which club they use and what time of day they visit, and are then asked to score a series of music clips. This data is collated and presented to the club on a monthly basis to help ensure its music selection is relevant and popular."

Different areas of a fitness facility also have different requirements. Tempo is key in the CV area – research by the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America suggests the optimum range for burning calories during exercise-to-music activities is 118-122 BPM. A number of genres may be appropriate, but ensuring all music in this area maintains a tempo of 110-130 BPM will improve an exercisers' ability to keep pace.

IPOD PLAYLISTS: BESPOKE, TARGETED PROGRAMMING

"One key way to add value to your offering is to provide services that extend beyond the four walls of the fitness facility," says Clare

Crean, MD of AudioFuel, which provides custom-written music for fitness fanatics.

"Our product's perfect for that. We can co-create products using a facility's fitness instructor – tailor-made walking or jogging programmes, for example, to suit their members/guests' needs. These all come with bespoke voice-overs along the lines of: 'Hello and welcome to the [operator/club name] AudioFuelled training session for beginners. Whether you're using this to walk to work, walk the dog or as part of a lunch-time workout, repeating this session three or more times this week will help you burn calories, increase your fitness levels and make you feel great."

"Similarly, we can provide programmes for people training towards specific events or challenges" – AudioFuel has recently collaborated with the Virgin London Marathon to create a new music-based training resource for marathon runners.

"This is all delivered digitally via the internet: links to these programmes could go out as part of a weekly email or be downloaded from a dedicated page on our website. Alternatively, more simply, we could create an affiliate programme with a fitness facility: we'd give our product to the fitness instructors or personal trainers to try, and they could recommend it to users who'd get a special discount code to redeem against any product in our shop." ●

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Actress

“What clients come looking for isn't a microcurrent treatment, it's a CACI treatment.”

M Duffy
Rowan Tree Beauty
West Sussex



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Heinz Schletterer

Founder & CEO, Inviion

Officially launched on 1 July 2010, Inviion is the new equipment subsidiary of Schletterer International Group, the globally renowned, Austria-based company specialising in spa planning, design and consulting. The design company, founded by Heinz Schletterer in 1989, has long had an equipment division – the first, Thermarium, was



Zillertal in Tyrol, Austria, with branches in the UK, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, Dubai, Egypt and China.

founded in 1991 and quickly developed a reputation for pioneering the Roman bath concept within modern spas. Thermarium has now been sold and replaced with the brand new Inviion concept. Inviion's head office is in Strass im

What's the history behind Inviion?

A couple of years after founding Thermarium, I split the business into production and trading, and sold 50 per cent of the production arm to a shareholder. In 2004, I sold my remaining shares in the production business, but kept the trading company and the brand. However, we began to feel that the Roman concept was outdated, and we wanted to go in a new direction, with more innovative designs and a much stronger focus on health, vitality, prevention and sustainability. So I sold the Thermarium brand to my partner and started developing Inviion. We've been trialling the products under the Schletterer name for 12 months with existing clients – including

hotel chains like Hilton, Four Seasons and Marriott, as well as a huge number of independent spa hotels – and we're now ready to bring them to market.

Where are they manufactured?

At our existing factory in Croatia, where we used to manufacture another line of equipment, which we're discontinuing. We're extending the site by 10,000sq m (107,640sq ft) and adding a second, very modern production hall.

Are these new products?

The products have completely changed. Of course, we're still manufacturing sauna, steam and other heat experiences, but we have made changes to the design, as well as focusing very strongly on improving hygiene, reducing costs and saving energy. We're using completely new technology, both in terms of insulation and control systems, to make energy savings of up to 50 per cent compared



to similar equipment. We've also created some brand new concepts with a very strong health focus, such as Holistic Cocooning (see below) and our next product launch, the Healing Liquid Pool. It's too soon to release details, but it's a totally new concept.

What changes have you made with regard to hygiene?

For example, some of the materials used to cover wet equipment can be quite porous, making it easier for bacteria to breed. We have opted for new materials with a completely closed surface, so the bacteria don't have anything to adhere to, and drainage is much more effective. We're also introducing individual seats, with armrests, so people can avoid

WHO'S WHO?

Technical director: Florian Jaud

Sales director: Thorsten Sträter

Finance: Gertraud Moser

THE PRODUCTS



The Holistic Cocooning bed

Holistic Cocooning:

a specially designed bed for deep-relaxation combining light, sound and aromatherapy with sleep therapy.

The 4 Senses Lounger:

a warm, vibrating relaxation lounger, featuring colour, sound and aromatherapy.

The Foot Reflexology Bath:

With massage jets and a special essence system.

Aquaveda:

a multifunctional therapy bed

The Infinity Solo Pool:

a spa bath with warm water, massage jets and aromatherapy.

Steam Baths:

the company offers a range of health-giving steamrooms, with options including thalasso, gemstone, Oriental, blossom-scented and herbal.

Saunas: Inviion has just launched a brand new range of sauna products.

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit www.spa-kit.net



The steam bath boasts new non-porous, top hygienic materials and better drainage

touching each other. We're using a new heat convection system for overnight cleaning, a new ventilation system... there are so many different elements.

How inter-dependent are the two companies?

Inviol is 100 per cent owned by Schletterer, but it's an independent company. Schletterer may recommend Inviol products to its clients, but it's entirely up to the client what they choose.

What is your sales strategy?

We're significantly expanding our service and maintenance services, and as an additional benefit, we'll provide our partners with a special web code to access very detailed information about the design, functionality, technical requirements and tender documents of all our products. It's our goal to guarantee a 24-hour support service in all our markets.

What's next?

We're developing a range of equipment-based medical treatments focusing on the different organs of the body. ●



Clarins unveils Eau des Jardins treatment fragrance

French skincare brand Clarins has unveiled a fragrance which can be used at the end of therapies or in the home to uplift and refresh the body. Eau des Jardins is based on aromatherapy and phytotherapy techniques and combines 10 essential oils and three bud extracts to recreate the colours and scents of fruit, flowers, leaves and wood.

spa-kit.net keyword **clarins**



Bespoke sound services from Prescriptive Music

Prescriptive Music makes private label CD for any spa and most recently it created a soundtrack for the spas within the Trump Hotel portfolio (see p50). The resulting compilation accompanies the signature Trump Personal Intentions treatment programmes that focus on themes of Calm, Balance, Purify, Heal and Revitalise.

spa-kit.net keywords **prescriptive music**



Range of new features for online solution SpaBooker

Online management and booking solution SpaBooker version 6.2 has been rolled out with a wide range of new features. These include a completely revamped point-of-sale module; an integrated social media marketing element; a smart-phone booking functionality for customers and a number of other features, updates and bug fixes.

spa-kit.net keyword **spabooker**



Treatment couch designed to resemble race car chassis

Marketed as 'the Ferrari of treatment couches', the Model 383 Kiko from Plinth 2000 features a silver tubular frame designed to resemble a modern race car chassis. Featuring a three-section plinth the Kiko is a light and more contoured than conventional treatment couches, but is strong enough to withstand heavy manipulation and loads.

spa-kit.net keywords **plinth 2000**

"Our next big purchasing recommendation will be Ojmar's Transponder System which can be used for access to a facility, use of the exercise system and lockers and for buying food and drink. It's smart, convenient and user friendly."

Claire Way, UK Director of spa operations, Spa Strategy

"The best decision we've made was to introduce equipment from CACI and St Tropez, so all sites offer the same up-to-date services. Most recently, we've purchased our own branded machines from CACI."

Frances Hayter, international Dove Spa development director

"Cybex and Life Fitness have always been my fitness brands of choice – they both offer exceptional quality, functionality and features."

Brian Hathaway, senior director of spas Asia-Pacific, Four Seasons Resorts Bali

"SpaEquip's Philippe Therene is the best supplier I've worked with. I trust him and know when I get products through SpaEquip, my clients will be taken care of."

Mindy Terry, president, Creative Spa Concepts

"Not only do Aromatherapy Associates offer great products that are constantly adapted to keep up with industry trends, they also provide an excellent support structure and are extremely reliable."

Vanessa Stoessel, project coordinator, Spatiality

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit www.spa-kit.net



ila reveals its Amazonian Rainforest Renew facial range

Organic skincare brand ila has introduced four face products that use ingredients from the Amazon to create an "elixir that leaves skin glowing with vitality". The Rainforest Renew day cream, night cream, face serum and eye serum combine bioactive raw ingredients such as acmella, pfaffia, marapuama and white lily. Pure babassu oil is used as a base for each product.

spa-kit.net keyword **ila**



New technology for Dry Float System from Dalesauna

Dalesauna has unveiled its Dry Float System. Once the product has been applied, the client is wrapped and gently lowered into a bath of water for the dry float, with a rubber membrane between the person and the water. Dalesauna's new air compression technology replaces the older hydraulic platform system, for greater ease of use and comfort.

spa-kit.net keyword **dalesauna**



Priverus incorporates cloud computing into spa scheduling

A new spa scheduling application called Priverus has been revealed. Said to be the first cloud computing system for the industry, the software makes virtual servers available over the internet with 24/7 access to appointment scheduling, reporting, training and updates. Priverus' fully-hosted solution offers a one-time start-up fee as well as a low subscription fee.

spa-kit.net keyword **priverus**



African aromatic spa products debut from Allure Africa

A new range of African aromatic spa products called Kanshi – meaning 'beautiful fragrance' – has been revealed. Inspired by African rituals, the range was created by Dzigbordi K Dosoo (see SB09/4 p27), the founder of spa group Allure Africa and Lydia Sarfati, the founder of Repêchage. The entire range of 33 products are available for global distribution.

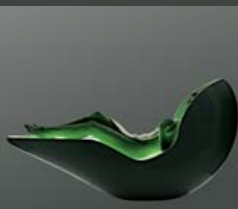
spa-kit.net keywords **allure africa**

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CREATING
the DIFFERENCE

- PRODUCT FOCUS -

Non-invasive anti-ageing equipment

With the recession continuing to squeeze discretionary spending, today's spa consumers want visible results in return for their investment. But not everyone is willing to go under the knife or resort to Botox. Instead, those who want fast solutions are increasingly turning to non-invasive, technology-based services – from laser and IPL treatments, LED light therapy, microdermabrasion and oxygen therapy to treatments utilising pulsed vacuum, microcurrent, radio frequency and ultrasound technology. According to research published last year by Diagonal Reports, "significant numbers of consumers are migrating to [these] new beauty solutions when they become available." In this special focus, we take a look at some of the top products on the market.



THERMAGE CPT: The latest Thermage CPT™ (Comfort Pulse Technology™) tightening and contouring system from US-based Solta Medical combines radio frequency technology with a new vibrating hand piece and advanced treatment tips to deliver more therapeutic heat across the treatment area while still ensuring superior comfort. spa-kit.net keywords **solta medical**

CACI Ultimate

The product: The latest offering from CACI International is the CACI Ultimate, a three-in-one system incorporating **microcurrent, LED light therapy** and crystal-free, orbital **microdermabrasion**. First, the microcurrent toning phase uses patented electrical 'wave-forms' at ultra-low frequencies to stimulate facial muscles for an instant firming effect. Secondly, in a non-invasive alternative to dermal fillers, a 'wrinkle comb' phase combines specific wavelengths of light with high-frequency microcurrent stimulation to cause slight oedema and tissue inflammation; this activates the body's sodium-potassium pump, encouraging the release of sodium ions, collagen proteins and hyaluronic glycoaminoglycans (GAGS) to plump out lines and wrinkles and trigger tissue repair.



CACI Ultimate comes with 45 programmes

Thirdly, the microdermabrasion phase uses disposable abrasive tips for exfoliation without the maintenance and downtime issues often associated with crystal-based systems. The treatment finishes with a silicon-based 'hydromask'. The CACI Ultimate includes a colour touch-screen with 45 preset treatment programmes.

Cost: £9,900 (US\$14,800, €11,850) plus VAT (sales tax); or on lease rental from £14 (US\$21, €16) a day plus VAT
Size: 45cmx45cmx12cm; the touch-screen folds flat for increased portability
Training: A four-day training course is included free of charge for three therapists
Recommended price per treatment: £90 (US\$135, €107)
Recommended course: 10 treatments, followed by monthly top-ups
Return on investment: According to CACI, just two treatments a day could generate profits of £50,000 (US\$75,000, €59,800) a year
The company: UK-based CACI offers an extensive range of treatments for the face and body, with products incorporating microdermabrasion; faradic, microcurrent and pulsed vacuum technologies; ultrasonic peels; oxygen therapy and LED light therapy. spa-kit.net keywords **caci international**

NUE SKIN: Skin for Life's Nue Skin range of microdermabrasion machines include crystal and diamond microdermabrasion options, and also microdermabrasion using organic grains – a softer, more rounded medium which it claims is ideal for treating older, fragile skin. The US- and UK-based company also supplies microcurrent, LED light therapy and oxygen therapy equipment. spa-kit.net keywords **skin for life**

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit www.spa-kit.net

The DermaVisage machine combines diamond and crystal microdermabrasion



DermaVisage

The product: The new DermaVisage machine from The Carlton Group combines diamond and crystal **microdermabrasion** with **colour therapy**. By removing dead skin cells, microdermabrasion has an instant rejuvenating effect, while over time it has been shown to stimulate collagen production, firming skin and smoothing lines and wrinkles. The DermaVisage system incorporates both crystal microdermabrasion, using aluminium oxide crystals set in motion using a vacuum system, and diamond microdermabrasion, which replaces crystals with ultra-hard and precise diamond-tipped rotational heads. Meanwhile, the colour therapy application uses different coloured LED lights set at varying wavelengths for a range of benefits: red to stimulate the lymphatic system, yellow to

promote collagen production, green for its anti-inflammatory effect and blue for its antibacterial and cooling properties. The system also has four settings that allow the light to penetrate the skin at different levels. The unit can be purchased without the colour therapy or diamond microdermabrasion options.

Cost: £3,450 (US\$5,180, €4,150) plus VAT (sales tax) for all three applications; £2,250 (US\$3,400, €2,700) for crystal microdermabrasion only

Size: 38.5cmx31.5cmx23cm

Training: One day's training included

Recommended price per treatment:

From £40 (US\$60, €48)

Recommended course: Depending on skin condition, from a one-off treatment to a course of six to 10, followed by maintenance sessions every five to six weeks

Return on investment: For the crystal-only unit, operators could expect a return from 56 treatments

The company: UK The Carlton Group has been manufacturing beauty equipment for over 60 years. Its Carlton Professional range of products includes over 20 electrotherapy machines and 16 treatment beds as well as furniture and accessories.

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



The unit has four different light settings

SKIN REJUVENATION LIGHT THERAPY CHAIR:

UK-based Light Therapy Systems has launched a Skin Rejuvenation Light Therapy Chair, harnessing the skin-stimulating benefits of LED light therapy without the need for hands-on treatment.

spa-kit.net keywords **light therapy systems**

JETPEEL™ AND JET-M:

The JetPeel™ and Jet-M systems from Israeli company TavTech harnesses patented jet technology to enable needle-free delivery of air, water and anti-ageing nutrients into the lower layers of the skin via a stream of super-sonic micro-droplets. spa-kit.net keyword **tavtech**



The Star Lift portable treatment centre

Star Lift

The product: The Star Lift from Israeli company Med-Op Aesthetic Technologies is a portable treatment centre combining **radio frequency** (RF), **ultrasound** and **pulsed vacuum** technologies to provide a wide range of beauty and anti-ageing solutions. While RF heads are used to create heat, stimulating collagen production to tighten tissue, the pulsed vacuum massage draws blood to the surface of the skin, breaking down fat deposits to shape and lift. In addition, the system uses ultrasound technology to deliver targeted vibrations for specific results – an ultrasound 'spatula' is used to deep-cleanse the epidermis while ultrasound heads are used to break down fat deposits, stimulate muscle and tighten skin. Star Lift also incorporates needle and soft-laser programmes for hair removal and the treatment of skin imperfections.

Cost: €33,000 (US\$41,400, £27,550)

Size: 58cmx41cmx25cm

Training: One day included

Recommended price per treatment:

€1,500 (US\$1,900, £2,250) to €2,400 (US\$3,000, £2,000) for six 40-minute treatments

Recommended course: one treatment every seven to 10 days, for six to 10 treatments

Return on investment: Spas could see a return in as little as 16 courses

The company: As well as Star Lift, it offers the Med-O-Sonic ultrasound system for skin rejuvenation and the Dermo Flash line for skin rejuvenation and hair removal, incorporating the company's unique NCPL™ (No Contact Pulse Light) technology – IPL without the gel.

spa-kit.net keywords **med-op**

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit www.spa-kit.net

– PRODUCT FOCUS –

Non-invasive anti-ageing equipment



Crystal Clear blasts streams of oxygen and an anti-ageing serum into the deeper layers of the epidermis for a healthy skin metabolism

▶ Crystal Clear Oxygen Therapy

The product: This painless **oxygen therapy** system uses puncture jet technology to drive high-pressurised streams of oxygen, combined with a patented anti-ageing serum, through the skin's barrier defence system into the deeper layers of the epidermis. The treatment is based on the premise that oxygen levels in our skin cells – which decrease as we age – are important for healthy skin metabolism, including collagen synthesis. In addition, the deep-down delivery

boosts absorption of the anti-ageing serum, which contains active ingredients designed to increase collagen production. The unit comes with two handsets: a lower-pressure option for the delicate eye area and a higher-pressure option for the rest of the face.

Cost: £6,800 (US\$10,200, €8,150) plus VAT (sales tax)

Size: 49cmx23cmx51cm

Training: One day of on-site training is included in the price

Recommended price per treatment:

£65 (US\$97, €78) for 45 minutes

Recommended course:

five treatments over three weeks

Return on investment: A spa needs to sell 20 courses to see a return on investment

The company: Crystal Clear offers a wide range of non-invasive aesthetic machines, including Crystal Clear Microdermabrasion, Crystal Clear Cellulite and Body Firming Therapy and Crystal Clear IPL.

spa-kit.net keywords **crystal clear**

LIFT M6: The latest development from LPG Systems, the French manufacturers of the acclaimed anti-cellulite system Endermologie, is Lift M6 – a facial treatment system designed to boost collagen and elastin production using patented **Liftmassage** technology. Using three specially designed treatment heads equipped with mechanised flaps, Lift M6 uses vacuum suction at varying intensities to gently squeeze and release the skin's connective tissue, stimulating lymph and blood flow and generating new collagen production. Each of the three treatment heads is designed for a different area of the face and bust, while a fourth, equipped with rollers, is used to resculpt larger fatty areas. spa-kit.net keywords **lpg systems**

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HIDDEN BENEFITS

Practising yoga is more likely to lead to mindful eating than other forms of physical activity, according to research from the US

KATIE BARNES • MANAGING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

Combining yoga with weight-loss programmes could make for a hugely successful slimming regime in spas, if the findings from a study carried out at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, US*, are to be taken into account.

The study, which was published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, showed that mindful eaters – people more aware of what they were eating and who stopped when they felt full – didn't weigh as much as those who ate mindlessly (when they didn't feel hungry) or in response to depression or anxiety.

Not surprising you may think – but what was interesting was the association between mindful eating and yoga practice.

GATHERING DATA

Information was gathered via a Mindful Eating Questionnaire (MEQ) devised by Alan Kristal, associate head of the Cancer Prevention Program in the Public Health Sciences Division at the Hutchinson Center. The survey consisted of 28 questions which measured factors such as:

- Disinhibition – eating even when full
- Awareness – being aware of how food looks, tastes and smells
- External cues – eating in response to environmental cues such as advertising
- Emotional response – eating in response to sadness or stress
- Distraction – focusing on other things when eating.

Each question was graded on a scale of one to four, with the higher scores relating to more mindful eating. The MEQ was distributed to just over 500 people in the Seattle area, including members of a yoga studio, fitness facility and weight-loss centre. It was also distributed at non-fitness related businesses such as a software company and a school.

"Yoga, which focuses on a calm mind and breathing, teaches mindful skills and may help people to judge their motivations for eating more accurately"

Just over 300 people completed the questionnaire: mostly women (81 per cent), white (90 per cent) and well educated (86 per cent had 16 years or more of schooling), with an average age of 42.

TELLING RESULTS

Around 40 per cent of respondents practised yoga more than one hour a week, 46 per cent walked for at least 90 minutes a week and 52 per cent engaged in more than 90 minutes of moderate/strenuous physical activity per week.

The average body mass index (BMI) of respondents was around 25.8, within the normal range, which is not surprising

considering that there was a bias towards physically active people in the sample.

BMI was lower on average among yoga practitioners (23.1) and those with higher MEQ scores, which in itself was found to be connected: the number of years of yoga practice and the number of minutes' practice each week were associated with higher MEQ scores. Other forms of exercise were not found to have a statistically significant impact on the MEQ.

The results seem to support Kristal's hypothesis that mindfulness – a skill learned either directly or indirectly through yoga – can impact on eating behaviour, and that yoga practitioners gain less weight over time thanks to improved body awareness rather than the physical activity aspect of yoga.

He explains: "Yoga encourages practitioners to adopt challenging physical poses with an accepting, calm mind and focus on the breath. This teaches mindfulness skills and may enable individuals to successfully navigate difficult food environments and more accurately judge their motivations for eating."

Kristal concludes that the MEQ is the first tool of its kind to characterise and measure mindful eating and suggests that it could be used in weight-loss clinics to promote healthy behaviour. ●

* *Framson C et al. Development and Validation of the Mindful Eating Questionnaire. Journal of the American Dietetic Association. Vol 109, Iss 8, p1489-1444. Aug 09.*



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The no-impact movement dynamically and automatically adapts to your natural stride length. With a low perceived effort and high calorie consumption, it is the best choice for you and your customers.

NATURAL & PERSONALISED MOVEMENT

TOTAL BODY & LOWER BODY WORKOUT

GREATER RESULTS IN LESS TIME

PATENT PENDING SELF STARTING SYSTEM

Healthy people & planet



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