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ethical investment



Over the last few years, the importance of caring for our planet has become firmly rooted in the international spa consciousness. Now an increasing number of operators and suppliers are also recognising the importance of caring for its inhabitants by supporting fair-trade practices that protect the rights of those in the developing world.

In this issue of *Spa Business* (p20), we ask why spas should consider investing in fair-trade products and initiatives, beyond the moral motivation. The responses are convincing; global body Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International puts sales of products with its stamp of approval at €2.3bn (US\$2.9bn, £2.1bn) for 2007, and estimates that the market grew by an average of 40 per cent a year over the previous five years.

In the face of a global recession, however, one can't help but wonder if the market for ethical goods and services – typically priced at a premium – will continue to be viable at a time when even affluent consumers are tightening their purse strings. But according to recent research, businesses cutting back on spend in this area are making a serious mistake.

The 2009 Cone Consumer Environmental Survey, published this February in the US, reports that 34 per cent of consumers are more likely to buy eco-friendly products today while a further 44 per cent say their environmental shopping habits have not changed as a result of the economic downturn.

Meanwhile, the goodpurpose™ global study – a survey of 6,000 consumers in 10 countries, published in November – found that 68 per cent would remain loyal to a brand during a recession if it supported a good cause, while 71 per cent had given the same or more time and money to good causes since the downturn began. Another report by the UK's Co-operative Bank agrees the economic gloom won't halt the rise of ethical consumerism, citing legislation and 'choice editing' by governments and industry as sales drivers.

If this research is to be believed, consumers, though curbing their spending, are not doing so at the expense of dearly held beliefs. If anything, the recession makes it more important than ever for spas to strike a chord with their clients. "Going to a spa used to be about buff and puff," says Ted Ning, director of the LOHAS Forum (see SB08/3 p62). "Now it's about the experience and how much it resonates with personal values. In the long run, companies that pull away from ethical business models will lose their market share."

This is not to say there are no challenges ahead for operators and suppliers that prioritise sustainability and fair trade. "Charging a premium price because you're mission-based is not going to work any more," admits Ning. "But the solution is to find a way to provide services that speak to people which is also cost-effective, not to compromise your core values."

Of course, retaining market share is not the only reason spa companies should consider investing in ethical business models; protecting the environment and helping to tackle global poverty are also compelling goals.



ON THE COVER:

Clarins is growing its presence in the international spa industry. We talk to Christian Courtin-Clarins, chair of the group's supervisory board, on p58.

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PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CALLOS ALVAREZ



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write to reply

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

A plea to ethical spa companies: let's end animal cruelty

Rebecca Ram, cruelty free officer, British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV)

Statements made by cosmetics companies about animal testing – both in policy outlines and on product labels – can be confusing and misleading. As the symbol of BUAV's Humane Cosmetics Standard (HCS) across Europe, the US and Canada, the leaping bunny is a globally recognised guarantee of cruelty-free beauty.

The certificate requires a company to adhere to three simple criteria. Firstly, it must apply a 'fixed cut-off date' (FCOD), whereby it commits to stop using ingredients that are tested on animals anywhere along its supply chain. Secondly, it must agree to an independent audit. And thirdly, it must no longer conduct or commission animal-testing.

To achieve this, the FCOD must be communicated throughout the supply chain. This is the only real way a company can influence animal testing, as the message is conveyed to all ingredients suppliers, fillers and testing laboratories.

Take-up of the HCS is growing and is now even more critical in light of forthcoming European Union (EU) legislation on the testing of cosmetic ingredients. We welcome the opportunity to work with skincare suppliers to help them provide cruelty-free products and treatments to their clients. Brands receive



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CEAÇA VICTORIA

full promotion on our website and in our consumer shopping guide, the *Little Book of Cruelty Free*. Spa operators can also apply for approval and make use of the leaping bunny logo around their facility, on merchandise and packaging.

Proving that beauty can be ethical as well as enjoyable is also important for business success. Ethical spending in

the UK in 2005 amounted to £29.3bn (US\$41bn, €33bn), while 79 per cent of people said they would be likely to swap to a brand that did not use animal testing if they discovered that their existing brand was tested on animals. For more information, call +44 20 7400 4888, email info@gocrueltyfree.org or visit www.gocrueltyfree.org.

Successful spa refurbishment requires creativity

Corinne Denzler, group director, Tschuggen Hotel Group, Switzerland

I read your recent article about spa refurbishments with interest (SB08/4 p76). I could relate to all of the experts' comments, as just a year ago we finished the refurbishment of the spa at the Carlton Hotel St Moritz (see p64).

The most important thing we learned was that if you want to enlarge an existing hotel spa, you have to think creatively – especially if it's not possible to add a new

building, the hotel dates back to 1913 and space is extremely restricted.

The original spa, located underground, was just 400sq m (4,306sq ft), with three treatment rooms, no reception and a tiny fitness centre. To extend it, we had to go deeper into the mountain, enlarging the existing two floors and adding another floor beneath for the sauna and steambath area, yet without making the spa too dark.

It really was a challenge to create a state-of-the-art spa under these conditions, but with the help of specialists we developed a concept which allows five of the six treatment rooms, as well as the spa suite, to offer daylight, while breathtaking mountain scenery can be enjoyed from all three floors. It was this unique design that helped us to become the first Leading Spa in St Moritz as of 1 January this year.

Bali is recovered, safe and prepared for anything

Mary Darling, spa consultant, Bali

In *Spa Business*, issue 4 2008 the lovely story on the COMO Group and Bali's own COMO Shambhala contained a paragraph that caused me to almost drop the magazine. It referred to Bali's "fearsome competition at the five-star level on an island which has not yet recovered from its post 9/11 terrorist attack and the resultant severe drop in the key Australian market – although COMO Shambhala Estate is one of the few Balinese establishments still attracting guests from the country". I had to re-read the words to ensure I'd understood them.

Though Bali tourism did suffer following the tragic events of 2002 and 2005, tourist arrivals have grown – so much so that the industry ended 2008 with a projected 1.9 million arrivals, a 47 per cent increase since 2002. Australia continues to be a key market, along with Japan, the European Union and the rest of south-east Asia, and we're seeing increased traffic from China and Russia.

We're still also seeing new hotel development. Bvlgari, Anantara, and St Regis have all opened sites on the island; and Jumeirah, Banyan Tree and Alila all have properties in the pipeline. Hotels have retrained, refreshed, renovated and repositioned to ensure they remain com-



St Regis is one of many new openings in Bali, where tourism continues to grow

petitive, and most properties offer spas, spa suites, or in-room spa services.

Spa operators here continue to reinvest, by upgrading facilities and educating staff. The spa industry in Bali is also extending its global reach, as operators worldwide come to the island to source products, as well as Balinese therapists – business which stimulates the local economy and diversifies our community.

Bali is safer and better prepared for unforeseen events than other locations in the world, due to our past experience. We've become more creative, strategic and focused, helping to create a destination that's constantly evolving, while remaining vigilant to dangers in the world around us and offering a safe environment for our guests. Details: www.balidiscovery.com.

How to find the silver lining in the economic cloud

Lisa Starr, co-founder, Wynne Business, US

It's no secret that business is going to stay flat or fall further before revenue levels climb back up. Retail spending in the luxury segment is off 5 to 25 per cent, and 2009 hotel occupancy rates are forecast to fall 5 per cent. For spa operators, this is a great time to do some financial housekeeping and get your spa into tip-top operational condition. But where to start?

The first rule is no cutting corners. Guests don't want to be reminded of the economic meltdown by a stingy refreshment selection or lack of fluffy towels. Instead, devise a twofold strategy; maximise every selling and saving opportunity, and involve staff, as they will be carrying out most of the initiatives.

With foot traffic down, you'll need to increase the average spend of each client. So make sure your menu offers a range of prices; add bite-size service up-

grades that can be performed within the scheduled appointment time; and ensure therapists write down a retail 'prescription' to encourage clients to buy products.

Avoid the discounting trap. Instead try value-added services, free upgrades, retail items packaged with a service, and other tactics that won't undermine your future prices. And market to groups: clients are still getting married, having babies, and celebrating birthdays! You can also use this downtime to work on your website and search engine optimisation.

Another focus should be retention. Assign someone to make a follow-up phone call to every first-time client, and contact clients you haven't seen for a while, perhaps with a special incentive. Introduce a staff compensation programme that encourages the behaviours that drive revenue – service and retail sales and client retention – and reward those who deliver.

Prune your retail inventory: eliminating the bottom 20 per cent of sellers from your shelves will create more space and cash for the products that turn more quickly. Also control your professional inventory. Every single treatment room doesn't have to be stocked with every single product; have a central dispensary for shared and speciality items.

Challenge staff to keep costs low by measuring product, rather than guessing, and by conscious use of linens – though not by cheating clients of a first-class experience. Also make sure to properly deploy personnel by having management staff participate in front-desk or call-centre duties for a few hours a day.

The extra time you've got now is the silver lining in the economic cloud; invest it in these activities and when sales do pick up, you'll see improved profit margins and a staff focused on results.

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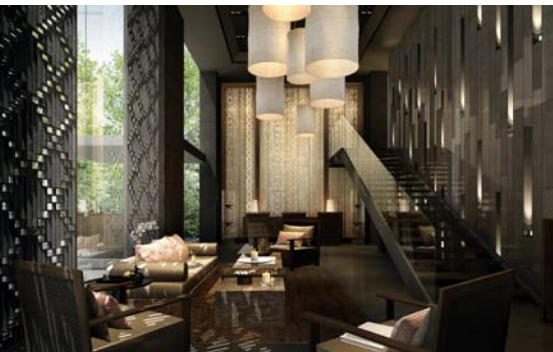


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Contact : spa-activities@clarins.net

news update



The reception area of the spa at Phulay Bay, which includes three traditional Thai pavilions

Global brand extension for Ritz-Carlton

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company is to launch a new resort brand called the Ritz-Carlton Reserve.

The inaugural Reserve will open in June 2009 in Phulay Bay in Krabi, southern Thailand. The property will have 54 villas and a pavilion-style boutique hotel, as well as an extensive spa and wellness centre managed by ESPA.

The ESPA at Phulay Bay spa will feature three traditional Thai pavilions set over two levels. These will offer 11 treatment rooms, including Thai massage rooms for couples and two VIP suites.

The design of each Reserve property will be inspired by four natural elements: fire, water, earth and air.

Launching the brand, Simon F Cooper, chief operating officer, said: "The Ritz-Carlton Reserve will feature signature, one-of-a-kind boutique resorts positioned in unique settings, each with a distinctive personality and sense of place reflecting its history and culture."

Future locations earmarked for Reserve developments include Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, the Turks & Caicos and the United Arab Emirates.

Mazagan Spa to open in Morocco

The Mazagan Resort in Morocco will open late this year with a luxury spa.

A US\$250m (€199m, £177m) joint venture between developer Kerzner International and integrated building design group NORR, the property will be located 90km from Casablanca. Facilities will include residential homes, private beaches, a hotel and an 18-hole championship golf course.

Consultancy Raison d'Etre is developing the 21,527sq ft (2,000sq m) spa, which will include a traditional hammam experience and 20 treatment rooms. The design will be based on Middle Eastern traditions.

Karma Resorts launches K2 brand

Karma Resorts is getting ready to open its first property under its new K2 brand in Jaipur, India.

The resort will combine a boutique hotel with an extensive spa offering, which will set the benchmark for the rollout of more K2 sites across Asia.

This will be the fourth property from the Karma Resorts group.

The latest Karma Spa facility launched at the Karma Kandara resort in Bali in December 2008. The spa has two treatment rooms, as well as a clifftop relaxation area featuring a salt-water whirlpool.



The Turks & Caicos resort features a 7,000sq ft pool

Gansevoort to open three new resorts

The Gansevoort Hotel Group (GHG) is to extend its brand with third-party management ventures – each comprising a resort and spa – in the Turks & Caicos; Toronto, Canada, and Chicago, US.

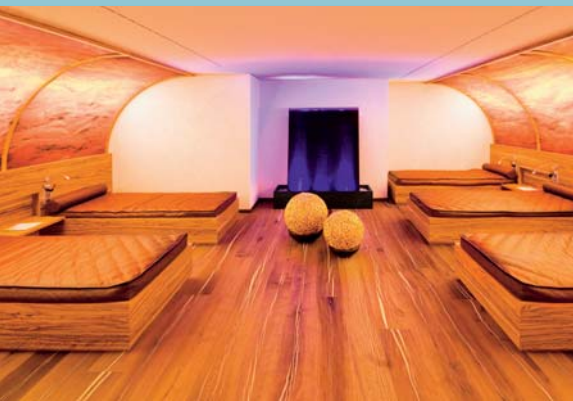
The first property to open, in March this year, is the Gansevoort Turks & Caicos, a Wymara Resort.

The 91-bedroom resort is located on the main tourist island of Providenciales, in the western area of Grace Bay Beach, which boasts reef-protected waters on its stretch of beachfront.

Built by the Apollo Development Company, the resort features a 7,000sq ft (650sq m) infinity-edged swimming pool as well as an Exhale Spa.

Gansevoort Toronto and Gansevoort Chicago will both open in 2011.

GHG also owns and operates the Gansevoort South Hotel, Spa and Residences in Miami, US, which opened in March 2008. The original Hotel Gansevoort debuted in New York City's historic meatpacking district in 2004, featuring G-Spa, a spa-lounge concept.



The spa at the Sackmann Hotel in Murgtal offers a sensory experience inspired by food

Culinary spa debuts in German hotel

German celebrity chef Jörg Sackmann has teamed up with Heinz Schletterer and his design team to create a culinary-themed spa at the Sackmann Hotel in Murgtal, Schwarzwald, Germany.

The 10,763sq ft (1,000sq m) day spa at the family-owned hotel will offer a sensory experience – incorporating herbs, salt, wine and honey – which is intended to give guests a foretaste of what they can expect to enjoy at dinner.

Facilities include a herbal/floral steam-bath, a Himalaya salt stone sauna, and a kelosauna which combines the fra-

grances of pine wood, wine and honey. There is also an extensive wet area featuring a hammam, an infinity solo pool, a seraglio bath for two, a swimming pool, an aroma pool and an ice fountain.

In addition, there are a number of beauty and massage rooms, reflexology foot spas and water-beds, a gym and a bar offering healthy refreshments. Sackmann said: "Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design have shown immense creativity and sensitivity, and have found a unique way of implementing the topics of pleasure and wellbeing into the spa."



The resort will have 215 hotel suites and 169 private residences

Palazzo Versace Dubai to open in 2010

The AED2.3bn (US\$0.63bn, €0.5bn, £0.44bn) Palazzo Versace Dubai resort on the edge of the Dubai Creek in the UAE will launch in early 2010.

The six-hectare (14-acre) development will include 215 hotel suites and 169 private residences, as well as restaurants and a large day spa: Salus Per Aquum.

The spa will be similar in design to the one at the resort's sister facility: the Palazzo Versace Gold Coast in Australia.

The Emirates Sunland Group – a joint venture between the Sunland Group and Emirates International Holdings – will develop and manage the resort. The House of Versace will design the interiors.

Spa to open at La Residence d'Angkor

A new spa will launch at La Residence d'Angkor hotel in Siem Reap, Cambodia, this year.

The spa will have six treatment rooms on the ground floor and eight spa suites on the first floor.

Part of the Orient-Express Hotels group, La Residence d'Angkor is an intimate hotel near Angkor Wat. It is set in a walled garden and is accessed by a bridge over a lotus pond.

2010 debut for Emirates Cap Ternay

Emirates Hotels & Resorts, the hospitality division of Emirates Airlines, is to open a conservation-focused property in the Seychelles in late 2010.

The Cap Ternay Resort and Spa, which is costing US\$253m (€201m, £179m) to build, will be situated in a protected area on the island of Mahé.

It will boast a Timeless Spa featuring 10 double treatment rooms, a gym and a health-food restaurant. Services on offer will include hydrotherapies.

In addition, the resort will offer 110 acres (45 hectares) of protected nature reserve, as well as 1,312 feet (400m) of private beach.

Beljanski Wellness Center launches

A wellness centre which uses extreme detoxification methods to help treat damaged cells in the body has opened in New York City, US.

The centre is based on the work of Dr Mirko Beljanski, a French biologist-biochemist who found that environmental toxins damage cellular DNA, which can lead to diseases such as cancer.

The 3,000sq ft (279sq m) Beljanski Wellness Center will offer a range of spa treatments, such as wraps, facials, colonics and acupuncture.

A range of health professionals will also be on hand for nutritional and medical consultations, and to administer various forms of chemotherapy.



An artist's impression of the 67-acre mega-development on the Las Vegas strip

Harmon Hotel & Spa project delayed

The completion of the Harmon Hotel & Spa development in Las Vegas is being postponed until late 2010, while its residential condominium component has been cancelled altogether.

The hotel is part of the 67-acre (27-hectare) CityCenter project currently under construction in the US city.

The total cost savings as a result of the changes are US\$600m (€477m, £424m). In addition, the delay defers the need for a further US\$200m (€159m, £141m), which is the cost of completing The Harmon's interior fit-out.

All other parts of the US\$9bn (€7.16bn, £6.37bn) CityCenter project remain set to open in December 2009, including retail and entertainment district Crystals; residential development Veer Towers; non-gaming hotels Vdara and Mandarin Oriental; and the ARIA casino resort. The 61-storey ARIA property will feature a 80,000sq ft (7,432sq m) spa, with 62 treatment rooms and three spa suites.

CityCenter belongs to CityCenter Holdings, LLC, a joint venture between MGM Mirage and Infinity World Development Corp, a subsidiary of Dubai World.

£5m spa unveiled in UK's Lake District

The Armathwaite Hall Hotel, located on the bank of Bassenthwaite Lake in the UK's Lake District, has opened a £5m (US\$7.07m, €5.62m) spa.

The spa concept, building and interiors were designed by Douglas Wallace Architects and Designers, working in conjunction with consultancy Gill Haines Spa Operations.

The two-storey building has 10 treatment rooms, including one couples' room. There is also a 50ft (16m) infinity-edged swimming pool, a floor-to-ceiling waterfall, a heat experience suite, a spa lounge, a 'tranquillity room' and a gym.

The facility has been constructed from local stone, slate and green timber, in order to create a building that is sympathetic to its natural setting.



Exterior view of the Lake District hotel

Jenni Paling has been appointed spa operations manager. Paling has worked in the spa industry for more than 25 years and was previously instrumental in establishing the spa at Farnham Estate in County Cavan, Ireland.

New chairperson for UK beauty association

A new chair, Michael Thornhill, has been appointed to the board of the Hairdressing and Beauty Industry Association (Habia), the UK government-approved standards body for hair, beauty, nails and spa.

Thornhill's appointment was made in December 2008. He takes over from the outgoing chair Penny Turvey.

Thornhill has been a director of Habia for more than four years and is currently the chair of the Diploma Development Partnership, which is developing a new Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies.

£1bn Trump resort and spa plans approved

US tycoon Donald Trump's plan to establish a £1bn (US\$1.41bn, €1.12bn) golf resort and spa on the Menie Estate in Balmadie, Aberdeenshire, has received outline planning permission from the authorities.

The Scottish government gave notice of its intention to grant consent following a public inquiry into the project, before finally confirming the decision in December.

Proposals for the resort include a 450-room hotel, two 18-hole golf courses, a clubhouse and a spa.

A detailed planning application will now be submitted before work begins.

SRI joins with United Eastern Medical

Dubai-based management company and consultancy Spa Resources International has entered into an agreement with healthcare development and investment company United Eastern Medical.

The aim of the joint venture is to address the increase in demand for integrative health, beauty and wellness services in and around the United Arab Emirates.

The partners will work together, using their leadership positions in the medical and spa industries, to create a holistic healthcare environment in the region, which integrates both spa and wellness services.

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www.globalspasummit.org

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Held in Dubai, the UAE, this year's showcase for hotels and resorts will introduce The Resort Experience: an arena dedicated to leisure, spa and relaxation. It will also see the launch of the Middle East Spa Summit for wellness professionals.

T: +971 4 331 9688

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Nikki Beach Resort & Spa on Roatan island, Honduras, will launch in late 2010

Nikki Beach brand to enter Honduras

The Nikki Beach Hotels & Resorts group is to further extend the brand to the Caribbean island of Roatan.

The Nikki Beach Resort & Spa on Roatan, one of Honduras's Bay Islands, will open in late 2010. The resort will be the centrepiece of Blue Ocean Reef, a 90-acre (36-hectare) mixed-use development, bordered by white-sand beaches.

Todd S Murray, developer of Nikki Beach Resort Roatan, said: "With Trade-Mark Developers, LPA International, Pluribus and Nikki Beach leading the way, we are well positioned to launch a

project that will truly set a new luxury standard in the region."

Further details have also been revealed about the next Nikki Beach-branded resort in the pipeline. Nikki Beach Playa Blanca Resort & Spa is scheduled to launch in Panama in the first half of this year. The property will be located in Farallon, on the Central American country's Pacific coastline.

Designed by Turjanski/Sartori and Associates, the resort will have an infinity-edged swimming pool and a 118,000sq ft (10,962sq m) Nikki Beach Club.



The resort will feature 50 boutique bedrooms and a large Sanctuary Spa

Rani Resorts expands to Mozambique

A luxury new resort with a spa is to be built on Paradise Island – also known as Ilha Santa Carolina – in the Bazaruto Archipelago in southern Mozambique.

Set to open in 2011, the project is a joint venture between Rani Resorts and Echo Delta Holdings, the concession holders of the island.

The resort will have 50 boutique bedrooms as well as a large Sanctuary Spa, which will offer indigenous treatments

combining Mozambican and Indian Ocean elements.

Other facilities at the property will include a dive centre and an air strip for easy access to the mainland.

Rani Resorts currently has a portfolio of seven island and safari destinations, including Indigo Bay Island Resort & Spa on Bazaruto Island and the Medjumbe Private Island in the Quirimbas Archipelago, northern Mozambique.



everyone's talking about fair trade

With ethical consumerism on the rise, a growing number of spa suppliers and operators are investing in fair-trade initiatives. We investigate

With 'greening' now commonplace in the vocabulary of most global spa companies, there's a new buzz-phrase on everyone's lips: fair trade.

Across the world, sales of fair-trade products and services are not only on the rise, but they're beginning to impact on new market sectors, including spa and wellness. According to research company Organic Monitor, a growing number of skincare companies are implementing fair-trade policies and launching certified products.

Developed in the 1980s, fair trade is an alternative approach to trade that promotes justice for producers in developing countries, including a fair price for goods and services, fair wages and working conditions, social and environmental wellbeing, and sustainable development. It does this by promoting sustainable and equitable trading relationships; securing greater access to mainstream markets; giving producers the knowledge and skills to take control of their own lives; and awareness-raising.

So why should spa operators and suppliers invest in fair-trade products and initiatives? Firstly, there is a moral argument that we have a social responsibility to empower those less fortunate. Secondly, there is an ever-growing consumer demand for ethical products and services: in 2007, the FLO International Annual Report revealed that sales of Fairtrade-certified products were worth around €2.3bn (US\$2.9bn, £2.1bn) worldwide, and had grown by an average of 40 per cent a year for the previous five years.

According to Organic Monitor, a third reason, particularly among natural and organic suppliers, is that fair-trade projects can foster sustainability and ensure a long-term supply of organic ingredients.

There are a number of ways spa operators can improve their fair-trade credentials. These include sourcing ethical products, and examining the supply chain to check that fair-trade practices are carried through it.



Nepalese company Wild Earth is founded on the principles of sustainability and fair trade

For operators in the developing world, fair wages, working conditions and operations, and equitable distribution of benefits to the host community are also key.

Although there are a number of fair-trade groups across the world, Fair Trade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) is one of the most recognised. A non-profit association of 23 national organisations, FLO develops and reviews standards, monitors the Fairtrade Mark – awarded to products by independent company FLO-CERT – and provides support to certified producers.

Although 'fair trade' is a generic term and not all skincare suppliers investing in this area are certified, Fairtrade certification has clear advantages. However, some say that the FLO-CERT process is too complex and expensive for cosmetic products, while the number of ingredients that can be certified is too limited. Consequently, organisations such as Ecocert in France and IMO in

Switzerland are developing their own labels.

And it's not only products where certification is an issue. In South Africa, a number of resort and spa operators are certified by marketing organisation Fair Trade in Tourism. Elsewhere, FLO is working with non-profit group Tourism Concern and others to develop global fair-trade standards for tourism in developing countries.

Of course, there are those who say that fair trade – particularly FLO's commitment to a long-term, minimum price – interferes with the free market, makes producers dependent on handouts and discourages mechanisation and industrialisation. Fair-trade advocates refute this, arguing that the premium on fair-trade products is typically invested in business development or social projects that drive, rather than prevent, progress.

So what are the key considerations for spa operators and suppliers looking to invest in fair trade? We ask a panel of experts.

Carroll Dunham, founder, Wild Earth, Nepal

There is no question consumers are increasingly caring more about where their products come from and how they are made. There will always be the consumer for whom price is the primary motivator in purchase, but, as an anthropologist, I know that the buying psychology is more complex than that – we want to feel good about what we purchase. In hard times, this becomes even greater an impulse.

Operators should consider investing in fair-trade products if fair trade is a core part of their ethos, and if it fits the marketing profile of their customer.

Fair-trade certification assures the consumer that the product has been evaluated and that the fair-trade label has not just been stuck on it as a marketing gimmick. However, many small, deserving fair-trade organisations in the developing world do not have access to the capital to invest in certification process, which has become an expensive business in itself.

Other than certification, operators looking for fair-trade products should consider their social and economic sustainability as well as the quality and efficacy. A fair-trade product should not only provide benefit to the community and be produced under decent living conditions where workers' human rights are respected in a hygienic and safe environment, but it also must not



harm the planet. This would exclude products grown with chemicals that poison the soil and water. I also feel that a fair-trade product made from synthetic rather than organic ingredients is rather absurd.

As well as sourcing fair-trade products, spa operators can undertake other measures, such as buying locally. They can treat staff with decency and respect their human rights. They might donate a portion of their profits to support a local community initiative, or create a massage corps, linking voluntary staff to the Red Cross in their area, ready to serve in the case of a natural disaster by offering massage treatments to the traumatised.

Fair trade takes tremendous work and effort. That's why some economists are so against it; they feel it takes too much time away from the raison d'être of business, which is to make profit. It takes commitment and will to use profit for good: for social change and for giving benefit back to the community. Essentially, fair trade enables us to use our business for a higher social purpose.

Carroll Dunham set up the product company Wild Earth in Katmandu, Nepal, in 1999. Founded on principles of sustainability and fair trade, the company is in the process of seeking certification. Details: www.wildearthnepal.com

"Companies engaged in the service industry can participate in fair trade not only by sourcing certified products, but also by applying the principles of fair trade – such as fair pay, direct purchasing, and environmental sustainability to other areas of their business"

Rob Cameron CEO, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations (FLO) International

Fair trade tackles poverty and promotes development in the developing world by helping producers improve their lives and take control over their futures. It does so by paying prices that cover the costs of sustainable production and additional income for social and economic development.

There are strong ethical reasons as well as concrete economic benefits for businesses to participate in fair trade. Businesses supplying Fairtrade-certified products are benefiting farmers and securing workers a better income, as well as investing in community development, long-term partnerships and environmental protection. They also benefit, from the growing demand for fair-trade products and confidence in the Fairtrade mark.

Spa operators have an important role in supporting the Fairtrade system. They can source Fairtrade-certified cosmetics, as well as tea, coffee and food products. They



can also encourage their suppliers to source Fairtrade products, and communicate to customers why they're using them.

Fairtrade-certified products such as shea and cocoa butters are becoming increasingly popular as ingredients in high-quality cosmetics. This reflects

the rapid growth of the overall market for Fairtrade products, which saw a 47 per cent global rise in 2007.

Any product with the Fairtrade Mark has been independently certified to have met international Fairtrade standards. The certification body, FLO-CERT, is fully independent, and Fairtrade is the only ethical label to meet the criteria of the international quality standard ISO 65. All producers trading through the Fairtrade system are certified through a rigorous and transparent process. This third-party monitoring and certification system is the only way to give consumers an independent, transparent assurance that certain standards are being met.

At the moment, certification for cosmetics is based on the same criteria as for food. However, a new policy specific to cosmetics is now being developed, which recognises the lower volumes and higher values of the ingredients used.

While the service industry currently has no universally recognised fair-trade standard, operators can participate not only by sourcing Fairtrade-certified products, but also by applying the principles of fair trade – such as fair pay, direct purchasing, and environmental sustainability – to other areas of their business.

Looking towards the future, the possibility of a Fairtrade label for tourism is now being explored. A feasibility study and concept paper have been completed, and research is ongoing. A final decision will likely be made this year about whether Fairtrade certification for tourism will go forward.

FLO International is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder, umbrella association with 23 member organisations across the world. Details: www.fairtrade.net

HAPPINESS LOVE PEACE VATA MESSAGE MASSAGE MESSAGE OIL OIL OIL OIL INFUSION INFUSION INFUSION

"To ensure that a fair-trade initiative is credible, it's crucial to visit the site. Talking directly with the people involved in a project gives you the chance to understand and appreciate their culture, food, health and customs, which is essential to the success of the process"

Amarjit Sahota founder and director, Organic Monitor

Natural and organic cosmetics is still a niche market in Europe, representing just 2 per cent of overall cosmetics sales. However, this rises to above 5 per cent in some countries, such as the UK and Germany, and the figure is growing.

Already highly ethical, natural and organic cosmetic companies are now increasingly investing in fair-trade sourcing projects – not only to support growers in developing countries, but also to encourage sustainability and guarantee a long-term supply of organic ingredients. However, not all cosmetics produced using fair-trade methods are certified.

Certification of fair-trade cosmetics is crucial, since this guarantees that the raw ingredients come from a fair-trade source. This ensures that growers receive a fair price,



that part of the profits are reinvested in the community and that the production methods are sustainable. It's very important that ingredients suppliers get certification, so that their fair-trade production methods are recognised by buyers. Without certification, there is a danger of 'fair-trade washing'.

Aside from looking for certified products, spa operators can demand that their suppliers who source from developing countries use fair-trade and sustainable ingredients. They should ask how sustainable the supply chain to the product is, whether any of the ingredients are organic or fair-trade, and, if they're not, if an organic or fair-trade source can be found.

Amarjit Sahota founded research and consulting firm Organic Monitor in 2001. Details: www.organicmonitor.com

FAIR TRADE BY NUMBERS

According to FLO International:

- Fairtrade products account for 1 to 20 per cent of all sales in their product categories in Europe and the northern US
- In 2007, there were 632 Fairtrade producers in 58 countries, representing 1.5 million people
- Including dependents, 7.5 million people benefit from Fairtrade globally

Ulisses Sabará, president, Beraca, Brazil

Following on from the widespread interest in natural and organic products, it's becoming increasingly important for consumers to know whether the raw materials used in cosmetic products are sourced fairly or not. As an ingredients supplier investing in fair-trade partnerships in the Amazon, we're finding that international cosmetic companies are approaching us to better understand the supply process.

Transparency and accountability are key to fair trade, and to everything we do. Our products are already certified as sustainable by the Forest Stewardship Council and organic by the French organisation Ecocert. However, getting our products certified Fairtrade through the current FLO-Cert system would be difficult. Many of our ingredients from the Amazon – such as our natural oils – are considered to be speciality products, and certification for speciality products is not as simple as for more commonly found products, such as chocolate or coffee.

Beraca is now working with FLO-Cert, EcoCert and a number of other companies to develop a new model of Fairtrade certification for our particular type of business. We have a team in the Amazon working with FLO-Cert and we aim to begin implementing the new model within the next few years. Once this has happened, product manufacturers that are Fairtrade-certified



will be able to use our ingredients.

Companies looking for certification should always go to a globally recognised organisation. However, certification is only the stamp which confirms a fair-trade relationship. Regardless of whether a product is certified, you should look carefully at the relationship between the supplier and the community; the procedures followed; the sustainability of the process, and the social and environmental impact.

To ensure that a fair-trade initiative is credible, it's crucial to visit the site. Once the process has begun, make contact with a local supplier who can facilitate contact with the community. Talking directly to the people involved in a project gives you the chance to understand and appreciate their culture, food, health and customs, which is essential to the success of the process.

When considering whether investing in fair trade is right for your business, you have to think in the long term. There are no short-term options when it comes to fair trade.

Founded in 1956, Beraca is a supplier of water technologies, food ingredients, animal nutrition and health products, and natural and organic ingredients for cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and fragrances. Details: www.beraca.com



Wild Earth works in partnership with local communities in Nepal

"I don't believe in guaranteed, fixed minimum prices for organic, fair-trade raw materials, as markets simply don't work like this. We believe we should always pay our local growers a premium for running a fair-trade operation, but on this should be on cost price-plus basis"

Bas Shneiders, CEO, Weleda Naturals

We strive for a supplier management system that is transparent and respects fair-trade criteria. All our suppliers are obliged to meet our standards. To support this, our organisation helps projects all over the world in a number of different ways.

Cosmetic companies need to be proactive in building up long-term supplier relationships, especially in developing countries. Besides this, a portion of revenue should be set aside to support social and ecological projects, from education to organic gardening. It's very important to involve local government, NGOs, worker unions and other local stakeholders in this process in order to gain acceptance and create a more sustained effect.

As demand from consumers for fair-trade cosmetic products increases, we're already seeing 'fair-trade washing' happening in the market. This could be avoided by having an international set of



standards for both raw materials and finished goods.

However, for Weleda, certification based on single raw materials – such as that awarded by FLO-Cert – is too complex and expensive at the moment, as each individual ingredient in a product has to be put through

the process. Besides this, the number of raw materials FLO-Cert is able to certify is currently very limited. As a result, we don't feel that FLO-affiliated labels are achievable for finished products containing 20 or more raw materials.

From a business point of view, we don't believe in the FLO system of guaranteed, fixed minimum prices for organic, fair-trade raw materials, as markets simply don't work like this. We believe we should always pay our local growers/processors a premium for using organic/biodynamic methods, and another premium for running a fair-trade operation. This should always be based on a cost price-plus basis, keeping market fluctuations in mind.

We place most importance on having full transparency and traceability in our supply chain. Operators should not only check the incoming goods, but dig a bit deeper, assessing the collectors/growers, processors, exporters, shippers and importers. When undertaking supplier audits, operators should make site visits to see the situation first-hand. You need to know that the workplace is safe, how workers are paid, if they have written contracts and the right to organise themselves, and how many hours they work. This is a process of continual improvement that needs to be supported by the operator.

For Weleda, working with our partners on an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable, long-term basis is the core of our business.

A subsidiary of Weleda Arlesheim, Switzerland, Weleda Naturals is a service provider to the international Weleda Group in medicinal plant cultivation and processing as well as international sourcing. Details: www.weleda-naturals.com



The spa at Harrah's Atlantic City is one of eight Red Door facilities within resort properties



Todd Walter

Despite global recession, Red Door Spa Holdings has just launched a new day spa division and is continuing its US rollout. We talk to the CEO about weathering the storm and new horizons

“We’re experiencing a lot of setbacks now, as many companies are. Unfortunately we’re all impacted by the global economy and facing cash-flow issues,” says Todd Walter, CEO of Red Door Spa Holdings.

One of the largest branded day-spa companies in the world, Red Door employs around 3,900 people and boasted revenues of US\$200m (£159m, £142m) in its last fiscal year. In light of the current economic climate, Walter predicts this figure will be down by 10 to 15 per cent this year and the company has put its international expansion plans on hold.

However, he is confident that the company will weather the storm, thanks in part to its pedigree of nearly 100 years in the industry (see p27). Launched by spa pioneer Elizabeth Arden in 1910, Red Door has strong links to the world-famous beauty brand Elizabeth Arden and a loyal following. “We’re still a very profitable company, so survival is not an issue for us,” says Walter. “As we started seeing things become tougher, we started reallocating our resources and we’ve been forced to become more focused and disciplined.”

So just what is the company’s plan of action and how will it implement it?

AN OUTSIDER’S PERSPECTIVE

Walter is the man ultimately responsible for making a difference as the company moves forward. His debut in the spa industry came with his appointment at Red Door Spa Holdings in July 2005. Initially, he held the positions of executive vice-president and chief financial officer, before moving quickly through the ranks to COO in March 2006 and then CEO in October of the same year. “Certainly my learning curve [in the spa industry] has been almost vertical,” says Walter. “It’s been a tremendous experience and I’ve absolutely fallen in love with the industry. I have never been associated with a more passionate group of people in my life.”

Before Red Door, Walter spent 14 years in financial structuring and management turnaround for businesses – experience which will stand him in good stead to guide Red Door through what will undoubtedly be a tough few years. “Prior to Red Door Spa I was working for Naked Juice, a premium juice company owned by the private equity group North Castle

Partners, which also owns Red Door,” he says. “My role at Naked Juice was an interim one, and when I completed the company turnaround I rolled onto Red Door – not because it was in crisis, but because it was under-performing.”

And Walter certainly proved his worth, as from 2005 to 2007 the profitability of Red Door increased by 80 per cent. “My training in the turnaround business was really to act as the catalyst for change,” he says. “Being an outsider helped because I would talk to people in the company to try to identify the true expert. Very often the knowledge of what needs to be done in a business is already there, it’s just a question of giving a voice to those people who know what needs to be done.”

ACCESSIBLE WELLNESS

The main priority for Red Door now, says Walter, is to strengthen its position in the domestic US marketplace, and he has a twofold strategy to achieve this.

The first part of this is to widen its customer base. To do this, Red Door Spa Holdings has created a new division called Simply Face & Body, to manage the rollout of a new membership-based spa model.



Red Door resort spas, such as the one at the Wigwam Resort in Arizona, are more focused on wellness than the day spas

A typical Simply Face & Body spa will be fairly small – approximately 3,000sq ft (279sq m) – with services limited to facials, massages and waxing, and will offer three- and 12-month membership options. For the three-month membership customers pay a joining fee of US\$29 (£23, £21), which is waived for those signing up to 12 months. Customers then pay a monthly fee of US\$59 (£47, £42), which entitles them to one service a month. The price point of services thereafter is fixed at US\$49 (£39, £35), which is much lower than the industry norm – the average cost of a massage in a Red Door Spa is US\$110 (£88, £78).

“There’s a tremendous focus on the higher end of the spa industry, but there is a huge segment of the population that hasn’t had access to affordable, yet high quality, spa services,” says Walter. “We want to bring wellness to that segment.”

As such, the target market for Simply Face & Body is people with a household income of US\$75,000 (£59,800, £53,300) a year. In contrast, the average Red Door Spa customer has a household income of US\$150,000 a year (£119,600, £106,550).

“The guest who goes to a Simply Face & Body we don’t believe would be a

“Average weekly revenues at our new spa at the Willard International have been in excess of double those for the previous two years. This demonstrates the advantage of bringing in a high-street brand”

traditional Red Door guest,” says Walter. “A traditional Red Door guest is looking not just for the technical delivery of the service but the total experience.”

It is partly for this reason that Simply Face & Body will not be directly associated with Red Door – it will not use the name and will have a separate website: www.simplyfaceandbody.com – although Walter says: “I suspect it will still be known that it’s a division of Red Door Spa Holdings.”

While it’s easy to draw comparisons between Simply Face & Body and other membership-based spa businesses in the US such as Massage Envy and Facelagic, Walter points out two key differences. “Massage Envy is exclusively dedicated to body services and Facelagic to facials: we offer both,” he says. “The other thing is reputation. We offer the assurance

and integrity of the Red Door Spa brand and we will not be franchised, as there is always a question of consistency of service delivery [with franchises].”

The first Simply Face & Body launched in New Jersey in January and Walter is monitoring business closely. “Right now, we want to prove the concept works and that the economics we have made around it are accurate,” he says. If things go well, the goal is to open up to eight new sites in 2010. The spas will all be new builds, with a capital cost of around US\$300,000 (£239,250, £213,100) to US\$350,000 (£279,000, £248,500) each, compared to US\$2.5m (£2m, 1.78m) to US\$3.2m (£2.55m, £2.27m) for a traditional Red Door Spa.

The facilities will be located in high footfall areas such as shopping centres, but not too close to the company’s existing

The historic Wigwam Golf Resort in Arizona opened its Red Door Spa in 2006



sites. "We intend to keep Simply Face & Body geographically separated from Red Door Spas," says Walter. "You won't find them within a 10-mile radius of each other."

So far, 1,000 possible sites have been identified for the rollout. And in the long-term, Walter predicts that the rate of new openings could easily go up to 12 to 15 units a year in the next 10 to 15 years.

RED DOOR ROLLOUT

The second part of Walter's strategy for the company is to expand its portfolio of Red

Door Spa sites. The company currently operates 31 Red Door-branded locations in the US and one in London (see p29). The portfolio comprises 23 freestanding day spas and eight spas in resort properties – although Walter admits that only five of these are "true resort spas", while three are day spas hosted by hotel operators. In addition, Red Door Spa Holdings owns and operates 20 Mario Tricoci hair salons and day spas, mostly in the Chicago area.

A typical Red Door Day Spa is approximately 7,000 to 8,000sq ft (650 to 743sq m)

in size and features up to 10 hair stations, five manicure and five pedicure stations, 10 treatment rooms and a small café. In contrast, Red Door Spas at resorts can range from 10,000 to 48,000sq ft (929 to 4,459sq m), with 15 to 30 treatment rooms and additional facilities including a gym, steamroom and sauna, a swimming pool, relaxation areas and a more extensive café.

While, the day spas are mostly focused on beauty services (hairdressing accounts for 25-30 per cent of their business), resort spas have "an emphasis on total wellbeing,

PERSONAL FILE

TODD WALTER

What's your favourite book? *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. I haven't read it in about 25 years, but it certainly has stuck with me over time.

What's your favourite film? Anything by Alfred Hitchcock, but if I had to pick one it would be *To Catch a Thief*.

What's your favourite song? *That's Why I'm Here* by James Taylor.

What's your favourite place? I have a small cabin in the woods in Vermont.

What's your favourite leisure activity? Tennis and skiing with my family.

What's your favourite spa treatment? I would have to say massage.

How would you describe yourself?

Open, direct and tough, but fair.

How would your critics describe you?

I suspect they'd say that I make decisions quickly, but that comes from my turnaround experience.

What's the best piece of advice you've received? Base your decisions on the most objective set of facts available and deal with the emotional ramifications afterwards. Don't let

the emotional side interfere with the decision. That came from our current chairman, Andrew Warshaw, who I also worked with at Naked Juice.

Who do you most admire?

President Barack Obama. He has so many of the attributes that make up a good leader and he has surrounded himself with the best people he can. I think common sense is more important than raw intellect, but he has demonstrated both of these characteristics.



Red Door's new Simply Face & Body model is targeting a broader demographic than the Red Door Spa brand

The Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon on New York's Fifth Avenue (below)

including dietary offerings," says Walter. The most popular treatments, accounting for around 20 per cent of all services, are facials. "The heritage of our brand is that we are a serious skincare company, so that's why we perform facials the most," says Walter. In addition to the Elizabeth Arden brand, other products available at Red Door Spas include B Kamins, SkinCeuticals and Italian plant-based line Floriani. Red Door also carries its own private label line, E Solutions. Retail stands at about 15 per cent of revenue.

In terms of clientele, the age range falls between 35 and 49 years, with the average at 39. "It's younger than many people would guess and we find ourselves fighting this misconception," says Walter. "But if you look at the newer Red Door Spas they have a more modern feel and we like to describe ourselves as a multi-generational brand."

The biggest demographic difference between the resort and day spas is the ratio of men and women. At resort spas there is typically an even 50:50 gender split, whereas in the day spas 85 to 90 per cent of customers are women for whom beauty services are part of their lifestyle – repeat custom sits at 65 to 70 per cent, although the credit crunch is taking its toll here. "We're seeing a greater length of time between customer visits," says Walter. "If a

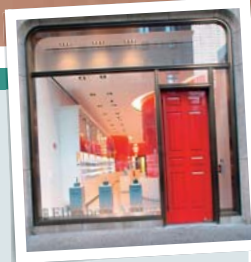
BACKGROUND BRIEFING

The first Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon opened on New York's Fifth Avenue in 1910, and over the next 50 years the number of sites steadily increased. At its peak, the business included 41 Elizabeth Arden salons and spas worldwide and the estate was worth US\$60m (€48m, £43m).

Following Arden's death in 1966, the company changed hands three times before being acquired by Unilever in 1989. Three years later, Unilever sold the salon-and-spa business to a newly formed company called Elizabeth Arden Salon Holdings. In 2000, the private equity firm North Castle Partners acquired Elizabeth Arden Salon Holdings along with the hair salon business Mario Tricoci and merged them to create Red Door Spa Holdings.

guest was coming eight times a year, they're now only visiting six or seven times." Overall annual revenue is US\$500 (€400, £355) to US\$700 (€558, £497) per square foot for day spas, down by 5 per cent from 2007.

The resort spas are feeling the pinch in a different way. "They're off approximately 19 per cent compared to last year," says Walter. "To a large extent that is driven by the occupancy rate of the resort themselves."



Unilever initially kept the Elizabeth Arden beauty products business, but sold it in 2001 to FFI Fragrance, which trades under the name Elizabeth Arden, Inc. Red Door Spa Holdings licenses the Elizabeth Arden trademark from Elizabeth Arden, Inc. See SB07/1 p96 for more information.

Nonetheless, the latest Red Door Spa, which opened at the Willard InterContinental, Washington, DC, in October 2008, has been a resounding success. The 5,100sq ft (474sq m) facility, described by Walter as a 'day spa in a host environment', has four treatment rooms, two pedicure stations, a manicure station, a whirlpool, steamroom, sauna and a 900sq ft (84sq m) gym. Red Door took over operations

from InterContinental, which previously ran it under its own I-Spa brand. "Average weekly revenues have been more than double those for the previous two years," says Walter. "This demonstrates the advantage of bringing in a recognised high-street brand, and is a wonderful example of what Red Door can bring to a host environment."

In the future the aim is to strengthen the Red Door brand even further, by opening more spas. Next on the list is a day spa in Bellevue, Washington, which is scheduled to open in September. The 8,000sq ft (743sq m) is expected to cost around US\$3m (£2.39m, £2.13m). A further three day spas are due to open in 2010, with a target of four to six a year thereafter.

To build the resort spa business, Red Door is keen to partner with a hospitality or real-estate company. One possible player is Harrah's, a chain of casino hotels, one of which already has a Red Door Spa.

BACK TO BASICS

Growing a company in precarious times, requires focus and discipline, says Walters. "There is no magic bullet," he says. "But a big part of what our team has accomplished in the last two years is due to getting back to basics and being very focused on the main priorities that have a meaningful impact on our business."

One of those priorities is to "surround yourself with great people," says Walter. "There were already experts in the company, but I felt that the team needed to be rounded out, so brought on a couple of new people in very significant senior roles."

The first was Teresa McKee, who joined Red Door in 1996 and was promoted to senior vice-president and chief operating officer in January 2008. Her role today covers standard operating procedures, service protocols and brand standards.

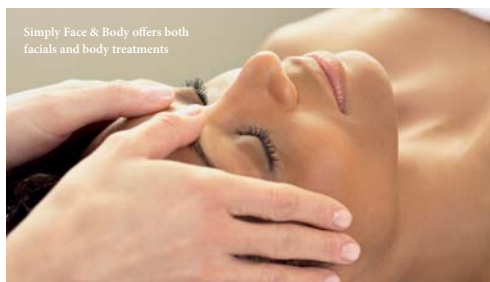
Next, in 2007, was Julia Petrini, who Walter refers to as the prodigal daughter:

"Julia had been with Red Door, but left in 2001 to become vice-president of global spa operations at Bliss Spa and to grow the brand from two units to 13. We brought her back specifically to head up a newly formed international division with the goal of extending Red Door Spas around the world. We've now refocused Julia's skill set on our North American ventures as senior vice-president of marketing; she is one of a three key people who interact on a daily basis and work together to drive the Red Door brand forwards."

The third appointment was skincare expert and consultant Cornelia Zicu, who took up the position of worldwide chief creative officer last August. An aesthetician from Romania, Zicu had her big break in the spa industry when she went into business with real estate developer Richard Aidekman, and his wife Ellen Sackoff, who charged her with developing products and treatments for their day spa on New York's Fifth Avenue, the Cornelia Day Resort (see SB08/4 p80). Zicu left this venture in 2006 to become a spa consultant.

"Cornelia is an icon in the industry and she is running our creative side and looking at our programmes and spa menus," says Walter. To keep menus fresh, Zicu will be taking her lead from the fashion industry by giving a new spin to the staple Red Door menu every spring and fall. For example, last fall, pomegranate seeds (high in antioxidants) were incorporated into manicures and pedicures.

"One thing that really differentiates us from most others is the investment in our infrastructure," says Walter. "We have probably the most experienced senior management team in the spa industry."



Simply Face & Body offers both facials and body treatments

CURRENT PORTFOLIO

RED DOOR DAY SPAS

New York, NY (opened 1929)

Chevy Chase, Washington, DC (opened 1976)

Phoenix, AZ (opened 1995)

London, UK (opened 1997)

Vienna, VA (opened 1997)

Chicago, IL (opened 1998)

San Francisco, CA (opened 1998)

Dallas, TX (opened 1999)

Darien, CT (opened 2005)

Deerfield, IL (opened 2000)

Fort Lauderdale, FL (opened 2005)

Plano, TX (opened 2001)

Reston, VA (opened 2001)

Westchester, NY (opened 2001)

Arlington, VA (opened 2002)

Bethesda, MD (opened 2003)

Baltimore, MD (opened 2004)

Fairfax Corner, VA (opened 2004)

Garden City, NY (opened 2004)

Gaithersburg, MD (opened 2005)

Northbrook, IL (opened 2005)

Richmond, VA (opened 2005)

Woodbury, NY (opened 2005)

RED DOOR RESORT SPAS/DAY SPAS IN HOST ENVIRONMENTS

Red Door Spa, Westin LaPaloma

Resort, Tucson, AZ (opened 2000)

Red Door Spa, Seaview Marriott

Resort, Galloway, NJ (opened 2000)

Red Door Spa, Mystic Marriott,

Groton, CT (opened 2001)

Red Door Spa, Providence Biltmore,

Providence, RI (opened 2005)

Red Door Lifestyle Spa,

Hyatt Regency Bonaventure

Conference Center and Spa, Fort

Lauderdale, FL (opened 2006)

Red Door Spa, Wigwam Golf Resort &

Spa, Litchfield Park, AZ (opened 2006)

Red Door Spa, Harrah's Resort

Atlantic City, NJ (opened 2007)

Red Door Spa, Willard InterContinental,

Washington, DC (opened 2008)



“We receive unsolicited interest from people looking to sell their businesses all the time and we think that, in our maturing industry, it would be natural for an operator to consolidate it”

A PEOPLE BUSINESS

Another area that Zicu will work on with McKee, is training therapists, not just in massage techniques but in customer care. This fits in neatly with an additional core focus that Walter has for the business.

“Historically, we were a company that was very much focused on the bottom line and I think we lost sight of the importance of the culture of our organisation... very simply, we view ourselves as ‘people taking care of people’ [and] we’re looking to attract the best people in our industry to create an environment that encourages our guests to come back to us.

“This starts with hiring the right people. We look for people who genuinely care about helping others, who are open and friendly and have a smile on their face.”

The hiring process is overseen by general managers of the spas, and the company has implemented a referral programme that gives an economic reward to members of staff who suggest other colleagues to hire. “Our experience has been that those technicians which are recommended to us stay longer and need little pre-screening,” says Walter.

For training, Red Door has a national organisation, and each of the four main services – body, face, waxing and nails –

has a dedicated national training director. To improve customer service, Red Door has also recently launched a national training programme for its 500 guest-service representatives. Headed up by McKee, this two-week programme covers everything from company background training, standards and procedures to retail product knowledge and guest interaction.

Service standards are monitored via monthly mystery shopper visits and guest comment cards, and, Red Door plans to launch an email programme in March to encourage more responses. “If we can improve customer service, then guests will have a better experience and come back more often,” says Walter. “As simple as this sounds, it’s probably the most significant change we’ve implemented so far.”

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Aside from investing his energy in the US rollout, Walter is keeping an open mind as to other growth areas for the business. Although the global expansion has been put on hold – the original goal was to open four to six international sites a year – Walter believes it will be on track by 2010.

Prospects in the US show no signs of abating either. “The resort-spa segment is growing faster than the day-spa segment,

The Red Door Day Spa in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, opened its doors in 2005

which in this very difficult economic environment is creating opportunities for us,” says Walter. “We receive unsolicited interest from people looking to sell their businesses all the time and we think that, in our maturing industry, it would be natural for an operator to consolidate it.

“We have demonstrated to host properties and real-estate developers that there is a definitive benefit to having a branded spa company. Also, we have the platform and infrastructure in place. We run the entire process, from site selection to design and construction; human resources and training; marketing and product service development; supply chains and information services; and the finance and accounting that governs it all.

“Right now, for us, our biggest challenge is remaining focused and staying true to the growth plans that we’ve laid out. Opportunities are increasing fast, but they have to make economic sense for us to pursue them. We need to make sure we don’t get too carried away. One of the reasons we’ve been around for 100 years is because we have remained focused, disciplined and fiscally responsible.” ●



Heavenly Creatures

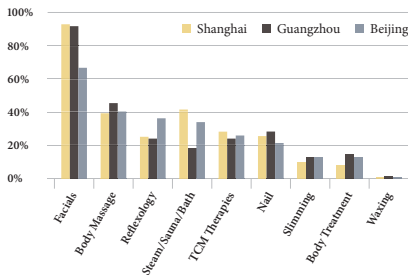
China is one of the world's fastest emerging spa markets, but what do its consumers want? Hong Kong-based consultancy CatchOn has published a study of spa-goers in China's first-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, otherwise known as 'the peacock', 'the owl' and 'the monkey'. We review its findings

LEONOR STANTON • CONTRIBUTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/OLGA ASYUTINA

For the last two decades, the world has watched China's rapid economic development with awe. Today, its population of around 1.3 billion, including over 300,000 millionaires, is seen as a major opportunity by most businesses. The spa industry is no exception, and a study of Chinese spa consumers published last year by the Hong Kong-based marketing communications consultancy CatchOn provides a useful and interesting insight into this emerging market.

GRAPH ONE POPULARITY OF TREATMENTS BY CITY



"A wildly disparate country", China cannot be considered "one country or one big monolithic market", say the study's authors. In line with this, the CatchOn study reports on spa consumers in just three areas: the first-tier cities of Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. Together, these cities represent 43 million people with above-average income levels, and it is in these locations that "foreign brands tend to focus their market-entry strategies".

The findings in the CatchOn report are based on three methodologies: a survey of 1,161 mainland Chinese respondents (374 from Beijing, 413 from Shanghai and 374 from Guangzhou), two consumer forums in each city, and individual interviews with spa-goers and spa operators. The research was conducted in the second half of 2007.

The report describes Shanghai as the 'peacock', Beijing as the 'owl' and Guangzhou as the 'monkey' to reflect the different cultural and market issues faced in each city (see Table 1, p36). According to Peggy Liong, general manager of Mission Hills Spa in Shenzhen, the study's "profiling of the different consumers in [each city] is fairly accurate and insightful [and] proves the point that we need to approach China not as one country but as different regions and markets".

FACING UP

According to the authors: "The modern spa movement in China is taking hold because it's trendy, cool, and emblematic of personal pursuits. Not only are spas the new status symbol, they give Chinese healing traditions – which, for a long time were conducted in more obscure and sometimes squalid environments – a flashier and more luxurious



Langham Hotel International's Chuan Spa at Beijing Capital Airport is scheduled to open in 2010 (above and below, right)



Chuan Spa at The Langham Yangtze Boutique hotel, Shanghai, is set to open in the first half of this year

setting." Emerging from the long-standing Chinese bath culture, spas in China are the "new third place", where friends and business associates meet and hang out.

Another reason for the growing popularity of spas is the power of branding, particularly at the mid- to high-end of the market. "A good luxury brand name in China does not only define quality, it also represents good taste and status, factors important to the country's [social] climbers," the report says. Langham Hotels International's director of spa operations, Barry White, confirms this: "Spas in China need a Western product, otherwise they are not as well received."

With over 84 per cent of respondents having had a facial in the previous 12 months, the study found that facials are the most popular of all spa treatments and often the first service that consumers experience. Although rated most highly in all three cities, they are most popular in Shanghai, with 93 per cent of spa-goers from that city citing them as their favourite treatment (see Graph 1 opposite). They are also the most frequently purchased treatment, with over 84 per cent of consumers who bought facials having had at least one a month in the previous year. Unlike in the US and Europe, where body massages are usually the most popular treatment, the study found that only 40 to 45 per cent of respondents had had a body massage in the last 12 months.

According to the report, the popularity of facials is in line with deeply ingrained cultural characteristics. "To the Chinese, appearance is everything – from what they wear, to where they're seen, to the title they hold in the company... 'Face' defines who they are, and how they want



their world to view them. Therefore to 'keep face' confers a degree of status and respect."

The researchers point out that whitening facials are particularly popular, because, "since ancient times, Chinese women view fair, white skin as the epitome of beauty".

Given the importance of 'face' to the Chinese, it's unsurprising that the top reason given for visiting spas was to "treat certain skin problems" (56.7 per cent) and the third most important was "to enhance my look" (29.1 per cent). "De-stressing or relaxing", which in Hong Kong, the US and Europe is found to be the primary motivation for going to a spa, came second China at 50.7 per cent.

Shanghai has the most developed spa scene of China's first-tier cities



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ROBERT CHURCHILL

When choosing a spa, Chinese consumers view therapists' expertise as the most important factor, followed by an established brand name, then affordable or competitive pricing, with convenient location in fourth place. Provision of a swimming pool and availability of other amenities were the least important factors.

BIG SPENDERS

In terms of spend, the report found that respondents spend 14 per cent of their personal income on beauty and wellness – including spa visits, skincare and make-up products – with more than 46 per cent of respondents spending over 20 per cent.

The mean and median spends per treatment are significantly lower than in the US or Europe (see Graph 2 opposite). However, the price range in China is significantly wider – the study found that although the average price paid for a facial is just under RMB 177 (US\$26, €21, £18), prices range from below RMB 100 (US\$15, €12, £10) to over RMB 1,500 (US\$219, £175, £156)!

Just over 14 per cent of the survey's respondents were male and, though the researchers do not believe this represents the total Chinese male spa market, the "findings relating to consumption patterns and preferences point to the dynamism and potential of this market segment." Notably, male consumers spend more and consume more while travelling (see Table 2 on p38).

The report found that day spas and beauty salons dominate the market for most treatments, with the exception of TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) therapies, which are better catered for in massage parlours (see Graph 3 on p38). "Many massage parlours in China specialise only in TCM treatments, with registered TCM doctors on staff to provide consultations," say the study's authors. "This communicates an assurance of authenticity." Mission Hills' Liong adds: "We should be careful how we integrate TCM into a spa setting, especially when it is marketed to the locals, who are very discerning about TCM."

Hotel/resort spas appear to have the lowest volumes of spa consumers, but often the highest prices, and at the

GRAPH TWO TREATMENT PRICES

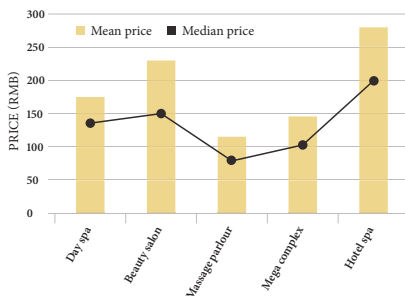


TABLE ONE SPA CONSUMERS' CHARACTERISTICS

SHANGHAI • THE PEACOCK Personal pride, power, rank and beauty	BEIJING • THE OWL Seeker of truth, silent observer	GUANGZHOU • THE MONKEY Indecisive and curious
Go to spas to look good; appearance is critical. Want solutions	Go to spas to learn to lead a healthier life and to socialise	Go to spas to feel good. Want pampering and relaxation
Spa treatments have a pragmatic, results-driven expectation	Appreciate functional, health benefits of spa-going	Believe in the "efficacy of machines in face and body treatments"
Going to spas communicates status and success	Least in agreement with spa's luxury status, trendiness and enjoyment	Going to spa "represents enjoyment of life", "a luxurious symbol"
Most experienced with spa offerings (tried 2.73 treatments previous year)	Most conservative; least diverse treatment-purchasing patterns	Open to trying different treatments (buy most massages)
Spend most on treatments (RMB242 on facials)	Average spenders (RMB167 on facials)	Spend least (RMB108 on facials)
Have highest proportion of treatment packages; highest satisfaction levels	Least satisfied with spas	Have the least proportion of packages – difficult to commit
Most developed spa scene	Least developed spa scene, though picking up	A lot of spa venue choices



Mission Hills Spa in Shenzhen is one of China's leading spa properties



upper end of the market, are seen as “defining the industry standard”. When the Chinese travel, their preferred spa venues are hotels and resorts.

In common with the situation in other countries, word-of-mouth and friends’ recommendations are considered to be the most reliable source of information by spa consumers, followed by newspaper or magazine articles. The least reliable source is considered to be advertisements, although this is still rated as “important”.

THE SPA CACHET

Still in the early stages of development, the spa industry in China, says the report, is highly fragmented, especially as foot reflexology, massage centres, and beauty salons have traded up “to cash in on the ‘spa’ cachet”. While a high proportion of recent investment has been in the first-tier cities reviewed in this report, the researchers assert that the greatest opportunity now lies in the country’s 60-odd, second-tier cities: “the backbone of the new economic landscape”. Around 13 of these locations, “account for only 8 per cent of China’s population but 53 per cent of its total imports, which is why the untapped markets of second-tier cities provide some of the most exciting and lucrative opportunities for exporters.”

In addition, the study identifies a number of as yet undeveloped locations which offer great potential for spa development, including an abundance of hot mineral springs and a multitude of heritage/cultural sites which could be developed into wellness destinations “on a par with the more established Asian destinations of Thailand and Bali”. With increasing affluence, the domestic tourism market is also predicted to grow, as are the number of outbound Chinese visitors.



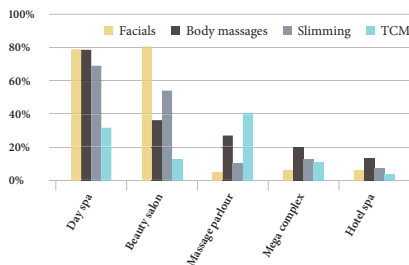
The Dragonfly spa chain, which has sites across China, is one of a number of operators targeting the growing middle class

In terms of both supply of and demand for spa services, the researchers believe that the greatest opportunity lies in the middle market. CatchOn considers hotels/resort spas and destination spas to be at the top end of the market and cosmetic centres, beauty/massage salons and foot reflexology venues at the bottom end, with the mid-market defined as upmarket day spas, multi-outlet massage centres, such as Dragonfly, or chains such as Beauty Farm, Natural Beauty and Décleor. “With the growing middle class hungry for international brands and world-class experiences, there is a lot of room for new players to enter this category,” say the authors.

TABLE TWO KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE/FEMALE CHINESE SPA CONSUMERS

	MALE SPA CONSUMERS	FEMALE SPA CONSUMERS
Spend (mean)	Facials RMB281.6, massage RMB275.8	Facials RMB171.6, massage RMB217.1
Most popular treatment	Body massage (65.5%)	Facials (91.8%)
Second most popular treatment	Reflexology (63.4%)	Body massage (38.2%)
Types of treatment experienced in previous 12 months	2.47	2.64
Frequency	Weekly: facial 13.6%, massage 10.2%	Weekly: facial 21.3%, massage 10.2%
Percentage that spa while travelling	40.4%	31.9%
Main reason for spa-ing	De-stressing and relaxing (85.8%)	Treating skin problems (61.6%)
Percentage that use spas to socialise/entertain	19.1%	7.9%
Attracted to spas because	Brought first time by family/friends	"It's a trendy thing to do"

GRAPH THREE TREATMENT POPULARITY BY SPA TYPE



CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

In addition to opportunities, the report identifies a number of challenges. Firstly, there is a shortfall of appropriate infrastructure to support comprehensive development, particularly in more remote areas of China, such as near mineral springs or heritage/cultural sites.

Secondly, staffing and training can be a challenge – accommodation for staff from remote areas and pension, medical and employment insurance expenses can double the payroll costs and training generally takes much longer (and is therefore more expensive) than in other countries, as it needs to incorporate absolute basics.

Thirdly, the protection of intellectual property rights is a critical issue; and fourthly, investment is required both to build brand awareness and to educate the consumer.

On the positive side, there are moves to improve the environment for foreign investors, including government

InterContinental is rolling out its Tea Tree spa brand in China

The greatest opportunity lies in the 60 second-tier cities. Around 13 of these locations "account for only 8 per cent of China's population but 53 per cent of its total imports... providing exciting and lucrative opportunities for exporters"

initiatives to stabilise "the banking system and institute legal reforms... while at the same time maintaining balanced growth, and tackling the attendant environmental issues."

However, the slow-down in the global economy, including that of China, since this study was conducted, substantially alters the trading environment for many spa operators and developers. According to CatchOn's founder and managing director, Cathy Chon: "The effects will be perceptible at the hotel, destination and premium, high-end spa level, which relies heavily on inbound tourism. These spas will need to aggressively build their local market and compete even more with day spas."

At the day-spa level, where prices are already competitive, Chon predicts the impact will be marginal: "These spas appeal to the emerging middle class, which will continue to grow despite the current crisis," she says. ●
To buy a copy of *Between Heaven & Earth: China's Emerging Spa Consumers*, visit www.catchonco.com



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People RHIANON HOWELLS • EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

the way I see it

Janice Gronvold, 56, business consultant and educator, Spectrec, California, US

My first exposure to spas was a visit to Rancho La Puerta when I was in art school. It was a pivotal experience: the combination of beautiful gardens and architecture, stimulating classes and spa treatments in a natural setting inspired me to want to be involved in creating places of positive transformation. After graduating, I studied landscape and architectural design, then spent a decade working on residential and commercial projects in California, before accepting the position of director of marketing and PR for Rancho La Puerta and the Golden Door.

The person who's had the greatest impact on my life was my friend and business mentor Lewis Weinberg, who recently passed away aged 93. He was CEO of Fel-Pro, the world's largest auto parts manufacturer, which was renowned for its award-winning labour relations programmes and consistently named best employer for women in the US. Lewis said: "Genuine concern for the physical, psychological and financial needs of our employees will almost always result in workplace improvements and productivity that will defy imagination." He was one of a kind.

I was born in San Diego and grew up in southern California. The region's beautiful climate, indoor/outdoor lifestyle and abundance of quality fruit and vegetables – together with the influence of family and friends – all contributed to my early interest in health, nutrition, exercise, gardening and wellness. I now live in Irvine, near the university where I teach, in a home filled with light, art and outdoor spaces.

The spa and hospitality industries are resource- and waste-intensive, and they need to become more sustainable. The spa sector has been slow to adopt eco-friendly business practices, but there are companies we can learn from. In hospitality, Marriott is demonstrating leadership with its Green Marriott programmes, incorporating water, waste and energy reduction, green building, employee and guest engagement, and a green vendor supply chain. Six Senses' commitment to sustainable tourism programmes is another great example of what can be done.

One of my favourite spas is Terme di Saturnia in Italy. I love the location, ambience, people, food, services and, of course, the magical waters. In addition, visiting any project that Sylvia Sepielli or Raison d'Etre have been involved with will always be a special experience.

One fascinating trend is the convergence of spa, medical, hospitality and tourism industries. We're seeing a growing market of consumers willing to go abroad for medical procedures, with countries competing to become 'centres of excellence' for health travellers. In the US, in particular, the healthcare system is unaffordable to millions and close to economic collapse. A study of early adaptors is revealing, and the spa industry is a perfect incubator for evolving spa/medical business models.

To succeed in this dynamic industry, you need to be committed to ongoing education. Visiting spas, attending conferences, continuing with training and subscribing to industry publications are a must.

My favourite movie, as a child, was *The Wizard of Oz*. As an adult, I still appreciate its universal themes: a journey, courage when confronted with the unknown, and coming of age – home to oneself – through challenge and adversity.

ABOUT JANICE GRONVOLD

Trained in graphic, landscape and architectural design, Janice Gronvold worked in real estate development, before applying her design, development, marketing and project management skills to roles with several world-renowned health resorts. In 1998, following years of international travel, she pursued a business degree at the Illinois Institute of Technology, before setting up her business and marketing consultancy, Spectrec, in 2000. She also teaches in the spa and hospitality management programme at the University of California, Irvine.

Demographic trends are having a significant impact on the industry. Spas need to be sensitive to male and ethnic markets, which have been under-served in the past. Generational considerations are another big factor. Baby Boomers are no longer the primary market for spas, and Generations X and Y are seeking spa experiences that reflect their needs and social habits. They want less pampering and more wellness; they often visit in groups; they're less brand loyal and more technology-centric; and they're responsive to businesses that demonstrate socially and environmentally responsible practices. The economic impact of this group is not to be underestimated.

I set up my business in order to address opportunities in the spa and healthy lifestyle industries, specialising in evolving business models that integrate spa, medical, hospitality and tourism elements. I'm not really aware of any competition; there's a tremendous need for professionals and educators in this industry, and if you're good at what you do, the work will be there.

Spas need to make adjustments to survive the economic downturn. Operators will have to rethink their value proposition, and some facilities, no matter what they do, will be forced to close. Compounding this, there will be more consolidation, competition and commoditisation of spa services, as deep-pocket companies acquire vulnerable spa properties. One unpleasant feature of a recession is that strong organisations can prey upon weaker ones.

macro scope

The new SHA Wellness Clinic in Spain is attracting attention by mixing cutting-edge Western medicine with natural therapies and macrobiotics, the diet system made famous by Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow. But does the business have star quality?

RHIANON HOWELLS • EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

For most of his life, real estate developer Alfredo Bataller had suffered with abdominal pain, for which he took daily medication. Then, nine years ago, following a family holiday with his wife and three sons, his symptoms worsened. When he went for a check-up, doctors discovered a tumour in his digestive tract.

His sons were desperate to help, so when a friend recommended a macrobiotic consultant in Madrid, they urged their father to see him. The man put Bataller on a personalised macrobiotic diet, based on wholegrains, vegetables and soy protein. Astoundingly, within a month, the tumour had disappeared. Not long afterwards, his son, Alejandro, suffering with chronic migraines, visited the same consultant. He, too, was completely cured.

It was a zeal borne of these personal experiences that inspired the Batallers – an

Argentinian family who moved to Spain in 1990 – to invest €50m (US\$63m, £44m) in developing the SHA Wellness Clinic, a luxurious medical resort with macrobiotics at its heart. “I wanted to share this discovery with others,” says Bataller, “to share this secret that for the first 50 years of my life I didn’t know.”

Soft-opened last November in the Spanish province of Valencia, the project has clearly been a labour of love for the entire family. Bataller’s eldest son, Alfredo Bataller Pineda, is managing director of the business, while his youngest son, Alejandro Bataller Pineda, heads up marketing and communications. The middle son, a graphic designer named Christian, is not directly involved, but has helped with aspects of the interior design; while Mrs Bataller, according to Alejandro, “has

had the most important job of all, working behind the scenes and helping everyone.”

The commitment is clear. But how did the family go about turning their passion into a viable business model? And what are its chances of success?

MODERN MACROBIOTICS

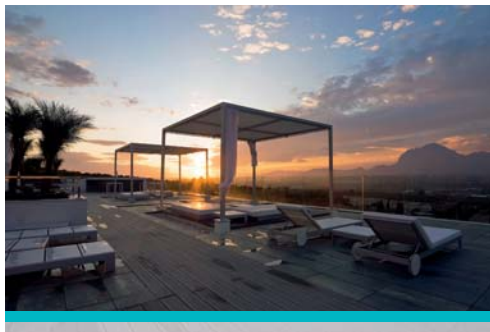
Finding a location for the clinic was easy enough. The family’s holiday home in the coastal village of Albir in the Sierra Helada Natural Park – a region recognised by the World Health Organization as having one of the healthiest climates in the world – provided the perfect setting.

The original building was demolished, and architect Carlos Gilardi worked with interior designer Elvira Montenegro to create a stunning, 93-suite, five-building complex, built into the mountainside.

Developing the macrobiotic concept into something that would work within a luxury resort context, while also having medical credibility, was more of a challenge – albeit one made easier by some very high-profile support. The world leader in the field is Michio Kushi, an 83-year-old Japanese immigrant to the US, who studied under George Ohsawa, the founder of modern macrobiotics (see p44).

Travelling to meet Kushi at the World Macrobiotics Congress in Lisbon, the Batallers persuaded him to be director of natural therapies at their new clinic. However, as Kushi’s other commitments would only allow him to be in Spain for six months of the year, they also recruited

The roof terrace has numerous, open-air relaxation areas: perfect for guests looking to unwind and de-stress (left)





The expansive roof terrace, featuring an infinity-edge pool, offers spectacular views of the Sierra Helada mountain range



Bill Tara – another leading figure in the macrobiotics movement, who has worked alongside Kushi since the 1960s – to provide year-round support.

Working with Kushi and Tara, the Batallers have developed what they call Método SHA, or the SHA Method. Based on an initial macrobiotic consultation, which combines traditional Oriental diagnostic techniques with a healthy respect for Western medicine, all SHA programmes (lasting from a minimum of three to a maximum of 14 days) include a personalised macrobiotic diet plan and a selection of natural therapies, from yoga, pilates, t'ai chi and qi gong to shiatsu, reiki, acupuncture and moxibustion.

Crucially, the programme also includes a significant 'life learning' component, ranging from lectures on nutrition and



The Aqua-Lab wet suite includes two steamrooms (above left) and a pool with hydrotherapy loungers (above right)

self-diagnosis workshops to cookery classes in a fully equipped teaching kitchen. "We're offering five educational options a day," says Tara. "That's our real distinction."

On leaving the resort, guests can also sign up to a phone and email follow-up service, allowing them to access the support of SHA's staff at home.

GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

The SHA concept does not hinge solely on macrobiotics, however. Another core element is the healthy ageing programme. Once again, the Batallers have gone straight to the top in their search for talent: the department is headed up by

leading anti-ageing expert Dr Miguel Martinez del Campo, while world-renowned genetics guru Professor Helena Baranova (see SB 08/1 p38) is a non-resident consultant. Other non-residents experts in fields from holistic dental medicine to neurology have also been signed up.

Diagnostic services offered include blood and urine analysis, to examine levels of oxidative stress, hormonal precursors, hormones and immunity; respiratory, cardiac and sense tests (such as sight and hearing); anxiety, stress and memory tests; and, as needed, genetic profiling. Based on these results, a personalised treatment programme can be devised for the guest, aimed at minimising, and even reversing, some of the negative effects of ageing.

"SHA is one of my favourite projects at the moment," says Baranova, who leads



the genetics and preventative medicine team at the clinic and is available to give one-on-one consultations as required. "It meets the highest criteria of this new multidisciplinary field."

Although Método SHA is rooted in 5,000-year-old Oriental beliefs, its healthy ageing programme is borne out of the most recent developments in Western medicine, yet the Batallars see the two offerings as complementary. "Both methods will help you to live better and longer," points out Alejandro, "and if our guests wish it, they can use both."

In line with this, alongside the macrobiotic consultation, every SHA programme includes a healthy ageing consultation, plus an oxidative stress test and an assessment of the guest's 'biological age'.

Another component of the SHA offering is the aesthetics medicine department, headed up by another top doctor, Dr José Perez. Therapies, all of which are non-invasive, include carboxitherapy (carbon dioxide injections) to combat cellulite and firm sagging skin; mesotherapy (injections

The hydrotherapy pool (above left); spa treatments are offered on the roof terrace as well as in the wellness area (above right)

of antioxidants and vitamins) for similar results; and photostimulation to encourage cell renewal. An aesthetic consultation is included in every SHA programme.

The final piece of the jigsaw is the wellness area (the word 'spa' is avoided). This includes the Aqua-Lab wet suite – comprising a large hydrotherapy pool, hydrotherapy loungers, experience showers, two steamrooms, a sauna and a floatation room – plus facials and body treatments using Sodashi products, and hair services using John Masters Organics.

SERIOUS PURPOSE

As a concept, SHA brings together some unique elements, and the offering is impressive. But who is it targeting? And now it's built, will they come?

According to general manager Giovanni Merello, who has 14 years' experience working for top resorts across the world,

target markets for longer stays are the UK, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, as well as the Nordic countries and Russia. For shorter stays, he says, the domestic market will be key. The clinic is also launching an invitation-only club for day members.

To market the resort, the management team has been working the European media very hard, with a steady stream of journalists visiting during the quiet, soft-opening period. As well as working with a London-based PR agency, the resort has recruited Princess Béatrice d'Orléans – a celebrity in her native France – as in-house director of PR, with special responsibility for the Spanish and French media.

In addition to schmoozing the press, the clinic is building partnerships with specialist tour operators and select medical professionals across Europe, as well as with luxury brands that they feel are a good fit for their image. "We ask ourselves, 'if SHA was a watch, what kind of watch would it be?'" says Merello. "We want to associate ourselves with the kind of products our clients would have."

WHAT IS MACROBIOTICS?

The word macrobiotics comes from the Greek 'macro', meaning 'long', and 'bios', meaning 'life'. The earliest recorded use of the term was by Hippocrates, who applied it to people who were long-lived. Later, Aristotle and other classical writers used it to describe a lifestyle and diet which promoted health and longevity.

The modern macrobiotic movement was founded in the 1950s by Japanese philosopher George Ohsawa. Ohsawa developed a dietary system based on ancient Chinese Taoist philosophy, which says that all things (including our bodies and the food we eat) are comprised of yin and yang

energies. Ohsawa believed if these energies were balanced through diet, optimal health could be achieved.

Following Ohsawa's death in 1966, his followers continued to disseminate and develop his teachings. One of the most eminent was Michio Kushi, who emigrated from Japan to the US in the 1950s. In 1978, he set up the Kushi Institute in Massachusetts and, subsequently, sister institutes across Europe and Japan.

The modern macrobiotic diet is aimed at supplying the body with the essential nutrients it needs to run efficiently, while minimising the intake of toxins. The staples are wholegrains, vegetables and



With prices from €1,400 (US\$1,750, £1,250) for a two-night stay to €9,100 (US\$11,450, £8,100) for a 13-night SHA Equilibrium programme in a deluxe suite, SHA would clearly be a Rolex.

The main challenge in conveying the SHA message, says Merello, is making it clear that this is not a hotel nor a spa, but a clinic with a very serious purpose. As for competition, he says: "Six Senses and Chiva-Som are no more our competitors than Louis Vuitton... though, if pressed, I might mention Clinique La Prairie in Switzerland, Lanserhof in Austria and Palace Merano in Italy."

In early December, after a month of operation, the resort was not yet fully open and was very quiet, with just a smattering of paying guests. Since January, however, all facilities have been fully operational, a full programme of activities has been on offer, and guest numbers are said to be steadily rising. As for the recession, Merello says he doesn't expect it to affect the business's projections too much, arguing that "health is a top priority for people,

A two-storey building on the roof terrace houses the restaurant and penthouse (above left); the suites are luxurious (above right)

and we don't need to attract big numbers: our target for our first year of operating is just 30 per cent occupancy."

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Moving ahead, the primary focus for SHA is consolidation. This includes developing a number of new programmes to meet specific goals, such as detox, slimming, anti-smoking and women's issues. Also in the pipeline for later this year are a SHA cookbook and SHA music CDs, while longer-term plans include the development of an own-brand cosmetics line.

Do they plan to open more SHAs? "I hope so," says Alejandro. "But first we must consolidate the concept."

Depending on how you look at it, SHA's uniqueness can be seen either as a weakness or strength. On one hand, the model is untested and one can't help but wonder if the incredible passion invested in the

project has overridden a cool business perspective. On the other hand, it is offering something truly different and exciting, providing it with a real competitive edge.

What's clear is that, for everyone involved, the definition of success in relation to this project is about more than making money. "The most satisfaction I can get is for a guest to leave saying 'thank you for doing this, I feel better,'" says Alfredo Snr. "This is a human project," adds Alejandro. "Its purpose is helping people who really want to make changes in their lives."

And despite the high-end nature of the project, it is not just the wealthy team at SHA are hoping to reach. "I've always worked with low-income or middle-class audiences, which obviously is not the market here," says Tara. "But if we can attract a significant number of decision-makers and get them to understand the message, that would be very helpful [to society as a whole]." ●

Rhianon Howells flew from London Luton to Alicante, Spain, with Monarch Airlines: www.monarch.co.uk

soy-based proteins (such as miso and tofu), with optional fish. Other animal products, including meat, dairy and eggs, are avoided, along with refined or processed foods. For sweetness, the system uses naturally occurring sugars, while it substitutes animal fats with olive oil. Also avoided are nightshades, such as potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and aubergines, which contain alkaloids that can be toxic.

Despite these parameters, there are no hard-and-fast rules. "The term 'macrobiotic diet' is a bit of misnomer," says Bill Tara, SHA's senior consultant for natural therapies. "There is just a macrobiotic way of selecting food that's right for you. So if

you're unwell, you're going to make different choices to someone in perfect health; and if you're exposed to a cold climate, you'll need more dietary fat than if you work in a heated office all day."

While there's no single body of research to support macrobiotics, Tara points to a wealth of studies proving its basic tenets. "There's ample research [to show] eating less protein lowers your risk of cancer," he says.

Yet despite having several celebrity followers, including Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow, macrobiotics is far from being mainstream. "By any social standard, the way we eat is crazy," admits Tara. "But it's crazy compared to a normalcy that is sick."





Classes such as yoga, tai chi and qi gong are held on the roof terrace in good weather

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: RHIANON HOWELLS

SHA Wellness Clinic, tucked away in a residential area of the small beach resort of Albia – halfway between the pretty town of Altea and the concrete jungle of Benidorm – is surprisingly unostentatious.

Situated cheek-by-jowl with family homes without much in the way of grounds, the resort has no real approach, and the facility blends seamlessly with its surroundings. It is, nevertheless, quite beautiful. Comprising five interconnected buildings set into the mountainside, SHA is a paean to minimalism, using an abundance of white stone, glass and water features to create a calm, light space.

The complex's central feature is an expansive roof terrace. Home to a two-storey building housing the resort's restaurant and penthouse, an infinity-edge swimming pool, a putting green and numerous relaxation areas, it offers spectacular views of the Mediterranean and the Sierra Helada mountain range; even Benidorm looks attractive from this perspective.

My suite, decorated in white and grey tones, is spacious and luxurious. In addition to the usual mod-cons, it has a balcony and dressing room, and many of the suites also have whirlpools. There's even a bedding and bath menu on the side, in

case I decide I want a softer pillow, a firmer mattress or an essence-filled bath.

This emphasis on a personal experience, I soon discover, is a signature of the resort. After settling into my room, I walk up to the restaurant for lunch. Once I'm seated, a waiter brings me over a menu with my name on it and, even more impressively, a napkin embroidered with my initials. The lunch itself – warm bread, curried carrot and onion soup, fried tofu with vegetable sauce and brown rice – is beautifully presented, somewhat bland, yet strangely satisfying.

During my four days at SHA, I don't crave any of the things I had expected to, such as sweets, caffeine or alcohol. Admittedly, I add generous spoonfuls of brown rice syrup to the kukicha tea, while the dessert served at dinner is a highlight of the day; but my sweet tooth is more than happy with these substitutes for the refined sugar it's used to. By the end of my stay, the blandness of the food seems to have receded, as the true flavours start to come through.

SHA isn't just about food, however, and during my sojourn I take part in a wide range of activities and classes. After several educational sessions, I begin to grasp the basics of macrobiotics and, while some of the yin/yang philosophising is lost on me, many of the principles appear to be common sense. I especially

enjoy the cooking class, which leaves me begging the question: who needs chocolate when you can have fried mochi (sticky rice cake) with rice syrup?

Other highlights are the natural therapies (shiatsu and reiki), roof-top yoga with panoramic views, and a guided walk through the Sierra Helada Natural Park.

My experience in the wellness area is less satisfying. The hydrotherapy suite is on the cold side and the changing rooms lack certain luxuries, such as coat hangers in the lockers or a well-equipped vanity area. With notable exceptions, the therapists seem a little gauche, and there's no pre-treatment consultation or follow-up care. That said, the intention to please is there and, at the time of my visit, training is ongoing.

Overall, and unsurprisingly for a resort still in its soft-opening period, SHA still has some way to go to reach the extremely high standards of service it is shooting for, but the fact that the management team leads by example stands it in good stead – the Batablers and Merello seem to be at the resort from morning until night, shaking hands and chatting with guests and staff alike. They also actively seek feedback.

I leave SHA feeling healthy, calm and full of good intentions. And while I haven't stuck to all of them – chocolate has regained some, if not all, of its former power – I have managed to incorporate some of the principles into my daily life.





ReservationAssistant™

SHINING EXAMPLE



A leading supplier of spa management software, TAC IT works with 350 operators worldwide. New managing director Thomas Roessler explains what the company can do for you



When did your company launch?

TAC IT GmbH launched in 2001 as a spin-off of a management consulting company. Our headquarters are in Austria and we have one office in the US.

What's your role in the company?

I became the company's new managing director on 25 February this year. I was one of the founding members of TAC IT GmbH in 2001, and was responsible for the development of the Reservation Assistant Product Suite software.

What key services does your company provide for spa operators?

Our Reservation Assistant Spa & Sport Management Software product range helps to manage all facets of daily operations and administration.

It assists with the optimal allocation of therapists, package administration, retail inventory control, cashless consumption, compensation models, and customer relationships management (CRM) for personalised guest care.

Our training and implementation specialists provide on-site user training and go-live support. A typical project starts with web-based administration training and ends with follow-up training for spa management after the opening. Our consultants add significant value to the training process – for example, by incorporating sales techniques and spa operation best practices.

A dedicated support team provides 24/7 live customer support from our offices while our business partners in the regions provide support in local languages.

Which spas have you worked with?

We have around 350 customers in 30 countries, and will offer our services in any location where they're required. We

currently do business in Australia, Japan, China, Europe (including Russia), North America, Mauritius and Bora Bora.

Well-known clients include Hyatt Regency Hua Hin in Thailand; Grand Resort Bad Ragaz in Switzerland; Travel Charme Group and Steigenberger Hamburg, both in Germany; Rogner Bad Blumau in Austria; Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort and Spa and Park Hyatt Beaver Creek, both in the US, and Radisson Sligo in Ireland.



"Our guests benefit from every function that is offered in Reservation Assistant. This allows our hotel to clearly shine and leaves the guest with a long-lasting good impression. Truthfully speaking, we were quite surprised to see how many good ideas have been incorporated in the software. We expect the best, and the best is what we have found in Reservation Assistant."

Markus Müller, rooms-division manager, Grand Hotels Bad Ragaz

What are your product's USPs?

The Reservation Assistant Product Suite is based on a modular concept, which allows our clients to customise it to their specific needs. Besides the core modules, we offer Membership Management, Gift Certificates or Table Reservation, while the TAC WebEngine is an online booking module for real-time reservations.

Reservation Assistant also interfaces with the top-tier hotels systems, including property management software (PMS), accounting and inventory. TAC can implement new interface requirements with a very short turnaround. We've set up a software engineering group to support

localisation requests by global customers.

As an active member of the Hotel Technology New Generation (HTNG) working groups since 2006, we have set the industry standards in collaboration with hoteliers. TAC was the first company to offer a certified interface in 2007 and in 2008 we renewed our HTNG certification for Property Web Services – the standard for guest self-service. This includes options to implement online booking and in-room, TV-based guest services kiosks.

In 2008, we further extended our product portfolio with digital signage. Digital signage in combination with Reservation Assistant is the best way to improve utilisation and ultimately boost the bottom line of your spa. You can increase revenue by sharing specific information about product and service offerings at the right time and in the right place. Available treatments can be displayed in real time, and retail products and packages highlighted.

What else makes TAC stand out from its competitors?

The recent economic downturn has led vendors and spa operators to demand more flexible concepts. We offer pricing models ranging from leasing to ASP (application service provider) and our customer care centre is manned 24/7 for software service support.

FLOWER POWER

Addis Ababa – literally meaning ‘new flower’ – is living up to its name, thanks to the emergence of a world-class spa scene in this beleaguered African capital

SALLY HOWARD • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

It could be a high-end spa in Milan or New York. Hushed employees, dressed in snow white, slide between clients as if mounted on casters – a French manicure here, a sharp-edged blow-dry there – as chandeliers the size of fridge-freezers sway above and the scent of patchouli drifts in from the rose-scattered, art-tiled treatment rooms. It seems inconceivable that beyond Boston Day Spa’s radiant glass doors lies Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia – a country that suf-

fered the worst famine in modern history in the mid-1980s, whose name became a shorthand for dust-bowl drought.

“The world stereotypes Ethiopia as poor, its fate dictated by weather and natural disaster,” says Yeshe Mekbebe, the 60-something Ethiopian businesswoman behind another high-end project, the Yemreha Spa and Residence, set to open this May. “But we see ourselves with pride. An Ethiopian may not have one penny, but his stomach is full without food”.

Like many educated Ethiopians of her generation, Mekbebe fled her country when the Derg, a Communist military council, seized power in 1974 (the ‘red terror’ lasted until 1987). She went on to run successful infrastructure and steel companies in the Ivory Coast and Guinea, before marrying an American diplomat and moving to the US. With her grown-up son Yohannes, 31, Yeshe has now returned to Ethiopia. This mother and son are typical of the Addis entrepreneurs nicknamed





A number of new hotels and spas are in development in Addis Ababa, boosted by the Ethiopian government's cancellation of taxation on hotel construction (this picture); properties such as the Kuriftu Resort and Spa are also popping up at weekend-break distance from the city (above)



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/LAS LINGBIERK VAN KRAANEN

GOING UP IN SMOKE

Not for the timid, the traditional Ethiopian health treatment of butter bathing – coating one's skin in butterfat and sitting in a eucalyptus-smoke filled hut – stretches back thousands of years, and continues to be offered in many of Addis Ababa's local spas. So what are the benefits of the treatment, apart from coming away smelling as if you've spent an evening in intimate proximity to a bonfire? "It gives you wonderful, soft skin," says devotee Kibinesh Chala, "but yes, you do smell odd afterwards."

'the returnees' – the parent conditioned by history to be cautious, the Westernised child brimming with bravado about the possibilities in this fast-changing country.

I meet Yohannes on a typical autumn day in Addis – the sky milky, bruised with clouds, the atmosphere close. Bordering the Mekbebes' home, the Yemreha construction project certainly looks ambitious: scaffolding clings to concrete blocks, while metal rods are ranged like otherworldly trees. From these dusty beginnings, the Yemreha Spa and Residence will rise, vying for attention with a raft of other leisure builds in this former shantytown quarter.

"For the past few years, Addis speculators have built on the Dubai model," says Yohannes, "all these shiny glass towers that are too showy in a poor nation and look tired within 18 months due to Addis's climate and pollution." In contrast, the Yemreha building – its design commissioned from London-based firm Dos Architects – uses materials chosen with Addis's climatic rigours in mind: high-strength, timber-look concrete that will resist the smog. There will also be one-way glass in the ground-floor gym and spa, and high-quality wet-room products imported from Sweden. "Money is obviously a motivation [for this project],"

says Yohannes, "but so too is setting an aesthetic standard for new Addis."

The Mekbebes are not alone in scenting business opportunity in Addis's spa sector. In the past five years, more than 20 modern spas have sprung up. Many are modest extensions to salons, but a significant number are aspiring to be world-class – although competitively priced in global terms, with a one-hour massage just US\$15 (€12, £11). Even at these price points, one wonders where the client base comes from, in a city in which half of the population still live on less than a dollar a day.

"From people like me," says entrepreneur Dr Tadiwos Belete, sat in his penthouse office, overlooking Addis' moneyed Bole district. "The rising Ethiopian middle class, the upper class that formerly had no access to such luxury and a captive audience of the largest diplomatic and expatriate community in Africa."

Belete's Boston Building – a ETB20m (US\$1.8m, €1.4m, £1.3m), five-storey, mixed-use complex featuring a spa and hair salon, international bookshop, trendy café and short-let apartments – is named after the US city where he honed his business acumen. After starting out as a hair stylist in Boston, Massachusetts, Belete spent 20 years running two spas in

"Ethiopia has long had an inferiority complex. But we deserve good services, so I'm creating a spa that's as good as any you'd find in Paris. In fact, better"

an upmarket district where he was the first black business owner.

"I always planned to return home, and the time felt right," says the 46-year-old. Now vice-president of his own company, Boston Partners, he has one foreign investment partner, but admits that finding an investor willing to come into Ethiopia was far from straightforward: "I pitched to thousands of businessmen and women to come in with me as a co-founder. But African business is a leap of faith for those used to [making] conservative business decisions."

Yohannes Mekbebe admits to having such reservations himself. "In Ethiopia, as in many African countries, our starting point is the negative," he says. "Everything needs to be built here from scratch, including infrastructure. Also, for all its horrors, colonialism gave western African nations a process of law and bureaucratic process, which are conspicuously absent in Ethiopia. Add the complication that this is a landlocked country, so construction materials have to be imported through [the neighbouring country of] Djibouti, and you can see why investment is daunting."

Nevertheless, Addis could promise rich pickings for outside investors with mettle. In 2002, the government of Ethiopia liberalised foreign investment laws, eliminating most discriminatory tax, credit and foreign-trade treatment and tacitly making the climate more agreeable for foreign investment without a domestic partner. The amendment of minimum capital



The Kuriftu Resort and Spa cost ETB20m – roughly US\$1.8m

requirement for foreign investments from US\$500,000 (€398,800, £354,500) to US\$100,000 (€79,800, £70,900) per project for wholly foreign-owned investments and from US\$300,000 (€239,300, £212,700) to US\$60,000 (€47,900, £42,500) for those with an Ethiopian co-investor has also done much to soften perceived risk.

The cherry on the cake of incentives, however, came in 2007, when the Ethiopian government flamboyantly cancelled taxation on hotel construction – which has an obvious knock-on benefit to spa developers with their sights on space within the city's now-numerous hotel developments.

Wellness tourism is something else the country's Chamber of Commerce (COC) is keen to promote. "Tourism in Ethiopia is seeing most expansion in eco-lodges," says Mulalem Denbegna of the COC. "They're less expensive to construct and are a natural choice with the attraction of our wildlife in mind. Spa and health facilities

could be a natural extension for any of these properties."

A rosy picture for spa investors, then? Belete certainly thinks so, with a ETB50m (US\$4.5m, €3.6m, £3.2m), 30,000sq ft (2,787sq m) expansion already underway on the Boston Spa – including a male spa area, whirlpool and additional treatment rooms – and a littering of resort lodges with spas under construction at weekend break-distance from Addis. The latter include the ETB20m (US\$1.8m, €1.4m, £1.3m) Kuriftu Resort and Spa at Lake Kuriftu and the ETB30m (US\$2.7m, €2.2m, £1.9m) Bahir Dar Resort and Spa at Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile.

Belete is also clear that Ethiopia-the-brand can only benefit from its nascent spa culture. "Ethiopia has long had an inferiority complex," he says. "There's this intimated notion that we don't deserve services and infrastructure as good as those in developed countries. Well, I know we do deserve it, so I'm creating a spa that's as good as any you'd find in Paris. In fact, better. Tell the world to come to Ethiopia – now's our time." ●

WELCOME TO ETHIOPIA

Location: A landlocked country in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Eritrea to the north, Sudan to the west, Kenya to the south, Somalia to the east and Djibouti to the north-east.

Government: Officially a federal parliamentary republic, the Ethiopian government is, according to *The Economist's* Democracy Index, a "hybrid regime" situated between a "flawed democracy" and an "authoritarian regime".

Economics: A nominal GDP, in 2007, of US\$19.431bn (€15.5bn, £13.8bn), or US\$251 per capita (€250, £178), representing a GDP annual growth rate of 9.8 per cent.

People: Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, with a population of 78,254,090 according to a 2008 estimate. It has over 80 distinct ethnic groups, with the Oromo, Amhara and Tigray making up three-quarters of the

population. Ethiopia ranks 170th out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index (which measures life expectancy, literacy, educational attainment and GDP per capita).

Religion: Christians make up 61.6 per cent of the country's population (51 per cent Ethiopian Orthodox, 10.6 per cent other denominations); Muslims make up 32.8 per cent, and practitioners of traditional faiths 5.6 per cent.

UNIQUE WELL-BEING CONCEPTS ARE CONVINCING



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WE SPA YOUR WORLD

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As the leading spa planning and consulting company worldwide we have been successfully benefiting our clients from the local and international hotel, thermal and leisure industries, as well as day spas, cruise liners and private customers.

We know what it means to create unique well-being concepts with excellent profitability. We stand for holistic concepts which guarantee an exceptional well-being experience.

THE MARLEYS

Bob Marley's family has opened a resort and spa in the Bahamas, inspired by the life and work of the late musical icon. We ask if it's a worthy tribute



Members of the Marley family involved in the resort and spa project include his wife Rita (far left), his eldest daughter Cedella (centre), and Stephanie, his seventh child (left)

The sound of Bob Marley tunes wafting through the air is not what one would usually expect to hear at a spa, but at the new Marley Resort & Spa, in the Bahamas, it is totally fitting, and surprisingly relaxing.

Situated on Cable Beach in the capital of Nassau, the 16-suite boutique, oceanfront resort opened softly in June with rates starting at US\$425 (€338, £301) a night. The property includes a fine-dining restaurant, two pools and a hot tub, a bar/lounge, a Marley music gallery, a Marley boutique and the Natural Mystic Spa.

The property was purchased as a family home in the late 1970s following an assassination attempt on Bob Marley, the Jamaican musician, singer-songwriter and cultural icon, who died in 1981. Stephanie Marley, the seventh of 11 Marley children, and CEO and managing director of the resort, says the family saw Nassau as a refuge: "We lived in the mountains in Jamaica, so the highlight of the year was going to Nassau for vacations."

With her husband gone, and the children grown, Rita Marley – Bob's widow and Stephanie's mother – decided in 2002

to turn the property into a guest house and "bring it back to life". It is, says Stephanie, "totally Mom's inspiration and vision". The goal was twofold: "To keep the legend alive and... to extend our family's brand and legacy in an industry that is not about music," says Rita.

Stephanie admits they were concerned they wouldn't be able to compete with the local Sheraton, Hilton and Sandals, but says her mother was determined to proceed nonetheless. "Mom said, 'it's not about selling rooms, it's about sharing a feeling,'" she says.



The spa is located in a former laundry area (left); the signature bathing rituals are performed in an Asian-style, sunken bath (right)



WARM, INTIMATE AND FUNKY

The renovation process, which took four years, began in 2004. As it was important to the family to maintain the integrity of the place, the main house remained largely the same, with the sole addition of a 'courtyard building' containing a ground-floor boutique and eight 'garden suites' above it. They also turned a wing of the property (previously a laundry area) into an intimate, two-level spa.

The spa's name, *Natural Mystic*, comes from one of Marley's songs, and the resort's guest rooms and public areas are also named after some of his best-known tunes. "We selected the songs that elicited a feeling or connection," says Stephanie. Examples include *Nice Time* for one of the guestrooms, *One Love* for the honeymoon suite, *Stir it Up* for the bar and *Simmer Down* for the restaurant.

Making sure the resort was environmentally conscious was another concern. Stephanie points out that although there was little awareness of green issues in Bob's lifetime, "he was a naturalist". In line with this, the resort works with local food producers, and has its own water treatment system, recycling programme and energy conservation protocols.

During the development period, Stephanie – a psychology graduate – lived in Nassau. However, as a self-proclaimed "island girl", she is now back in Jamaica, travelling to Nassau once a month and staying in touch by phone and email.

Along with Rita and Stephanie, the other family member involved in the project is Bob's eldest daughter, Cedella Marley. "Cedella is the creative genius, the designer, investor and the family's home decorator," says Stephanie of her older sister, who has given the resort an energetic, Afro-Caribbean vibe. "We wanted it to feel warm and intimate with a bit of funk."

According to Stephanie, the concept for the resort has been entirely the family's own, and they've been closely involved in the development. On the operations side, however, they're working with hospitality professionals. "This is an investment, so we need the professionals to make the brand successful," acknowledges Stephanie.

Despite this, the resort has already seen a high turnover of managers, as the Marleys have struggled to find a candidate who is a perfect fit. But Stephanie is confident that in their most recent appointee – operations manager Barbara Hanna-Cox – they have found what they're looking for: someone with a broad range of experience, who is "open-minded and willing to rise to the occasion". Previously a director of operations for Hilton and a former president of the Bahamas Hotel Association, Hanna-Cox has, says Stephanie, "increased our occupancy, mileage and revenue."

GLOBAL FUSION

A global traveller, Rita never stays at a property without a spa, so she was determined to have one in Nassau. "I'm a

The Marley family's vacation home was renovated to create the resort; facilities include an open-air dining area (above)

spa-lover, and I like to work relaxation and renewal into my lifestyle," she says. "It's about self, wellness and rejuvenation."

From décor to products and treatment protocols, *Natural Mystic* is a fusion of African, Caribbean and Asian traditions. These specific cultures were selected, says Stephanie, "because they all employ traditional methods and natural ingredients."

The desire to use the natural resources of the Caribbean led the family to Linda Hall, a Caribbean-based spa consultant and owner of the product line *Caribbean Essentials*. Hall joined the Marley project in 2004 – when development was already well under way – to create a spa menu in keeping with Rita's Caribbean/Asian/African vision, with everything from manicures, pedicures and facials to massages, body wraps and scrubs.

When it comes to treatment protocols, "the aim is to deliver something unique... not a factory [experience]," says Hall. She cites the example of body services that begin with a full stretch, and facials that include chakra-balancing or lymph drainage. As for pricing, the signature 80-minute bath ritual is US\$90 (£72, £64), while a 60-minute massage or a 75-minute facial are US\$110 (£88, £78) apiece.

The spa includes a small reception, three treatment rooms (two single and one for

ABOUT BOB MARLEY

Robert Nesta Marley was born on 6 February 1945 in the small village of Nine Mile in Jamaica, to a white father and a black mother. He left school at 14 to make music, going on to find fame as a singer, song-writer and guitarist with a band called The Wailers in the 1960s, before forging a successful solo career after the band split in 1974.

Largely credited with bringing the Jamaican music genres ska, rocksteady and reggae to an international audience, Marley's best-known hits included *I Shot the Sheriff*, *No Woman, No Cry*, *Exodus*, *Could You Be Loved*, *Stir It Up*, *Jamming*, *Redemption Song*, and *One Love*.

Having married Rita Anderson in 1966, Marley had 11 children: three with Rita and eight with separate women. He also adopted two from Rita's previous

relationships. In the late 60s, Marley became a leading member of the Rastafari movement, an Abrahamic religion that recognises Haile Selassie I, the former Emperor of Ethiopia, as the returned Messiah promised in the Bible. Tenets of Rastafari include the spiritual use of cannabis, rejection of Western society and Afrocentric social and political views.

In December 1976, two days before he was due to perform at the Smile Jamaica concert to promote peace between two warring political factions, Marley, Rita and Don Taylor, his manager, were shot by assailants inside the Marley home. Rita and Taylor sustained serious injuries but later recovered. Marley, with minor injuries, performed at the concert, saying: "The people who are trying to make this world worse aren't taking a day off. How can I?"



In 1977, Marley was diagnosed with a form of malignant melanoma, but rejected surgery on religious grounds. After a four-year battle with the disease, he died on 11 May 1981, at the age of 36.

couples), mani-pedi areas, male and female locker rooms, and an open-to-the-sky wet area – known as the Wata Passage – with a lounge, whirlpool and steamroom. There are also two Asian-style, sunken baths, where the spa's signature bathing rituals take place.

In keeping with the resort's philosophy, the products used in the spa – South African brand Africology and Asian line Sabi Sabi – are very eco-friendly. For the signature bath rituals, Hall has worked with local soap company Botani Bath to create a range from scratch. All products are also available as retail items, and Hall is confident that retail, overall, will eventually account for 25 to 30 per cent of spa revenue, perhaps more.

In place of a spa manager, Hall is working with a spa coordinator/receptionist. In addition, Natural Mystic employs three locally recruited therapists, plus a Jamaican masseuse called Sister Iyana – "the family's holistic mentor" – who worked closely with Stephanie's grandmother (Bob Marley's mother) before she passed away.

When it comes to finding staff, "we look for experience and a natural, caring instinct," says Stephanie. Although already qualified, all the therapists are undergoing an advanced training programme with Hall, which includes a written exam and ongoing performance evaluation.

Hall is confident Natural Mystic will be a big draw for the resort, while Stephanie says she expects the spa to contribute at least 30 per cent to overall revenue.



The Marley family vibe makes Natural Mystic stand out from other resort spas

At the time of my visit, just following the soft opening, the Marley Resort & Spa was still a work in progress. While I was impressed with the vision, I felt much work was needed to make the project the "intimate, world-class sanctuary" the Marleys were aiming for. As the sole guest, I felt as though I were in a family home rather than a luxury, boutique resort, although therein lay part of its charm. There wasn't a full management team in place, many operational protocols still seemed to be under discussion and there was only one full-time spa employee – although, according to Hall, the spa is now fully staffed and "training is going great".

But even during my visit, there was no denying the resort's potential. In the spa, in particular, the décor, blend of cultures and unique services all wrapped up in the Marley family vibe elevated the Natural Mystic experience above that typically offered by a boutique resort spa.

SPREADING THE WORD

Musicians, entertainers, music-lovers, Marley fans and "anyone who wants to experience something different" will be the prime target markets for the resort, says Stephanie.

Print advertising is being considered for a number of publications, including *Rolling Stone*, *Billboard*, *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Travel + Leisure*. The internet will be a major component of the marketing plan and, in Nassau, the spa is also being promoted using local media outlets.

Stephanie is projecting 80 per cent occupancy for the resort by the end of the first year, and estimates that at least 70 per cent of guests will use the spa, although at the moment locals are driving business. "The local community has totally embraced what we're doing," says Hall. She adds that they're toying with idea of making the spa accessible only to resort guests plus a fee-based membership; but for the time being the spa continues to welcome day guests.

Looking ahead, Stephanie says the hope is that the Nassau property will be successful enough to launch a chain from Jamaica to Japan – and not only for profit, she says, but in order to be able to better support the family's favourite charities.

So what would Bob Marley – the down-to-earth man of the people – have thought of what has become of his former vacation home? His daughter is confident he would have approved. "Daddy was a socialite and a people person," says Stephanie. "His home in Jamaica was always full of friends, family and fans... he would love this place." ●



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WONDERFUL SITE

The number of consumer-facing spa marketing websites is on the rise, with an ever-widening array of bells and whistles to help promote your business. We find out what this means for spa operators

NEENA DHILLON • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

While the travel and hospitality industries have benefited from online marketing services over the past 13 years, the spa industry has been slower to harness the power of the internet as a sales tool. But with a greater number of people getting connected every day – there were more than one billion web-users worldwide in December 2008 – developing an effective online presence is becoming a priority for spa operators.

"The increase in internet usage has had a profound impact on the spa tourism industry," said a 2007 Mintel report on International Spa Tourism. "The internet has become a valued source of information and more people are now booking their treatments or travel online."

The report also forecasted the rise of specialist products: "In the long-term, analysts predict that more virtual communities focused on spa-inspired healthy living will appear online, with websites featuring advice and diagnostic tools in tandem with traditional marketing information. Spa blogs that share individual experiences will also permeate cyberspace."

The number of consumer-facing spa marketing websites has indeed grown over the past three years, with players such as The Spa Junkie and The Spa Project in the US, and Wahanda and The Good Spa Guide in Europe, joining the well-established SpaFinder, which has dedicated sites for the US, Japan, the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. What all these sites have in common is a searchable

directory at their core. Other elements shared by some, though not all, include gift-certificate retailing, online booking options, consumer or professional reviews, and social networking.

POWERFUL PLATFORM

SpaFinder, Inc. president Susie Ellis, who has witnessed up-close "the explosion of the internet into the most powerful media platform", has her own views on why such sites are on the rise. "Today, if consumers want to research, find and select a business such as a spa, they do it online," she says.

"The internet is the best way to sort through all the options. For example, if consumers want to find spas that have infrared saunas, they need only go to the advanced search page on SpaFinder.com

The internet's incredible reach allows spas with limited marketing resources to expand their presence globally



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ALUHAARENA ONLINE



SpaFinder provides marketing solutions and booking and gift-certificate programmes to more than 8,000 spas worldwide (right)

and a list comes up. There are 220 search categories on our website and an almost infinite number of combinations. It would be impossible to accomplish this in any other directory than one online."

The Good Spa Guide's managing editor, Anna McGrail, agrees that the trend is consumer-driven: "It's the power of the people; they understand how the web can help them find a spa that will give them what they're looking for."

However, according to Lopo Champalimaud, co-founder and CEO of new online 'wellness community' Wahanda, the growth in spa marketing websites is also a reflection of industry demand. "The airline, hotel and restaurant industries have internet marketing partners that can help them fill seats, rooms and tables in periods of low utilisation and therefore maximise their profitability," he says. "Unfortunately, until now, the wellness industry did not have the same resources. We created Wahanda because we saw a consumer and business need that was not being met."

Ellis believes the net has particular appeal for a fragmented industry such as the spa sector. "There are 71,000-plus spas worldwide, and the majority have limited marketing resources," she says. "The internet's incredible reach – allowing a small spa in Ohio or Germany to expand its presence via global, aggregator search-based sites – is a significant new opportunity and that's why large consumer-facing marketing sites are on the rise. Our partner spas realise that an association with a global site is quite simply the most targeted, cost-efficient, high return-on-investment dollar they can spend."

"Our partner spas realise that an association with a global website is quite simply the most targeted, cost-efficient, high-return-on-investment dollar they can spend" Susie Ellis, president, SpaFinder



FULL INTEGRATION

Founded in 1986, SpaFinder is currently the leading player in the field, working with over 8,000 spas to provide marketing solutions, booking and customer-management technologies, and gift certificate programmes. The site's searchable database includes profiles, images, user reviews and social media, as well as expert content about the diversifying world of spas.

"Our consumer portal model gives our users all the tools they need to choose the right spa," says Ellis. SpaFinder charges a one-off set-up fee for a basic listing while enhanced listings incur a monthly fee. Other income streams include SpaFinder gift certificates and cards, plus a new gifting division, Salon Wish, for salons. Gift certificates are sold online – via the US, European and Japanese versions of SpaFinder.com and on SalonWish.com – while the gift cards are available at over 60,000 retail locations worldwide.

"Some studies show that a third of spa-goers were introduced to the arena through a gift certificate; they have been partially responsible for the industry's huge growth," says Ellis. "Our volume of high-quality spas is what make a gift programme really work because people want to be able to redeem them anywhere."

As a further development of the gifting business, SpaFinder's sister company, Spa-Boom, provides spas with the technology to sell their own-branded gift certificates online, alongside tailored e-marketing programmes and websites. Back-end management and reporting are also covered.

The final piece of the business model is SpaBooker, an online management solution with a booking engine that can be integrated into a spa's own website, allowing consumers to make real-time reservations at SpaFinder.com. This service has a start-up fee that covers implementation and associated training and a monthly transaction fee for bookings processed through the system. The fee, dependent upon monthly sales volume, declines during off-peak months.

Although Ellis claims that SpaFinder is still "the only fully integrated global spa

marketing company to combine strong consumer programmes with rapidly growing business-to-business offerings for the industry", she says she welcomes innovation in the marketplace, and is complimentary of the technical execution of new entrant Wahanda.com.

AMAZONIAN AMBITIONS

Wahanda was founded early last year by Lopo Champalimaud and Salim Mitha, former senior executives with lastminute.com, the highly successful, UK-based online travel agency, and Yahoo!, one of the world's leading internet brands. The company is backed by an impressive array of investors, including Brent Hoberman, co-founder of lastminute.com, and Wolf Hengst, former president of worldwide operations for Four Seasons; Hengst is also chair of the company's board.

Wahanda's ambitious mission is "to do for wellbeing what Amazon did for online retailing". COO Salim Mitha explains: "Our goal is to deliver an intuitive and

easy-to-use website that brings consumers and businesses together and allows users to learn about treatments, find providers, share professional- and user-generated reviews and book the hottest deals."

The Wahanda directory currently has 3,000 UK and European wellness businesses, with each listing comprising pictures, menus and prices and details of treatments/services. The basic listing is free, but there are paid-for upgrade packages, which include the option of uploading more comprehensive information, membership to Wahanda's voucher programme, high-profile placement in key locations on the site, the ability to sell special offers and packages, and priority in terms of participating in promotions, such as newsletters and PR.

While one commercial element of the site comprises fees generated from the advertising of special offers, another important revenue stream is the Wahanda gift voucher scheme. The vouchers, available for purchase online, are currently

redeemable in 150 UK facilities. Last but by no means least, Wahanda has a robust community section, where consumers and practitioners can create profiles, share advice and post independent reviews.

Champalimaud says Wahanda differs from competitors in a number of ways: "Wahanda is about health and wellbeing, so we feature businesses ranging from fitness centres to salons, nutritionists to cosmetic surgery clinics – not just spas.

"Every business and professional can set up a free listing, whether they're a small nail bar, a seven-star spa or a therapist. We also provide a place for professionals to share knowledge and connect with peers and customers, plus our community is based on independent ratings and reviews.

"Finally, registered users (it's free to register) can create an online scrapbook of their favourite businesses and treatment pages, by clicking on the 'Add to favourites' or 'Add to wishlist' buttons as they browse."

Although currently focused on the UK and Europe, Champalimaud and Mitha aim to take Wahanda global, as well as to add an online booking engine to the site.

NON-PARTISAN REPUTATION

A player in the UK marketplace since 2006, online directory The Good Spa Guide features over 500 UK facilities, as well as independent reviews by in-house 'spies', who assess every aspect of a spa, from cleanliness to service, and award 'bubble ratings' accordingly. "We also have articles on what you can expect from various types of treatment," says McGrail. "Our ethos is about managing customer expectations so spa-goers know what they will find."



The Wahanda online 'wellness community' debuted in Europe in early 2008, but there are plans to take it global (above)

"We're giving thought to the gifting model we want to adopt. Feedback has shown that a six-month redemption period is too restrictive"

Anna McGrail, managing editor,

The Good Spa Guide



Wahanda gift vouchers can be purchased online and redeemed in around 150 UK facilities to date



Lavish, a UK website specialising in gift vouchers for salons and spas, launched last September (above and right)

The guide maintains a strong non-partisan reputation by not taking a listing fee, but it does work with selected promotional partners who want to offer deals, highlighting these in a monthly newsletter. This has proved to be the main revenue stream to date but the company plans to launch a spa voucher scheme in the near future, as a result of consumer demand.

"We expect this to be more profitable than promotions but are giving thought to the model we want to adopt," says McGrail. "Customer feedback has shown that the six-month redemption period favoured by other schemes is too restrictive so we'll be looking to improve that, for instance."

Another development has been the partnering of the guide with lastminute.com, which has allowed consumers to click directly through to the site to make live bookings on selected spas since September 2008. "Why spend millions on a booking system when one of the leading travel companies wants to partner with you?" says McGrail. "We have retained our editorial independence and lastminute has benefited from the trust we've established."

Lastminute's head of spa, Koulla Joannou, acknowledges the brand has benefited from the name that The Good Spa Guide has built for itself. "We started negotiations with them almost two years ago because we loved their bubble rating and felt their quirkiness and independence fitted well with our brand," she says. "I've also been very impressed with the business model established by Wahanda but its community aspect makes it a different proposition. We wanted to give our customers expert reviews from an established name."

Another UK website, specialising in gift vouchers for spas and salons, Lavish was launched last September. "The website is primarily a place to buy a gift and to find

"Businesses can mitigate the impact of the downturn by focusing on how they market online... Consumers are using the web to find the best value"

Lopo Champalimaud,
CEO, Wahanda



out about the locations where it can be used," says founder Susi Pink. While some Lavish marketing packages do include listing fees, they tend to be offset by lower commission levels on voucher sales.

Online promotions and nationwide marketing campaigns are currently being implemented to push sales of Lavish vouchers. As an added bonus for businesses, Lavish is also committed to efficient redemption processing so that spas and salons do not have to wait for long periods for their money after consumers have used Lavish vouchers in their locations.

FREE DISCUSSION

As part of the online marketing revolution, spas have had to come to terms with social networking forums that encourage user reviews. Mitha believes businesses should see this as an opportunity rather than a threat, however. "Reviews are a chance for businesses to get direct feedback and join in the conversation," he says. "They are not one-way discussions."

McGrail agrees: "We have received an overwhelmingly positive response to

our own and consumer reviews; spas are happy to work with us to improve their offering in the light of our feedback."

But what happens when feedback takes a negative slant or reviews adopt a malicious tone? Wahanda employs automated tools – based on a reputation points system – to track every review and to highlight it, if it is suspicious. So, if someone writes regular reviews, creates favourites, comments on other reviews and is active within the community, Wahanda has a high degree of confidence in them if they suddenly post a negative review. On the other hand, if someone posts a bad review as their first contribution to the community, this is viewed suspiciously and their profile investigated. Reputation tools, therefore, play a big role in ensuring the integrity of reviews on the site. Meanwhile The Good Spa Guide vets every posting before it goes live to ensure it is not libellous. Constructive criticism, however, is allowed to stand.

Although she acknowledges that social media can be scary for spa operators, Ellis argues that it is precisely the authentic,

unvarnished quality of consumer reviews that makes them so powerful, creating unprecedented levels of engagement with spas and driving traffic to their websites. "Many would like to wish the user-generated content revolution away but it's not going anywhere," she says.

"Of course, there will always be a few consumers who use these platforms to sound off [as well as] some businesses fraudulently posting reviews, but that's just the nature of this world. Overall, if you encourage a high volume of reviews, these things balance out. Consumers are increasingly savvy at interpreting an overall picture, throwing out comments that seem overly positive or negative. And if certain criticisms keep emerging, it's the best tool to help you reshape your business."

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Before spa operators sign up with any site, it is important for them to work out how much they will be charged for a listing (which may or may not include fees), advertising, gift certificate/voucher schemes (which can incur an upfront fee or commission) and commercial transactions. Not all sites are equal and their fees should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis (see table below).

Ellis advises: "It's important to look at who is visiting the website; how long the company has been in business; how the site or gift certificates are promoted; what other businesses are advertising; how the company supports its customers, and what other spas have experienced. Subscriptions and/or listing fees should be charged if there is a proven return on investment."



SpaFinder's new gifting division, Salon Wish, is dedicated to salons: certificates are available to purchase online (above)

So what have operators gained from getting involved? The Sanctuary Spa at Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa in Arizona, which participates in a range of SpaFinder's marketing programmes, reports that it receives over 550 referrals a month from the site and that the majority of packages sold with an overnight stay are also derived from this source. Fitness Ridge Resort and Spa in Utah says that a whopping 90 per cent of its business comes through SpaFinder.

Wahanda can also demonstrate exposure and sales leads for its spa partners. Linda Meredith, owner of a stand-alone salon in Knightsbridge, London, says that, since signing up in August, traffic to her enhanced listing on the site has increased 15 times. She has seen a positive uptake on her special offers, people visiting to redeem vouchers and spending more than

the voucher value, and an overall rise in her sales.

Meanwhile, Andrew Duggan, marketing manager of the UK's Run-nymede Hotel & Spa, has nothing but praise for The Good Spa Guide, explaining that it is always one of its top 10 referring websites. "When we started looking for promotional partners in 2006, sites were either selling services at too high a price or charging ridiculously high commission of 40 per cent," he says. "The Good Spa Guide did neither and its independent reviews have given us great exposure."

Clare Brandish, sales and marketing director of Ragdale Hall Health Hydro in Leicestershire, UK, agrees: "Their opinion counts because they've built a track record based on credibility. We've also been put forward for review pieces in glossy magazines and newspapers." She adds, however, that she isn't in favour of the guide's association with lastminute.com, because she would rather all enquiries be handled directly by her own team.

What everyone agrees on is that in times of economic gloom, maximising marketing opportunities is paramount. "Businesses can mitigate the impact of the downturn by focusing on how they market online," says Champalimaud. "Consumers are using the web to find the places to go for the best value, which doesn't necessarily mean price."

Overall, it's clear that spa operators risk losing out by not proactively engaging with marketing websites. But like their customers, it's essential they consider the value they're likely to receive in return for their investment before signing on the virtual dotted line. ●

Domain name	Markets covered	Listing fee	Promotional opportunities	Gifting scheme	Booking system	Reviews/social networking
www.spafinder.com	US, Japan, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain	Basic listing carries a one-off US\$50 (€40, €35) set-up fee; enhanced listings cost US\$70 (€56, €50) a month	Yes	Cards and certificates	Yes	Yes
www.wahanda.com	UK, Europe	Free basic listing; premium package costs £30 (US\$42, €34) a month plus 15 per cent commission on transactions	Yes	Vouchers	To come	Yes
www.goodspaguide.co.uk	UK	Free	Yes, an annual package costs £695 (US\$980, €781)	Voucher scheme to launch by May 2009	Partnered with lastminute.com for bookings	Yes
www.lavish.co.uk	UK	Free basic listing with 20 per cent commission on voucher sales; upgrade packages start at £50 (US\$70, €56) set-up fee, £55 (US\$78, €62) a year and 17 per cent commission	Yes	Vouchers	No	No

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Christian Courtin-Clarins

French product house Clarins is ruffling a few feathers as it consolidates its presence in the international spa industry, but the chairman of the group's supervisory board insists the skincare giant has always been – in essence if not in name – a spa brand

RIHANON HOWELLS • EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

Before interviewing Christian Courtin-Clarins at the Paris headquarters of the Clarins Group, I'm asked to fill out a questionnaire given to all journalists granted an audience with him. Alongside requests to know my age and job title, I'm surprised to see a query about my star sign. It seems the man in control of this hugely successful international company has an avid interest in astrology.

Relaxed, genial and quick to laugh, Courtin-Clarins, I soon discover, is not the aloof magnate one might imagine at the helm of an organisation which turns over in excess of €1bn (US\$1.25bn, £0.89bn) and employs almost 6,000 staff. Nor is the company itself everything observers in the spa world might expect it to be.

The uncontested leader of premium skincare in Europe (with 16.2 per cent of the market, according to a 2007 survey by European Forecasts), Clarins' success has been built upon its retail products and, to a lesser extent, its professional skincare treatments, available in salons around the world, as well as its own Clarins Instituts.

In the global spa marketplace, however, the 55-year-old business has, until recently, remained in the background, while younger companies – such as Decléor, Pevonia, ESPA and Elemis – have carved out a niche for themselves as spa-specific brands.

Nevertheless, over the last few years, Clarins has been quietly dipping its toe into spa waters. In 2002, the company opened its first spa with a hotel partner in Mauritius, going on to roll out a dozen such 'Spas by Clarins' – some franchises, others managed facilities – over five years.

At the same time, it started to open treatment centres under the new name of

'Clarins Skin Spa', although it has retained the 'Clarins Institut' label in some markets due to brand recognition, language and cultural issues. The company now has 13 Clarins Skin Spas across four continents, as well as 29 Clarins Instituts.

Then, last year, the company took its spa strategy to a new level – not only by opening eight more Spas by Clarins with hotel partners, and confirming agreements for a further six, but by creating a dedicated spa division and recruiting Ghislain Waeyert, previously director of marketing for Italian product house Comfort Zone, to head it

Parisien treatment centre in 1954 and, soon after, started manufacturing skincare products based on botanical formulations. Naming his company after a sympathetic character he once portrayed in a school play, Jacques legally added Clarins to his family name in 1978, underlining how close the business was to his heart.

In 1974, at the age of 24, Christian joined the company and, as director of international relations, it was he who engineered the brand's meteoric global growth. "My father was a very strong character, but fortunately for me he didn't speak one

"All of our products are used in treatment facilities. How can you pretend to be an expert in skin products if you don't have experience of skin treatments? It's like saying 'I'm an expert in food, but I never cook'"

up. As international director of spa activities, Waeyert is charged with growing the spa portfolio and making Clarins as synonymous with spa as it is with skincare.

LONG-TERM VIEW

The company's somewhat belated arrival in the spa sector has generated both interest and scepticism, with many established industry players arguing that 'a retail brand' has no place in their ranks. According to Courtin-Clarins, however, the move is a natural progression for a company that has always had treatment excellence, service and sustainability at its heart.

Christian is the older son of the late Jacques Courtin, a chiropractor-turned-beauty entrepreneur, who opened a

word of English," says Courtin-Clarins. "Me, I was born a Sagittarius, the sign of the traveller, and I decided to export what my father was doing in France."

The year Christian came on board, Clarins was worth €1m (US\$1.25m, £0.89m), roughly equivalent to around €20m (US\$25m, £18m) today. Last year, the company's market capitalisation was over €2bn (US\$2.51bn, £1.78bn), and its distribution reaches more than 150 countries.

In 2000, Jacques handed day-to-day control of the business to Christian and his younger brother, Olivier, an orthopaedic surgeon whose science background made him an ideal candidate to head up the production division; one of the things that sets Clarins apart, Courtin-Clarins

A professional headshot of a middle-aged man with short, light grey hair and a friendly smile. He is wearing a dark navy blue suit jacket over a light blue dress shirt and a matching blue tie. The background is a warm, out-of-focus golden-brown color. A thin vertical gold bar is on the left side of the image.

Christian Courtin-Clarins
engineered the company's
international growth after
joining the company 25
years ago, at the age of 24



stresses repeatedly, is that in contrast with many of its competitors it conducts all of its research and development, as well as all of its manufacturing, in-house.

When Jacques died in 2007, at the age of 85, Christian assumed the role of chair of the supervisory board for the whole Clarins Group, which includes fragrance brands Thierry Mugler and Azzaro as well as Clarins skincare. Then, last year, he made the decision to delist the company from the Paris stock exchange – 24 years after it had floated and in the eye of the international banking storm.

The decision to buy back the shares (the majority of which had always been owned by the family) was motivated by the need to be able to take a long-term view of the company's future, says Courtin-Clarins.

"When we joined the stock exchange, it was because we needed money to finance a new research centre and a factory. But at the end, rather than the financiers serving the interests of our business, we were serving theirs – they were asking for in excess

of 15 per cent operating profit and it was becoming more each year.

"They weren't interested in the fact that the euro was strong and the dollar was weak, and we do 35 per cent of our business in dollars. They started to say, 'Why don't you close this factory? Why don't manufacture in China?'"

"I wanted to invest in the business, but as soon as I said that our share price dropped, because to shareholders investing in your business means less operating profit. If you want to run a quality business, you need to take a long-term view, and the stock exchange view is extremely short term. So we left, and it was the right decision as a week later, [the Paris market] collapsed."

SPA CREDENTIALS

Since taking the company private, the family has reassessed the direction of the business, and a key decision has been to make spa central to its growth strategy.

Courtin-Clarins is keen to emphasise that this is not so radical a step as some

of its rivals in the spa arena would imply. After abandoning a medical degree to work as an orderly in Parisien hospitals during World War II, Jacques Courtin later trained as a chiropractor. After the war, he started Clarins as a chain of medical treatment centres – only later going on to develop a product line – and the philosophy of offering effective, results-oriented treatments has remained central to the business ever since.

"All of our products are used in our treatment facilities," says Courtin-Clarins emphatically. "Because how can you pretend to be an expert in skin products if you don't have experience of skin treatments? It's like saying, 'I'm an expert in food, but I never cook.'"

In line with this, more than 5,000 beauty therapists worldwide are trained by Clarins each year. What's more, both therapists and clients are encouraged to give their feedback on the products, with this information then used by the laboratory team to tweak and improve formulations.



Kotoran Spa by Clarins is situated within the Kyoto Royal Hotel, Japan (opposite page, top left); Clarins has a number of spas in Beachcomber hotels in Mauritius, at the Paradis Hotel (opposite page, top right), at the Hotel Royal Palm (above), and at the Hotel Dinarobin (opposite page, bottom right); treatments are central to the Clarins concept (opposite page, bottom left)

Courtin-Clarins admits that, until recently, this emphasis on results has taken precedence over the integration of 'spa' into the Clarins concept – although he denies that the relaxation aspect of the treatment experience has been disregarded, pointing out that for over 20 years the ceilings of all Clarins treatment rooms have been painted blue to resemble the sky. Nonetheless, he admits the company could have caught the spa wave earlier: "It's been an evolution. We have been a little bit slow and for that I criticise myself. But you have to understand that, for European people, spa always meant water, whereas now it's a generic word meaning wellbeing and pampering. The definition has changed."

Having now made this semantic leap, the company is well placed to make an impact in the international spa market, believes Waeyert, if it can only convey its message more effectively – he admits that before taking up his current position he did not think of Clarins as a spa brand. "I thought it was a retail brand, maybe a

salon brand, but not a spa brand," he says. "I was surprised by what I learned."

Among the credentials both Courtin-Clarins and Waeyert are keen to promote is the use of natural plant extracts as the main active ingredients in Clarins products – although Courtin-Clarins adds that they will continue to use synthetic preservatives where science dictates there's no alternative, and will only choose organic when it's also the most eco-friendly option. Of the 130 plant species used in Clarins products, two-thirds are cultivated. The other third is gathered in the wild, in accordance with sustainability guidelines laid down by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife and Flora (CITES).

The company's commitment to sustainable development – encompassing both environmental and fair trade principles – is something else that it has been slow to boast about, despite having formed its first fair trade partnership as far back as 1985. Today, whenever sourcing raw ingredients

for its products in developing countries, the company not only pays farmers a fair price for their harvest but it also commits 5 per cent of the total paid to community projects such as the building of schools or public hygiene facilities.

A modern-day example of this policy in action is a project in Madagascar, where Clarins sources katrafay, a moisturising ingredient found in the bark of the katrafay tree. In an effort to protect the already endangered rainforest, the company has created katrafay plantations, where it is paying locals to plant more trees, thereby ensuring a sustainable supply of the ingredient in 20 years' time while also contributing to the economy.

BRAND DEVELOPMENT

As part of the spa strategy, Waeyert is currently overseeing the development of a number of spa-specific products and treatments to support the existing range.

However, it is not only its flagship brand, Clarins Paris, which the group is investing



SPAS BY CLARINS

RECENT OPENINGS

- Qasr Al Sharq Hotel, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – January 2008
- Le Blizzard Hotel, Val d'Isère – February 2008
- Côté Sable Hotel, Le Cap Ferret, France – April 2008
- Royal Hotel Carlton Hotel, Bologna, Italy – May 2008
- Landhaus Wachtelhof Hotel, Rotenburg, Germany – May 2008
- Shima Kanko Hotel Bay Suites, Japan – October 2008
- Intercontinental Hotel, Geneva, Switzerland – October 2008
- Grand Lisboa Hotel, Macau – October 2008
- La Fontaine Centre of Contemporary Art, Bahrain – November 2008

CONFIRMED FUTURE OPENINGS

- Allodis Hotel, Mèribel, France – early 2009
- Le Clos St Martin Hotel, Ile de Ré, France – May 2009
- Mowana Safari Lodge, Botswana – 2009
- Kenzi Tower Hotel, Casablanca, Morocco – mid 2009
- Royal Palm (Beachcomber), Marrakech, Morocco – 2010
- Côté d'Or Hotel (Beachcomber), Praslin, Seychelles – 2011

in. In 2007 – tapping into the increasing popularity of ‘doctor brands’ – the company launched My Blend by Dr Olivier Courtin. Introduced last year in the US, where the trend is strongest, the range is now also available in Zurich and Paris.

Described in the collateral as ‘a customised skincare concept’, the line is designed to cater to individual needs, dictated by age, skin type and lifestyle factors. It comprises eight day and night creams, known as ‘Essentials’; 225 problem-specific ‘Emergency Boosters’, or concentrates; and a small line of add-in products. At present, the line is retail only, although the products are sold only after a consultation with ‘a personal blend expert’.

During our interview, Courtin-Clarins rails against skincare suppliers that “abuse the trust of the customer by making them believe that the more expensive a product, the better it is”. So I’m surprised to see that, in Saks Fifth Avenue, New York City, a My Blend night cream set (comprising a 1.7oz product and a 0.5oz mini version) is retailing at US\$250 (€199, £177). This is in contrast to the US\$86 (€69, £61) price tag for a 1.7oz Clarins night cream in the same store. The company response is that My Blend is a “niche and very sophisticated retail brand with a unique... concept targeting different customers to Clarins”.

Meanwhile, while Courtin-Clarins maintains that Clarins Paris products won’t be 100 per cent natural or organic until this can be achieved without compromising safety or efficacy, he is not averse to keeping his eggs in more than one basket. In 2006, the company bought Kibio, a line of retail skincare products that is certified organic by both Cosmebio and Ecocert.

CLARINS BY NUMBERS

- » The Clarins Group net sales in 2007 were €1,007.5m (US\$1,200m, £897m)
- » The group’s operating profit for 2007 was €111.4m (US\$140m, £99m), which is a margin of 11.1 per cent; net profit was €90.7m (US\$114m, £81m)
- » Net sales for the Clarins Paris subsidiary was €683m in 2007; of this, 83.4 per cent was generated by skincare, 15.9 per cent by make-up and 0.7 per cent by perfumes
- » As of January 2009, the company employed 5,900 staff worldwide
- » The research centre employs 80 staff
- » As of January 2009, there were 42 Clarins Instituts/Clarins Skin Spas; 12 Clarins Boutiques with treatment rooms; 99 Skin Spa attached to Clarins counters, and 19 Spas by Clarins in five-star hotels



PERSONAL FILE

What’s your favourite book? *C’est Vert et Ça Marche*

(It’s Green and It Works) by Jean-Marie Pelt

What’s your favourite film? *The Mission*

What’s your favourite place? My bed – I’m not being rude!

What’s your favourite treatment? Abdominal massage

Who do you most admire? Soeur Emmanuelle,

the Mother Theresa of the French people

What do you worry about? Disease

What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever been given?

The first was from my father, who said, “Learn to respect other people.” The other was from a lady called Catherine Enjolet, who told me, “He who doesn’t give doesn’t know how much he loses.”



Following select reformulations aimed at enhancing quality, the products are currently being distributed through Clarins subsidiaries in Canada and Europe.

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

With Weyear on board, targets for the Clarins skincare brand include increasing the number of Spas by Clarins worldwide, possibly through partnerships with leading hotel chains, to as many as 100. Other plans include the opening of more flagship Clarins Skin Spas over the next two years, in key locations across Europe and Asia.

In the longer term, Courtin-Clarins is hopeful that the company will remain in the family. Between them, he and his brother have six girls: Christian’s daughters Virginie, 23, Claire, 21, and Jade, two; and Olivier’s daughters: twins Prisca and Jenna, 22, and one-year-old Charlotte. Of the four older girls, Virginie and Prisca are

currently at business school, and Courtin-Clarins thinks they will eventually join the business. The other two, he says, have a more artistic bent, but they will contribute in their own way; it was his middle daughter, Claire, who designed the company’s logo for sustainable development.

In the shorter term, the company is girding itself for recession, and Courtin-Clarins admits: “There’s a risk retailers are going to run out of stock, and won’t be able to pay us [for more] because of problems with financing.”

However, he also sees a silver lining to the economic cloud. “In Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is made up of two ideograms,” he says. “One means ‘danger and risk’ and the other means ‘luck and opportunity’. I’m hoping that this crisis will help distinguish the authentic, quality brands, such as ours, from those that are led by marketing. That’s the opportunity for us.” ●

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The Spa at the Carlton Hotel, St Moritz

Our spa spy is dazzled by the service at the Tschuggen Group's Carlton Hotel in St Moritz – but disappointed by her experience in the spa

LEONOR STANTON • CONTRIBUTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Nestled in the Swiss Alps, in the exclusive resort town of St Moritz, the Carlton Hotel is one of four properties owned by the Tschuggen Hotel Group, which also runs the Tschuggen Grand Hotel in Arosa (see SB08/2 p36). Originally built in 1913 as a summer residence for Tsar Nicholas II, the Carlton reopened in December 2007, following an 18-month refurbishment costing a reported US\$65m (€52m, £46m). The project saw the 107-bedroom hotel transformed into a complex of 60 suites, two restaurants, a bar and a spa.

The renowned Swiss architect Carlo Rampazzi was responsible for the interior design of the renovated hotel, which is built on the side of a mountain. While the original features of the grand restaurant and bar area have been retained, the contemporary suites – ranging from 45sq m (484sq ft) to 160sq m (1,722sq ft) in size – boast the most modern conveniences.

THE EXPERIENCE

What impressed me most about the Carlton Hotel was the exquisite hospitality and service – starting even before I arrived. I'd phoned the hotel in advance of my visit to book a treatment at the spa. The phone was answered within three rings and a very friendly lady took my reservation, reading the date and time back to me to confirm, all in perfect English. On checking into the hotel a couple of days later, I was given a letter, once more confirming the date and time of the reservation and details of the treatment I had chosen.

After first marvelling at our suite and seeing what every switch could do, I set off to explore the hotel and locate the spa. It was easy to find, being signposted in the main hotel lifts. Situated below the hotel's main entrance level, the facility spans three floors, all of which afford stunning views of the lake and mountains beyond.

Although my treatment was not until the next day, the receptionist was keen to show me the facility and answered all my questions. Though not overly luxurious, the décor was modern and plush, and

featured several of designer Carlo Rampazzi's trademarks – for example, curved, wave-like passageways and spaces – as well as some intriguing, eccentric touches, such as gently rotating clouds, made of what looked like cotton wool, which served as lampshades in one of the corridors.

On the day of my treatment, the receptionist greeted me and escorted me to the changing room. She showed me how to use one of the lockers, which contained a robe and slippers, and asked me to come back to reception when I was ready. When I did so, my therapist was waiting for me. However, on noticing my slippers were too big, she rushed off to get a smaller pair; I was impressed by the level of service.

I'd chosen a 50-minute Aroma Oil Massage, and the menu had stated I'd be able to select my own 'aroma essence'. However, I was not asked to make a choice, so I asked the therapist which oil she was using. She said it was one 'they always used'; it was packed in Switzerland, although she was not sure if it was made there, and was based on avocado.

During the treatment, I wondered if this was the most experienced therapist I'd ever been treated by: she was certainly more mature than usual, and the massage was both professionally delivered and technically competent. Nonetheless, something was missing. The menu had promised I'd be 'revitalised, soothed, relaxed and taken away into a world of wellbeing'; but at the end I did not feel particularly relaxed. This seemed to confirm that a natural ability to connect with guests is even more important in a therapist than experience.

An abrupt end to the treatment further detracted from my enjoyment. I was offered a glass of water, which was left on the side while the therapist waited just outside the door. I felt hurried and compelled to drink quickly. I wondered why I had not been offered the drink in the extensive relaxation areas on the floor below.

Overall, although the treatment itself was competent, my experience in the spa was at odds with the exceptionally high standard of service in the rest of the hotel.



The Carlton Hotel was built in 1913 as a summer residence for Tsar Nicholas II



The outdoor pool is heated to 35°C (above); a refurbished guest room (below left); the spa's large sauna offers external views (below right)

FACILITIES

The spa features seven treatment rooms, including a private spa suite, which are located on the top floor. These treatment rooms are separated from the other facilities (games and internet rooms) on that floor by a glass door.

On the floor below, there is one indoor pool (heated to 30°C) and one indoor/outdoor pool (35°C) which incorporates hydrotherapy stations and water jets. A heated towel cabinet reflects the attention to detail in this area. Also on this floor are the changing rooms; while the ladies' area had seven lockers, there is really only enough space for one person to change comfortably.

On the lowest floor is a heat treatment area featuring a large sauna (90°C) with external views, a steamroom (45°C), a caldarium (45°C), and a separate, ladies-only area with its own sauna (65°C) and steamroom (45°C). Also on this level are several relaxation rooms, with splendid views, and a small fitness centre. ●



VITAL STATISTICS

Carlton Hotel
Via Johannes Badrutt 11
7500 St Moritz, Switzerland
Tel +41 81 836 7000
Fax +41 81 836 7001
info@carlton-stmoritz.ch
www.tschuggenhotelgroup.ch
Opening hours: 7am to 9pm
Treatments: 9am to 9pm



THE SCORE

Booking	10/10
Receptionist	9/10
Treatment	6/10
Aftercare	3/10
Value for Money	6/10
Overall	6/10

RIGHT OF REPLY

Ketty Urbani, spa manager,
the Carlton Hotel St Moritz:

"We're delighted to hear that the hotel, staff and spa with its wonderful facilities were impressive to the writer. We regret she left feeling hurried and can assure your readers that all clients are offered a drink at the end of a treatment, with relaxation time in the treatment room, while the therapist leaves the room to allow them some tranquility and privacy. Guests are also able to enjoy the spa's facilities, with views overlooking the mountains."

SAMPLE TREATMENTS

Classic facial – 90 minutes – CHF180 (US\$153, €122, £108)
Classic manicure/classic pedicure – 45 minutes – CHF70 (US\$59, €47, £42)
Tranquility bath – 20 minutes – CHF70 (US\$59, €47, £42)
Body scrub – 30 minutes – CHF80 (US\$68, €54, £48)
Aroma oil massage – 50 minutes – CHF150 (US\$127, £101, £90)
Ayurveda abhyanga massage – 75 minutes – CHF230 (US\$195, €155, £138)



JULIE CRAMER • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

mountain medicine

A BEAUTIFUL, HIGH-ALTITUDE LOCATION MAKES THE TYROL REGION OF AUSTRIA AN IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR A REJUVENATING BREAK. NOW A NUMBER OF HOTEL OPERATORS ARE CAPITALISING ON THE AREA'S NATURAL ASSETS BY OPENING CUTTING-EDGE MEDICAL WELLNESS CENTRES

The scenic Alpine region of the Tyrol, in south-west Austria, is one of those places where a feeling of wellness washes over you the minute you arrive.

With flower-festooned villages, clean mountain air, hiking trails and drinking water from pure Alpine springs, the region's natural assets provide an environment where a health and wellness industry cannot help but flourish. And flourished it has – with a whole range of four- and five-star hotel and spa facilities nestled in the mountains, in lush Alpine meadows or on the shores of crystal-clear lakes.

In terms of international and domestic visitors, the Tyrol – one of nine independent federal states in Austria – is a

tourist magnet. According to the Austrian National Statistics Office, arrivals in the region in the summer of 2007 were 3.9 million (ahead of Salzburg with 2.5 million and Vienna with 2.4 million) while bed nights totalled 17.4 million. In the winter, with arrivals boosted by the ski season, the region attracted 4.9 million visitors and 25.6 million bed nights.

A refreshing feature of the region's hospitality industry is that many of the hotels are family businesses that have evolved through the generations. They offer an authentic Austrian welcome with a large dose of 'gemtlichkeit' – a word implying warmth, tradition and rustic qualities – yet with facilities to rival the big international brands. However, in these competitive

times, many of these businesses have had to diversify in order to survive and, for many, investing in medical wellness has offered a way forward.

In December 2007, the Seyrlings, a family of fourth-generation Tyrolean hoteliers, completed a €7m (US\$8.77m, £6.22m) refurbishment of their AlpenMed Hotel Lamm in Seefeld, including the addition of an upmarket medical spa adjacent to the existing hotel (see p70). "The market is saturated with good hotels," says owner Hans Seyrling. "They all offer high-quality rooms and gourmet food, but now there is a need to offer something else to attract a whole new type of customer."

The migration of medical services from clinics into more mainstream wellness fa-



The Tyrol region's high altitude and beautiful scenery make it ideal for wellness-orientated holidays

THE MAYR CURE

One approach to medical wellness for which Austria is renowned is the Mayr cure: a rigorous fasting and treatment programme based on a system developed by the Austrian physician Franz Xaver Mayr (1875-1965). Dr Mayr claimed that many illnesses have their origins in the digestive system, and argued that cleansing the intestines would detoxify

the body, boost immunity and improve health. Guests follow a milk-roll diet – which involves chewing on pieces of semi-stale spelt bread until it is liquid, before swallowing – while specially trained FX Mayr doctors recommend medical treatments, particularly abdominal massages. Guests are encouraged to follow the regime for three or four weeks to feel the full effects.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/INSMAR WESIMANN

cilities in Austria is a trend that appears to be on the rise – no doubt aided by the fact that patients recuperating from specific surgeries or health conditions can claim back the cost of a stay of up to three weeks on national health insurance at medical spas participating in the scheme.

Many Austrian spas already employ an on-site doctor to advise customers on suitable diets, fitness regimes and treatments, and many more specialise in the traditional Mayr cure (see above). But the new breed of medical spas – though sometimes incorporating Mayr – offer a more sophisticated range of services, which go beyond the usual blood-pressure readings and cholesterol testing to include joint analysis, ultrasounds, ECGs and x-rays.

“What we understand as wellness and medical wellness has really developed over the past 25 to 30 years,” says Johannes Entner, a third-generation owner of a Tyrolean property – the Wiesenhof hotel near Lake Achensee, which welcomes post-operative cardiac patients alongside regular guests (see p68). “We currently have 10 medical spas in Tyrol, eight of which are family businesses.”

Another leading medical wellness operation in the Tyrol is the four-star, 75-bed centre at Parkhotel Igls, which offers a range of controlled nutritional programmes – from the Mayr cure to tea-fasting – alongside medical consultations with doctors from the nearby University Clinic, Innsbruck. For an even

more extensive offering, which combines Mayr with modern medicine, Reiger says that the Lanserhof, near Innsbruck, is an international leader in its field, while Alpenresort Schwarz is currently the only Austrian medical spa to offer plastic surgery services such as facelifts, liposuction and breast augmentation.

However, hoteliers who are considering branching into medical wellness must be aware of, and adhere to, strict regulations governing the delivery of medical services in Austria. For certain complementary and alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, the practitioner must be a qualified doctor, while therapists working in medical environments must have at least three years of formal training.

CASE STUDY The Wiesenhof

At first, the 65-room Wiesenhof seems like any other four-star Tyrolean hotel. Situated on the shores of Lake Achensee, 40km from Innsbruck, it offers traditionally furnished rooms with lovely views; a wide range of cuisine; a spa, pool and gym; and friendly and professional staff.

It is not immediately clear that the hotel also actively markets itself to post-operative cardiac patients as a holiday centre where they can relax and recuperate with medical experts close by.

"After treatment it's very important that these patients watch their diet, manage their stress levels and exercise; they can do that here with our specialist help," says Wiesenhof's third-generation owner, Johannes Entner. "We guarantee a doctor can be here in three minutes, while a helicopter can also lift them to the main hospital in Innsbruck in nine minutes."

Entner's vision for wellness has been shaped by his family's medical history. His father, who is still living, had his first heart attack in 1984, and went on to have seven more attacks and nine heart-bypass surgeries. His grandfather died at 48 from a heart attack and Entner himself exhibits congenital risk factors. So it's little wonder that he is so passionate about offering

THE FOUR-STAR WIESENHOF HOTEL IS ACTIVELY TARGETING POST OPERATIVE CARDIAC PATIENTS AS WELL AS MORE TRADITIONAL HOLIDAYMAKERS. BUT HOW IS IT MANAGING TO CATER EFFECTIVELY FOR BOTH THESE MARKETS AT ONCE?

healthy lifestyle options to post-operative patients and regular guests alike. Since taking over the business in 1990, Entner has invested over €15m (US\$19m, £13m) in developing the Wiesenhof into a wellness destination, upgrading its facilities and adding a 1,500sq m (16,146sq ft) spa.

The heart message, however, remains a subtle one. Heart motifs and shapes are everywhere – from key fobs and biscuits to a stone sculpture on the outdoor terrace – but there are no overtly medical signs or literature. "We're essentially a wellness hotel, not a rehabilitation centre," explains Entner. "We've focused on fundamentals that will benefit all guests: the need for calmness, good nutrition and motion."

In terms of food, the Wiesenhof's head chef, Hansjörg Schulz, along with his sous chef, have received 600 hours of education in a heart clinic to know how to cater for cardiac guests. Low-cholesterol/low-fat and vegetarian options are menu staples, while produce is mostly organic and local, often picked from the fields that morning.

As for motion, Entner says the hotel offers endless exercise possibilities. "We're in a great situation, surrounded by mountains but with a lot of possibilities for flat walking. And at 1,000m, the altitude is fine for heart patients; it is not recommended for them to go higher."

Currently only around 3 per cent of guests are cardiac patients, so there is a lot of scope to grow this side of the business. At the moment, most of these visitors come via word of mouth and rehabilitation clinics, as well as adverts in the medical press and special-interest publications.

The hotel is more vocal about its general prevention services. Options include fitness profiling, a back check using a Dr Wolff machine, a spine check with a MediMouse (a handheld device), and a test to determine metabolic rate. To assess general heart health, there is also a Cardio Scan test – a single-channel ECG, which shows a 3D-image of cardio stress levels on a computer screen. This can give guests early-warning signs that their heart may

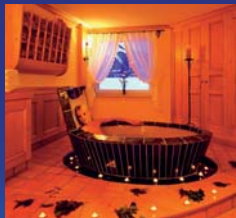


Wiesenhof by numbers

- ▶ The average stay at the hotel is 4.2 days
- ▶ Average spend is €156 (US\$195, £139) a day
- ▶ Turnover is €70,000 (US\$87,000, £62,200) per month
- ▶ The hotel can cater for 120 guests and average bed occupancy is 78 per cent
- ▶ 42 staff are employed at the hotel
- ▶ 30 per cent of guests comes from Germany, 20 per cent from Switzerland, 15 per cent from the UK, 10 per cent from Austria, with the remainder made up of visitors from Italy, France and the Benelux countries
- ▶ The average age of guests is 42 and there is an equal mix of couples and families
- ▶ The spa has the capacity to offer 25 to 30 treatments a day



Local shale oil is combined with clay packs in a body wrap called 'fango'



The hotel boasts lovely views (this picture); guests can hire Segways to get around (above, centre); the spa is traditional in style (above, left and right)



be working too hard and provide data for a safe and appropriate training plan.

The hotel's Karwendel-Therme spa (named after the surrounding mountain range) was built in 2000 with a €2.3m (US\$2.88m, £2.04m) investment. The facility, which has six treatment rooms and four full-time therapists, is traditional and comforting in style, rather than cutting-edge.

Entner is big on offering an authentic Tyrolean experience. He himself takes an early-morning, traditional hay flower bath in the spa before he starts his day. The bath treatments are a speciality at the spa, particularly the Tyrolean Shale Oil Bath. Shale oil is said to help with rheumatism, joint complaints and poor circulation, and is much sought-after by large pharmaceutical companies for use in creams and lotions. Built for two, the wooden bathtub looks out through a big picture window onto the very mountains where the shale is mined by a local family company, Tiroler Steinol. It's a measure of Entner's desire for authenticity that he battled the local authorities for three years to be the first Tyrolean spa

to have a wooden bath; they said it was unhygienic, but he managed to persuade them otherwise.

The shale oil is also combined with clay packs to create a 'fango' body wrap. Other products are supplied by Tyrolean company Alpienne and French supplier Sothys.

The spa is run under the watchful eye of Edith, a local woman who, after working in her husband's clothing business for most of her married life, decided to retrain as a therapist in her mid-50s and is clearly loving every minute of it.

Trained in massage, she also carries out the spa's 'sound bed' treatment. The guest lies on a wooden bed, under which there are musical strings (Entner had it made to order by a musician friend in Munich). The therapist sits on a small stool and plays the strings, which are fixed at the 'earth tone' of C, sending relaxing sound vibrations through the client's body and offering an unusual meditative experience.

Without revealing too much, Entner says the spa will also soon offer "a very special recreational sound-therapy which includes

the ultra-sonic sound of your own heart".

According to Entner, many guests also use the spa for the wide range of saunas on offer, including the outdoor Beehive Sauna at 85°C, the Bio-Herbal Sauna at 70°C and the Achensee Grotto, which, at 35°C, is suitable for the cardiac guests. Although the spa does not actively encourage day visitors, its late-night sauna evenings are popular with locals.

Entner, who lives at the hotel with his wife Alexandra and their two young children, has succeeded in putting a very friendly and fun stamp on the facility. Ducks and chickens wander freely around the gardens, while his children whizz by on Segways (also available for guests to hire). A motorcycle enthusiast, he offers bike tours of the region, while his wife, a horse trainer, runs the nearby stables.

However, despite his enthusiasm, Entner is not unaware of the challenges that lie ahead for his facility and others in the region. "A wellness holiday is not just about pleasure anymore," he says. "It has to give a real benefit for healthy body and soul."

CASE STUDY AlpenMed Hotel Lamm

“Some guests arrive suffering from total burn-out,” says Hans Seyrling, the jovial owner of AlpenMed Hotel Lamm in the beautiful Tyrolean village of Seefeld, 1,200m above sea level. “But after two weeks with us they leave a different person.”

These rejuvenating powers can be attributed not only to the fresh Alpine air and clear spring water, which you can drink from any tap in the hotel, but also to the property's new spa and medical centre, opened in December 2007 after an extensive 12-month refurbishment.

The hotel has been in the Seyrling family since 1890 and remains a family affair, with Hans' wife Silvia and daughter Simone both involved in the business. The €7m (US\$8.77m, £6.22m) investment saw old guestrooms revamped and a new wing built, making 71 rooms (126 beds) in total.

The extension also saw the addition of a 1,940 sq m (20,882sq ft) spa with 17 treatment rooms, relaxation rooms, a beauty area, swimming pool and gym, plus a diagnostic medical centre under the direction of Georg Kettenhuber, a doctor of general medicine, lymphology and nutrition; the centre specialises in conditions of the musculoskeletal system.

Yet to set the property apart from its competitors, Seyrling felt something even more special was needed. The trump card

THE ALPENMED HOTEL LAMM OFFERS A SPA AND DIAGNOSTIC MEDICAL CENTRE FOLLOWING A €7M REFURBISHMENT. BUT THE FEATHER IN ITS CAP IS ITS CRYOTHERAPY CHAMBER – ONE OF ONLY SIX SUCH FACILITIES IN AUSTRIA

was a cryotherapy chamber: a facility which, by exposing users to temperatures of -110°C , is said to help relieve chronic pain and rheumatism, alleviate joint and back problems, boost the immune system and improve mood. Cryotherapy packages on offer incorporate medical check-ups, physiotherapy, food and accommodation.

According to Seyrling, the chamber is one of only six units in Austria. Since opening, it has attracted a number of high-level athletes, including a Paralympian fresh from the Games in China, top Austrian skiers and a Brazilian footballer.

All the new facilities are in the new wing, covering 3,520sq m (37,889sq ft). The modern glass-and-steel structure was designed by the Swiss architect Thomas Mauchle (Silvia Seyrling's cousin) to mimic the shape of the original wooden chalet housing the main hotel. However, the new guest rooms are far from traditional: features include dark, wooden floors, white walls and bedding, sliding glass doors, walk-in showers and modern art.

Hans' daughter Simone Seyrling, who heads up sales and marketing, admits they

have lost some repeat customers – but the upside has been the chance to attract a new and more lucrative market.

Other challenges have included dealing with “huge construction works while the hotel was open; the implementation of medical know-how into a hotel business; and the search for medical clients and appropriate marketing channels.”

Recent marketing initiatives have focused on medical and wellness-related internet sites, incentive-based mailings and partnerships with regional and international doctors. At present, the majority of customers come from German-speaking countries, with the rest coming from the UK, Netherlands, Italy and Russia.

The target, says Simone, is to raise the medical centre's capture rate from 50 to 80 per cent and to increase the average length of stay from 7.4 to 14 days. The signs are already promising: with the new facilities the hotel's average revenue per person per day increased by 30 per cent in the winter season and doubled in the summer season.

Like the medical centre, the hotel's spa is bright and white but that's where the



AlpenMed Lamm by numbers

- ▶ The Seyrlings are expecting to see a return on their recent investment within three years
- ▶ Average guest room occupancy is currently 73 per cent
- ▶ The cryotherapy chamber, supplied by Zimmer, cost €250,000 (US\$313,150, £222,150)
- ▶ The spa employs seven therapists and can deliver 70 treatments a day
- ▶ 12 per cent of the spa's users are day guests, with 88 per cent coming from the hotel
- ▶ The Seyrlings would like to see spa spend reach an average of €150 (US\$188, £133) a head



The medical centre specialises in treating musculoskeletal conditions



The hotel is located in the beautiful village of Seefeld, 1,200m above sea level



similarities end. A much more relaxing environment, the spa is filled with modern art, trendy leather sofas and Buddha statues, while the treatment rooms have full windows with red, translucent drapes overlooking private inner courtyards. There's a wide range of treatments, from holistic therapies, including hopi ear candles and moxibustion, to the latest sports-related treatments, such as kinesio taping. Product ranges include Maria Galland and Aiomyth.

At the AlpenMed Lamm, the Seyrlings have successfully managed to bring in the best of the new while retaining the best of the old. Guests can receive state-of-the-art medical treatment by day, and later enjoy healthy yet delicious cuisine in the hotel's rustic restaurant, before moving on to the dark and cosy Lammkeller bar for a fun evening of music and dancing – 'gemtlichkeit' as its best. It's a refreshing combination and, if the early indications are anything to go by, one that looks set to work. ●

CRYOTHERAPY First-person experience

I'm wearing a swimming costume, socks and trainers, gloves, a fluffy white headband and a mouth and nose mask and, quite frankly, feel ridiculous.

Even odder, I'm about to step into a chamber cooled to -110°C , where I will dance around for up to three minutes, just for the good of my health.

Cryotherapy guests at the AlpenMed Lamm go through this three times a day. A consultation with the doctor will highlight any contraindications, such as heart problems, active tumours and pregnancy, and the length of time they should stay in. Four minutes is the maximum – after 10 you would be dead.

The chamber is like a walk-in freezer with three interlinked rooms. I step into the 'warm-up' room – a mere -15°C . Surprisingly, it's not too bad. My next stop is the middle chamber at -60°C ; it's definitely getting chilly now.

Finally, the big one: -110°C , where the biggest shock is not so much the cold but the inability to breathe properly. The therapist watches through a window, instructing me via an intercom to keep moving around. Crucially, I must take very shallow breaths through the mouth mask and avoid a big intake of air. After 90 seconds my skin stings and I'm



Julie Cramer

desperate to get out (I'm told skin temperature drops to 12°C , but organ temperature remains the same). Somehow I make it to three minutes.

Coming out, I'm relieved and slightly elated. Cryotherapy

produces a huge rush of endorphins; the blood vessels expand and let blood circulate more efficiently, while the body's millions of nerve receptors are stimulated. Already I'm thinking 'that wasn't so bad!' Post-therapy, I'm advised to snuggle up on a float bed for 30 minutes, and then do some light exercise.

Three weeks of cryotherapy is said to have dramatic results. It works as a potent pain reliever, reduces inflammation, boosts blood circulation, improves cardiovascular function, energy levels and muscle metabolism. It can be especially effective for chronic pain and rheumatic conditions, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, skin irritations and stress.

For high-level sports people, it can minimise muscle damage and speed up the rehabilitation process after injury. ●

KATH HUDSON • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

FLEXIBLE THINKING

Everyone hates the feeling of being stiff, and it's surprisingly easy to improve flexibility. We explore how spas can get their clients stretching

Those who have experienced the delicious, limber feeling of relaxed, stretchy muscles and joints following a yoga class, versus that of being tensely hunched at a desk all day, will understand the benefits of stretching. Despite this, many people consider it to be a waste of time. Stretching might make you feel good, but to those on a time budget it doesn't appear to offer as many rewards as a CV or resistance workout.

The benefits of flexibility often don't become apparent until someone experiences a mobility problem, or everyday tasks such as putting on shoes become difficult.

Chris Onslow, managing director of UK fitness equipment supplier Proactive Health, says: "Flexibility is important for sports people, but seems less so for the general public. Most people don't realise how important stretching is until their lack of flexibility begins to limit their lifestyle. There's no reason why an 80-year-old shouldn't be as flexible as a 20-year-old,

but most people going through the same routine each day, who don't pay attention to stretching, will start to experience some deterioration in their flexibility."

In the worst-case scenario, not stretching regularly can lead to the onset of osteoarthritis, says Chris Frederick, CEO of the Arizona-based clinic Stretch to Win. "People who don't stretch get shorter with age and lose range of motion in their joints, which results in tighter muscles," he says. "When the joints stiffen, the muscles cannot contract and lengthen to their full extent, creating a vicious circle."

Aside from maintaining flexibility, stretching has other benefits: as well as being a pleasurable and relaxing activity, it helps improve posture, develop body awareness, improve coordination, promote circulation, increase energy, reduce muscle aches and aid the elimination of waste products and toxins. Additionally, improving flexibility may help prevent the common problems of back and neck pain.

WORKING IT OUT

There is no definitive formula for how much or how often a person should stretch. According to Frederick, each joint should be put through a full range of motion each day in order to prevent atrophy, while other experts say people should simply keep themselves flexible enough for their lifestyle or specific sport. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends stretching on a minimum of two or three days each week, holding each stretch for 10 to 30 seconds at the point of mild discomfort, and performing three to four repetitions per stretch.

There is also disagreement about when stretching should occur in relation to CV and resistance exercise: on one hand, there is evidence that stretching before working out can reduce injury, but on the other there is evidence that stretching without warming up can lead to injury, as cold muscles are prone to tearing. It's important not to strain when stretching, since constant straining may have an adverse effect on health, as it causes the body to lay down scar tissue.

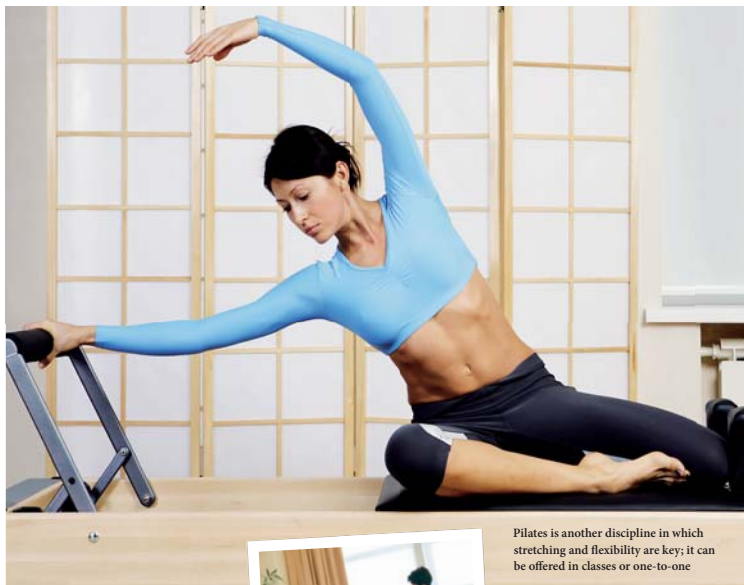
According to Frederick, dynamic stretches are better before exercise than static ones: "In my experience, clients respond better when they move through their stretches with longer duration and increased intensity, because the connective

"Most people don't realise how important stretching is until their lack of flexibility begins to limit their lifestyle. There's no reason why an 80-year-old shouldn't be as flexible as a 20-year-old"

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CARLOS ALVAREZ



Yoga classes are just one of several options to promote stretching that spas might consider introducing



Pilates is another discipline in which stretching and flexibility are key; it can be offered in classes or one-to-one

ADDED VALUE

There are a variety of therapies that spas could incorporate into a flexibility and stretching programme for their clients. Some of the following could be considered:

FASCIAL STRETCH THERAPY™

Created by Chris and Ann Frederick of Stretch to Win, this treatment improves flexibility by lengthening fascia, with the use of traction of the joint capsule. It is claimed that just one session can dramatically improve flexibility.

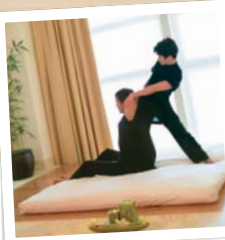
SHIATSU

A subtle treatment, originating in Japan, which uses acupressure and simple manipulations to influence energy flow, promote relaxation and improve flexibility.

THAI YOGA MASSAGE

Originating from the Indian disciplines of yoga and ayurveda, Thai yoga massage uses acupressure massage along the energy lines, combined with deep stretches to relax muscles and improve flexibility.

PHOTO: MANDARIN ORIENTAL



Thai yoga massage uses acupressure and deep stretches for relaxation and flexibility

WATSU

Ideal for those in chronic pain or with severe mobility issues, watsu is a very nurturing treatment which involves the client being floated and stretched in warm water.

MYOFASCIAL RELEASE

Therapists use myofascial release (MFR) to ease pressure in the fascia – a fibrous band of tissue surrounding our muscles, bones, joints, blood vessels, nerves and organs. MFR techniques include massage, kneading, trigger pointing and stretching (see SB07/2 p78).

BOWEN TECHNIQUE

This is a soft-tissue remedial therapy, where the therapist uses fingers or thumbs to move over muscle, ligament, tendon and fascia. Subtle and relaxing, the technique involves no hard or prolonged pressure. Between sets of moves the therapist leaves the room so the client's body can determine the correct response to the treatment.

THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Rather than a series of exercises, the Alexander Technique is a re-education of the mind and body to move in a way which will release harmful tension. It can be applied to sitting, lying, standing, lifting or other everyday activities.

FOAM ROLLING

Sometimes described as 'self-myofascial release' or 'the poor man's massage therapist', foam rolling involves clients using their body weight to roll on a piece of cylindrical foam, massaging away restrictions and providing a cost-effective soft-tissue workout.

"When massage therapists work on clients they can tell which muscles need stretching. To ensure this is done properly, spas could send therapists for workshops"



Arizona-based clinic Stretch to Win specialises in stretching therapies

► tissue has been warmed through exercise, thus becoming more responsive to stretching, with less discomfort."

Brad Walker, who developed the New York-based Stretching Institute in a bid to get flexibility training the same level of recognition as fitness and strength training, recommends stretching throughout a workout. "Stretch gently and slowly, breathing slowly and stretching only to the point of tension: it shouldn't be painful," he says. "I'm a big fan of incorporating the stretching session into the warm-up, the main exercise session and the cool-down. This way it's not something extra which needs to be added on."

LAZY MAN'S YOGA

So what can spas do to improve their flexibility offering? "To do it properly in the spa market we need to give detailed initial assessments and, from that, suggest where the individual should go," says Onslow.

The fact that spas are geared up to cater for individuals can be a plus when it comes to stretching, as people can have very different needs depending on their fitness level, age, lifestyle, body

temperature and the structure of their joints. People who are unathletic or uncoordinated are more likely to hurt themselves and would therefore benefit from personal tuition, while for others a group class may be adequate for their needs.

Onslow recommends using the Y balance test, where the individual stands on one leg on the centre of an imaginary Y on the floor, then moves their other leg down each strand of the letter. Based on what they observe, the instructor can decide whether the person would benefit from personal tuition, or if they can immediately join a group class, such as pilates. Some people may need individual attention first if one side of their body is stiffer than the other, says Onslow; he recommends working on the weakest factor at all times.

But would people be willing to pay for a one-on-one stretch session? Definitely, says Frederick. "Our business is proof of the success of this service as a strong cash-revenue generator. We have clients who come in for a massage, a pilates class or an assisted stretch session – which we call Fascial Stretch Therapy" – or all three.

They buy packages of stretch sessions in bulk, with the high utilisers buying up to 20 sessions at a time. We've noticed that Fascial Stretch Therapy is becoming more popular all the time."

Frederick suggests that spas differentiate themselves by

offering a variety of one-on-one stretch sessions with a certified therapist. "I sometimes call this lazy man's yoga," he says. "All the client does is lie there while their flexibility is almost magically and painlessly increased. It can be offered as a relaxing experience, or as a strengthening and lengthening session, as resistance can be combined with stretching to make it more of a workout."

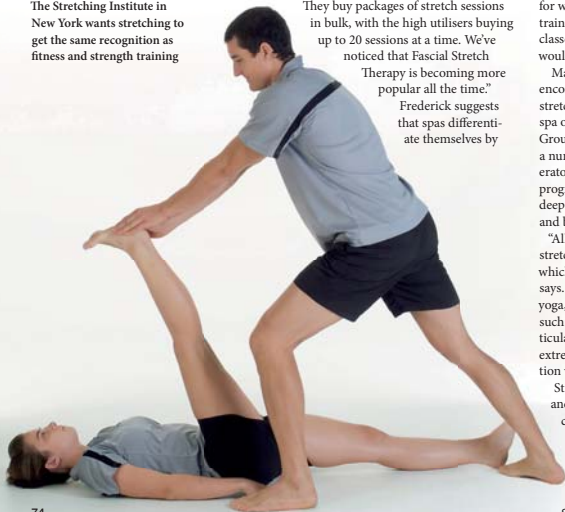
Cindy Tan, a physiotherapist and stretching expert at Singapore-based Core Concepts, suggests spas incorporate stretching as an add-on during massage. "When massage therapists work on their clients, they can tell which muscles are tight and need stretching," she says. "To ensure the stretches are done properly, spas could send their massage therapists for workshops on stretching. Engaging trainers or instructors to conduct exercise classes incorporating stretching or yoga would also be beneficial."

Many spa therapies and classes already encompass elements of flexibility and stretching (see p73). The head of group spa operations at the Mandarin Oriental Group, Andrea Lomas, recommends a number of treatments which spa operators could offer as part of a stretching programme: Thai yoga massage, shiatsu, deep-tissue massage, acupuncture, watsu and back, neck and shoulder treatments.

"All of these treatments assist with stretching the body and releasing tension which has built up for many years," she says. "These can be combined with pilates, yoga, meditation and breathing classes, such as pranayama. Iyengar yoga is particularly good for stretching and releasing extreme tension and rigidity and meditation will further build on this."

Stretching is a crucial part of health and wellbeing which both spas and their clients could benefit from. The great thing is that the results can be rapid and it can instantly make people feel better. ●

The Stretching Institute in New York wants stretching to get the same recognition as fitness and strength training



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Spa Products



TRI-DOSHA'S AYURVEDIC SKINCARE

Tri-Dosha has revealed a new line of products called Ayurvedic Skincare. Available for both professional and retail use, the collection consists of a cleanser, face mask, face scrub, and a choice of three face creams (all 60ml) for dry/mature, oily/sensitive and combination skin. The palmarosa and grapefruit cleanser comes in a 200ml, pump-action bottle and is designed to gently remove dirt from the skin. The company's kutki and fitkari face scrub contains 43 ayurvedic herbs – including kutki and fitkari – intended to reduce skin toxins and impurities.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **TRI-DOSHA**



DRY FLOAT THERMO-SPA

From German company Trautwein comes the Thermo-Spa, a dry floatation bed designed to give the feeling of weightlessness and encourage relaxation. The Thermo-Spa massages the body from the thighs to the neck while temperature-regulated water jets are expelled against the underside of the bed's surface, releasing muscle tension. Meanwhile, sound waves pumped through the device – both heard and felt – add to the therapeutic benefits.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **TRAUTWEIN**



SHOWERING THE DIGITAL WAY

UK manufacturer Aqualisa has unveiled a collection of contemporary-looking digital showers and baths aimed at the high-end hospitality market. The latest line, HiQu Digital, features a bath and shower incorporating a one-touch control, with a simple push start/stop button and an integrated LED display, which indicates water temperature readiness. Displays flash while the water is warming up and then steady once the water has reached the user's pre-set temperature. Aqualisa's digital processors are designed to blend hot- and cold-water flows with extreme accuracy, which the company claims results in perfectly controlled temperatures. For sustainable-minded operators, there is an eco-setting that reduces water flow to eight litres a minute.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **AQUALISA**

MEN'S GROOMING FROM THAL'ION

A new line of products from Thal'ion Laboratories has been designed to meet all men's grooming needs. The three products all incorporate Algoskin CX, a marine complex which concentrates the healing properties of seaweed. Included are SOS After-Shave Instant Soothing Moisturiser – a gel cream designed to soothe razor burn – and Age Control Time-Fighting Energizer. Also available is the Basic 3 in 1 Deep Cleansing Scrub (pictured), an ultra-fresh gel formulated to eliminate impurities.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **THAL'ION**





ORGANIC TEA FROM RISHI TEA

Rishi Tea has introduced a new range of three Organic Tea Sets. Each set comes with two best-selling teas, plus a teapot or infuser cup chosen to complement them. The items include the Organic Black Tea Set, which comprises a glass teapot with a stainless-steel coil filter, plus packs of Organic Fair Trade China Breakfast Black Tea 40g and Organic Fair Trade Earl Grey Black Tea 40g; and the Organic Green Tea Set, which includes a Ceramic Loose Leaf Infuser Cup with lid, and packs of both Organic Fair Trade Jasmine Green Tea 40g and Organic Fair Trade Jade Cloud Green Tea 30g. The third choice is the Organic White Tea Set (pictured), which comes with a glass teapot with glass infuser, and packs of Organic White Peony 25g and Organic Peach Blossom 30g teas.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **RISHI TEA**

SCRUBBING WITH ANNE

Anne Semonin has unveiled its Black Sand Body Scrub for retail to spa and salon clients. The scrub – presented in a 200ml jar – is designed to revitalise the skin and stimulate cellular renewal. Containing sea salt and Tahitian black sand, the product is said to actively sweep away dead surface skin cells to detoxify and stimulate the cellular regeneration of the epidermis. Botanical oils are also included for their moisturising, nourishing and soothing properties.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **ANNE SEMONIN**

FEELING YOUR AGE?

From I-M Health comes its Age and Health Measurement System. Once users have inputted details on biomarkers such as skin elasticity and blood pressure, the system is said to be able to measure the rate at which regions of the body are ageing, providing an accurate assessment of a patient's biological age compared with their chronological age. One of the main features of the system is the way it displays results. Graphics include a body map (pictured), which shows the rate at which specific regions of a person's body are ageing compared to those of their peers. The system provides a full overview of results, with graphs and test explanations, as well as advice and guidance on suitable health programmes when interpreting the findings.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **I-M HEALTH**



RELAX ON A WAVE

The Next Wave Relaxation and Therapy Room is designed to relax, revitalise and rebalance the body. By engaging all the senses, the room is intended to give the client a total body experience, which is claimed to have far-reaching and long-term effects. A key feature of the room is the low-frequency sound wave therapy bed (pictured), which delivers therapeutic programmes said to reduce muscle inflammation, improve blood pressure and boost circulation.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **NEXT WAVE**

GIVING FEET A TOUCH OF SILK

London-based Holistic Silk has unveiled its angora and merino wool slipper socks for women. Described as "extremely soft, warm and snug", the slipper socks come in three colours: cream, jade and rose (pictured). Intended for use while travelling, as well as on any surface that could become slippery such as tiled and wooden floors, the socks are said to be ideal for use either at the spa or at home. Complete with padded and waterproof soles, the socks are available in three sizes: small, medium and large.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **HOLISTIC SILK**



SPACE-SAVING KINESIS

Italian company Technogym has launched a single-unit version of its Kinesis fitness range. Just like the original, only smaller and taking up less space, Kinesis One is an innovative and attractive standalone training system that combines a series of unique, patented grips, cables and weight-stacks to offer a workout that is intended to strengthen both body and mind. The system is suitable for a wide range of users and benefits include increased strength, improved resistance, better coordination and improved posture.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **TECHNOGYM**

NOT SO CRAZY PAVING

Spanish tile manufacturer Apavisa has introduced the Spectrum collection. Said to be ideal for flooring and walls in wet rooms and outside areas, the porcelain tiles are claimed to absorb just 0.1 per cent of the water they come into contact with, giving them an extended lifetime. Available in eight colours – red, olive, lilac, rose, blue, brown, black and white – the tiles can be ordered in either a polished or satin finish, depending on the client's needs.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **APAVISA**

BLISSFUL ELIXIRS FROM PINKS BOUTIQUE

Pinks Boutique has introduced two new elixirs to its organic range of products. Pinks Organic Himalayan Elixir and Pinks Organic Indonesian Elixir are designed to enable therapists to incorporate blissful, exotic scents into their treatments. The products contain only natural organic ingredients and essential oils and do not incorporate any toxic chemicals. Pinks Organic Himalayan Elixir contains peppermint, eucalyptus, geranium and lavender, while Pinks Organic Indonesian Elixir includes sweet orange, patchouli, ylang ylang and neroli. The elixirs can be sprayed onto treatment towels, into the air before a client arrives, or onto hot towels to be used during a massage or other body treatment.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **PINKS BOUTIQUE**



SEALING SPAS WITH OTTO'S SILVER SERVICE

Sealants and adhesives company Hermann Otto has introduced two new high-quality sealants. OTTOSEAL S 130 is a sanitary and natural stone silicone available in 10 colours and suitable for the pointing on ceramic tiles and natural stone in permanently wet areas. OTTOSEAL S 140 is primarily for pool, underwater and natural stone joints. Also ideal for floor joints it can be supplied in seven colours. Both products incorporate the company's OTTO Fungitect Silver technology, a treatment with antibiotic, antimicrobial and fungicidal properties, which is said not to wash out, even under a heavy water flow. Otto claims this gives moisture-prone areas a longer degree of protection from mould development.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **HERMANN OTTO**



KEISER STRIDES INTO SPAS

Keiser has launched its latest elliptical machine, the M5 Strider. The portable machine can be incorporated into group-exercise classes or just used on the gym floor. The machine is described as having a "super smooth resistance" and is designed to activate a wide range of muscle groups, giving an intense workout with lower perceived exertion and less strain on muscles and joints. Furthermore, the user is able to adjust both the pace and resistance to meet their personal exercise needs.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **KEISER**





OAKWORKS TURNS TO BAMBOO

Oakworks' Bamboo Spa Clinician® treatment table is said to provide a high-level of versatility and comfort, via features such as Aero Cel® padding, upgraded UltraTouch® upholstery, auto-adjust removable armrests and its patented QuickLock® Face Rest. The table can support loads of up to 550lbs and incorporates inter-locking legs and an open storage shelf for added stability and strength. Bamboo is a durable material and is an obvious choice for eco-minded spa operators, because it grows quickly. Additional finishes are available.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **OAKWORKS**



OMVEDA UNVEILS SIGNATURE BEAUTY KIT

The Omveda Signature Beauty Kit brings together the company's skin, body and haircare products in travel sizes, making it ideal for spa retail, as a trial, starter system or gift. The kit holds six products, with added slots for personal items such as cotton wipes, and can be customised with mini versions of Omveda favourites. The products, which all come in 25ml sizes, include Aloe Cleanser, Walnut Scrub, Rose Toner, Amla Shampoo, Body Gel and Rehydrating Body Lotion.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **OMVEDA**



GENTLE CLEANSING FROM CLARINS

Clarins has unveiled updated versions of its three Gentle Foaming Cleansers, all of which are available for spa retail. All three cleansers contain saponins – plant molecules taken from the root of gypsophila, a white flower – which create what is said to be an incredibly soft foam. One of the cleansers, containing shea butter, has been designed for those with dry or sensitive skin and is intended to be ultra-gentle, while working to nourish and soften the skin. For those with normal or combination skin, a cleanser containing cottonseed is said to soften, protect and preserve the skin, while a third cleanser containing tamarind extract – a plant exfoliator – is available for those with combination or oily skin.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **CLARINS**

PEPPERED BY GERARD'S

Gerard's has introduced two new Pepper products, which can be retailed or used as part of its new professional Pepper Aroma Detox Wrap treatment. The Pepper Aroma Scrub (pictured) is designed to renew the skin, leaving it smooth and sweetly scented, while the Pepper Aroma Cream is intended to nourish and moisturise the skin. The new wrap treatment features a full-body exfoliation, which incorporates white mud and pepper to control and balance the skin to prevent it from becoming greasy, while also stimulating the metabolism. In addition to treating the body and face, the treatment is claimed to give rise to intense feelings of lightness, relaxation and wellbeing.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **GERARD'S**



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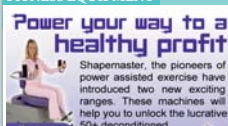
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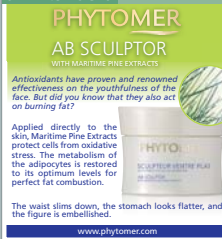


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MIND CONTROL

Spas wishing to help guests tackle the scourge of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) – the common gastrointestinal condition – may consider not only offering cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or hypnotherapy in their facility, but also teaching people how to self-administer these therapies at home.

IBS is a long-term disorder that affects the digestive system. It is characterised by chronic abdominal pain and discomfort, diarrhoea and/or constipation. Although it poses no serious threat to a person's health, it can have an adverse effect on their quality of life and conventional medicines are said to be unreliable.

There are numerous clinical studies showing that CBT and hypnosis delivered in a clinical environment can be effective in tackling IBS. Now scientists have shown that people can also be taught to treat themselves, with good results.

CBT uses the power of the mind to replace unhealthy beliefs and behaviours with healthy positive ones. However, standard CBT (S-CBT) treatment typically

Self-administered psychotherapies can help to alleviate irritable bowel syndrome, according to scientific studies

involves several one-hour sessions over a period of weeks, which can be expensive and time-consuming for sufferers (see below). What's more, IBS clinics are rare and in many parts of the world there is a shortage of CBT therapists.

Recognising these challenges, a team led by Jeffrey Lackner, at the University at Buffalo, New York, devised a primarily self-administered treatment programme – minimal contact CBT (MC-CBT) – which patients could learn at home, using self-study materials, supplemented by four in-office counselling sessions. They compared it with S-CBT in a study

published last year in the journal *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*.

In the study, 75 men and women with IBS were divided into three groups. One group was placed on a 10-week waiting list, and their IBS symptoms were monitored. Another group followed an S-CBT programme, comprising weekly, one-hour clinical sessions for 10 weeks. The third group participated in MC-CBT, where they had clinical sessions once a month over four months and stuck to the home-care routine in between.

Unsurprisingly, those on the waiting list did not do well. Yet a high number of patients in both treatment groups reported a significant relief of symptoms: 60.9 per cent in the S-CBT group and 72 per cent in the MC-CBT group. Both sets of patients also reported a significant improvement in their quality of life.

Also in the interests of offering IBS sufferers a more affordable and convenient treatment option, Olafur Palsson and his team at the University of North Carolina developed a three-month, at-home hypnosis treatment programme for IBS sufferers, requiring no clinical contact (see left). Palsson tested the programme on 19 IBS sufferers and compared the results to a separate study of 57 IBS sufferers, who received standard medical care but no psychological treatment.

His findings, which were published in the *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* in 2006, showed that three months after treatment 53 per cent of hypnosis subjects reported a 50 per cent reduction in the severity of IBS symptoms, compared to only 26 per cent in the control group. Hypnosis subjects also reported a more improved quality of life than the controls. ●

CBT AND HYPNOTHERAPY FOR IBS

Standard CBT treatment sessions for IBS typically cover education on stress related to IBS; self-monitoring of stress and IBS episodes; muscle relaxation exercises to cultivate a sense of control over the symptoms; learning to identify and change negative thoughts associated with IBS; changing underlying beliefs, such as perfectionism, that fuel threatening thoughts; and formal training in problem-solving to help cope with IBS-associated stressors.

Hypnosis can also help treat IBS. The home-administered protocol developed by researchers at the University of North Carolina consists of eye-fixation induction; deepening of the trance (via counting or imagined, gradual movement such as going down stairs); guided physical relaxation; vivid description of a 'therapeutic scene' to engage the senses and promote inner calm; therapeutic suggestion aimed at changing IBS symptoms; and trance termination.



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