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Harnessing social media power

Social media – logged-on and hi-tech – is the antithesis of spa and wellness, yet new research from ISPA shows spa-goers are engaged and enthusiastic users, making it a powerful tool for operators who can figure out how to use it appropriately

Spa and wellness businesses that create communities of loyal fans and advocates around their brands have a huge competitive advantage and social media offers a wealth of powerful free tools which enable this.

In this issue of *Spa Business* (page 78), we look at research by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for ISPA. *Social Media and the Spa-Goer*, examines US spa-goers' use of social media and outlines opportunities for spas to use social platforms for marketing and customer engagement.

Spa-goers are super-users of social media. The report says: "What's most exciting for the industry is that the demographic profile of engaged social media users bears a remarkable resemblance to the profile of spa-goers."

PwC found high levels of social media use (defined as once a week or more) among US spa-goers, with – for example – 80 per cent using Facebook, against 68 per cent for the general population and 55 per cent using YouTube, versus 40 per cent for the general population.

The report provides invaluable data on spa-goers' social media use, broken down by age, wealth, sex and social media channel. It also shows time of day/use by age and income and use type by age, wealth and sex, for activities such as researching prior to purchase and giving feedback.

With such great tools available, you can now create a marketing matrix to align with the consumer groups you want to engage. This will enable communications and offers to be tailored to specific age, sex and demographic groups by time of day and purpose. Marketing modules in many spa management software packages can also be optimised to take advantage of this new information.



Within the space of ten years, social media has become a dominant force which can transform your fortunes if used effectively

There are other highlights – PwC says spa-goers are twice as likely to respond to social media advertising and are more attracted to offers. The study also found social media is great for targeting men, with a higher proportion using it for feedback, booking and queries. It says the most popular search terms are fitness, nutritional advice, stress, detox, alternative medicine and smoking cessation, so ISPA advises communications be tailored accordingly.

Most importantly, visual media score highly, making Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram especially effective. PwC says: "Creating engaging, share-worthy visuals and encouraging spa-goers to post their own may be one of the most effective strategies for driving up spa visits."

Although this raises operational challenges around photo and video-taking, you can create a great video, which can be shared with customers, make sure photos on your website are "Pinnable" and allow photography and video in a controlled way during certain stages of a spa visit to ensure you balance the privacy of guests.

The main message is that spa-users love social media, giving you great tools to engage their hearts and minds.

Liz Terry, editor @elizterry

CONTACT US: *Spa Business* magazine, spabusiness.com TEL: +44 (0)1462 431385 EMAIL: theteam@spabusiness.com
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READER SERVICES

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Denise Adams +44 (0)1462 471930

CIRCULATION

Michael Emmerson +44 (0)1462 471932

EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR

Liz Terry +44 (0)1462 431385

MANAGING EDITOR

Katie Barnes +44 (0)1462 471925

PRODUCT EDITOR

Jason Holland +44 (0)1462 471922

NEWSDESK

Helen Andrews +44 (0)1462 471902

Tom Anstey +44 (0)1462 471916

Katie Buckley +44 (0)1462 471936

Jak Phillips +44 (0)1462 471938

ADVERTISING TEAM

PUBLISHER/ADVERTISING SALES

Astrid Ros +44 (0)1462 471911

ADVERTISING SALES

Julie Badrick +44 (0)1462 471919

John Challinor +44 (0)1202 742968

Paul Thorman +44 (0)1462 471904

Jan Williams +44 (0)1462 471909

advertising - www.spa-kit.net

Astrid Ros +44 (0)1462 471911

spa recruitment & training sales

Julie Badrick +44 (0)1462 431385

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Ed Gallagher +44 (0)1905 20198

WEB TEAM

WWW.SPA-KIT.NET

PRODUCT SEARCH ENGINE

Jason Holland +44 (0)1462 471922

SPABUSINESS.COM

Michael Paramore +44 (0)1462 471926

Tim Nash +44 (0)1462 471917

Dean Fox +44 (0)1462 471900

Emma Harris +44 (0)1462 471921

DESIGN

Andy Bundy +44 (0)1462 471924

FINANCE

Denise Adams +44 (0)1462 471930

CREDIT CONTROL

Rebekah Scott +44 (0)1462 733477

Prantik Bordoloi

A lecturer and research coordinator at Stenden Rangsit University, Thailand, Prantik Bordoloi was instrumental in organising the 2014 *Spa Industry Research* study on Thai spa consumers (p82). He has a particular interest in researching learning and development in hospitality and tourism. Email: prantik.bordoloi@stenden.com Twitter: @prantikbordoloi



Neena Dhillon

Neena Dhillon writes about spas and hotels and travel trends around the world for consumer and business titles, ranging from *Sleeper, easyJet* and *Gatsby* to *Hospitality Design*. She is also the former managing editor of the Great Hotels of the World *Luxury Spa Collection* directory. Email: ndhillon@spabusiness.com



Rhianon Howells

Rhianon Howells was the launch editor of *Spa Business* and established it as a journal of note. As consulting editor, she is closely involved with its continuing development, while also writing about health, fitness, travel and leisure as a freelance journalist in major national titles such as *The Guardian* newspaper. Email: rhowells@spabusiness.com



On the cover: Behind the scenes at the David Lynch Foundation (p36)

Julie Cramer

Julie Cramer worked as news editor for BBC News Online for more than 10 years. She now has a successful freelance career writing articles focused on health, fitness, travel, hospitality and design. She is a former deputy editor of the international industry magazine *Leisure Management*. Email: juliecramer@me.com



Andrea Foster

PKF Consulting's Andrea Foster is the publisher of the annual *Trends* in the *Hotel Spa Industry* report (p74). She's been in the US hospitality industry for 15 years and previously headed up business development and marketing at Miraval. She's consulted on numerous hotel and spa projects. Email: andrea.foster@pkf.com Phone: +1 617 488 7290



Leonor Stanton

Leonor Stanton is an independent hospitality and spa consultant who specialises in market and commercial assessments and financial planning in the hospitality and spa sectors worldwide. She previously worked for Deloitte Consulting and Deloitte Corporate Finance. Email: lstanton@spabusiness.com Phone: +598 95 59 88 54

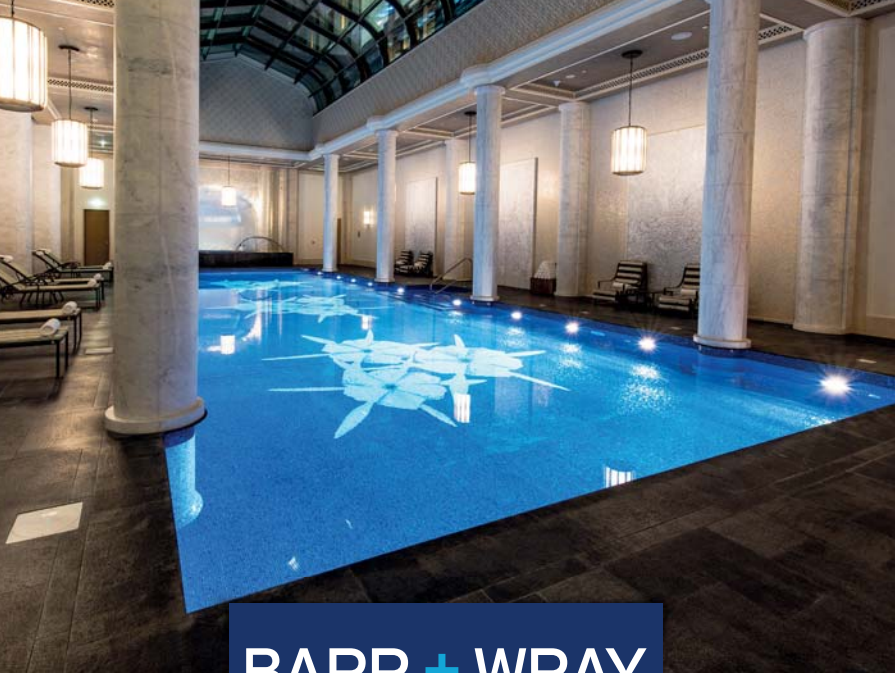


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Letters

KATIE BARNES, MANAGING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

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



SHUTTERSTOCK/WARREN GOLDSWAIN

CELLULAR HEALTH APPLIES TO SKINCARE TOO

Neal Kitchen, VP of strategy & development, HydroPeptide

The article on cellular health in your *Spa Foresight*™ last issue (see SB14/4 p30) intrigued me because of its role not only on the total health of the body but in specific areas such as skincare.

My best friend at college developed type 1 diabetes and from that moment, I began a journey to better understand cellular health and what ultimately determines our long-term health and wellbeing and it was the focus of my thesis in epigenetics. We've learned a great deal over the past couple of decades on epigenetic chemical reactions and factors that influence cellular health. However, there's much more we need to realise, especially in how to apply this knowledge to our overall health and wellbeing.

I recently transitioned into the spa industry because I saw a unique opportunity to bring the science of cellular health to the forefront. It's the most powerful tool we have in developing new products, techniques and treatments that will yield better results.

My favourite topical ingredients include peptides and antioxidants because of their ability to specifically communicate responses at the cellular level and protect the cells from the damaging effects of free radicals. Good cellular health relies on achieving a homeostatic balance. But as we age, our ability to maintain this balance deteriorates. Helping our cells combat the ageing process via a nutritious diet, proper exercise and rest as well as intelligently applying products to our skin can go a long way to finding that elusive 'fountain of youth'.

I believe that as skincare technology moves forward, we'll find ways to utilise active ingredients like peptides to more effectively interplay at the molecular level. While cellular health may often go unseen, I'm a strong advocate in driving its awareness.

Contact Neal Kitchen
Email: nealk@hydropeptide.com
Twitter: @HydroPeptide

WE NEED SALES PEOPLE IN SPAS

Helen Merchant, owner,
International Spa Consultants

Having been exposed to the workings of cosmetic retailer SpaceNK and hi-tech skincare brand Colbert MD in the last 18 months, my perception of retail has been turned upside down and inside out. I've spent time on the shop floor watching, listening and learning about body language, terminology, confidence and – most importantly – how to close a sale.

I've learned that sales people are essential if spas are to drive retail and I was pleased to see Steve Jeisman, group spa director of Alila, touch on the subject in your last issue too (see SB14/4 p40). Sales people can up-sell services at the point of check-in and bring expertise in all areas of retail to ultimately understand what the customer wants and to get them to buy something. And they're not deterred or upset by rejection or the word 'no'.

My experience has brought home to me the importance of recruiting the right people and matching them to the right roles. I know, how many times have we heard this? But to make a difference, operators need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their team, especially where retail and up-selling is concerned.

Make a conscious effort to ensure that each member fully understands their role in the retail journey. Let them try products as a 'seeing is believing' approach is essential in the recommendation process. Finally, offer training and instil confidence, set targets and share retail budgets. Most of all, make retail part of your everyday spa concept: live it, feel it and believe it!

Contact Helen Merchant
Email: helen@helenmerchant.com
Phone: +44 7447 908528



What's your spa news?

Helen Andrews is the spa news editor at Leisure Media, writing for both *Spa Business* and *Spa Opportunities*. She posts news online daily and would love to hear your global spa and wellness news:
Tel: +44 1462 471902
Email: helenandrews@leisuremedia.com
Twitter: @HelenAndrewsSB



Pfeifer is a construction engineer

New managing director for Klafs' spa division

Construction engineer Patrick Pfeifer is the new managing director of the spa division at Klafs, the German sauna, pool and spa supplier.

He joins Sharon Barcock who recently came on board to head up Klafs in the MENA region having previously been a group manager of spas for Hilton in the area.

Pfeifer replaces Adrian Egger who is now the CEO of spa design consultancy and equipment company Thermarium. In July, Klafs acquired Thermarium, but the two firms will continue to operate independently.
Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=A6R8C>



There are 141 rooms, suites and villas on the crescent-shaped resort island near Qatar

Anantara debuts first full-service wellness centre

Anantara's Banana Island Resort Doha has opened in Qatar with the group's first dedicated wellness concept.

Balance Wellness Centre, with a unique oxygen fern room and indoor botanical garden, offers a wide range of holistic programmes, pre- and post-natal therapies and anti-ageing rituals. Nutritional wellness cuisine crafted by specialist chefs is available too. The centre sits alongside a separate Anantara Spa.

In an interview with *Spa Business*, Kathryn Moore, a group spa director of

managing company MSpa, said this would be the first "full on wellness concept" for Anantara (see SB13/3 p38) and that it would target regional clients who usually go to Asian resorts such as Chiva-Som.

"Nothing like this exists in the Middle East because return on investment is tough," she said. "But our owners are the Qatari royal family and they really want something with a different angle."

The crescent-shaped island has 141 rooms and villas, plus extensive facilities.
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=G3u2Q_S

Leela plans Buddhist Trail hotels from Nepal to India

Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts and developers Summit Group of Nepal are to collaborate on four hotels across Nepal as part of a major rollout.

The five-star Leela Kathmandu hotel and spa – to be designed by John Gerondolis of Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart & Associates of Atlanta, USA – will be the first to open in three years time.

It will be followed by a hotel in Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, plus another in Pokhara after that.

The main goal is to create a Buddhist Trail from Nepal to Leela's other properties in Bodhgaya, Nalanda and Varanasi in India. Leela has eight properties in India in total, all of which have spas including five ESPA facilities.



Leela Kathmandu will be the group's first site outside of India; three others will follow

Under the Nepal deal, Summit will develop the sites, while Leela is set to market and manage them.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=S7H6p_S



The South Korean skincare company has started offering public tours at its factory

AmorePacific wins award for multisensory visitor centre

South Korean skincare and beauty company AmorePacific is to be presented with an attractions industry award in March for its visitor centre which has "transformed the concept of a factory tour".

Story Garden by AmorePacific opened in late 2013 at the company's headquarters in Osan and was created and produced by design firm BRC Imagination Arts. The 10,000sq ft (929sq m) attraction tells the story of the company through an interactive, multisensory and multimedia experience. Although Story Garden

was originally intended for a limited audience, AmorePacific has started offering public tours thanks to its popularity.

AmorePacific is to receive an award for Outstanding Achievement by attractions industry body the Themed Entertainment Association (THEA). The creator of the THEA Awards says Story Garden "elevates the experience of a brand visitor centre to the highest artistic and emotional standard – a stunning new standard for Asia and the world".
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=b6e6y_S

Islamic wellness among Spafinder's 2015 trends

Medi-spa prescriptions for cannabis and Islamic wellness rituals (beyond hammams and argan oil) were among the predictions in the *Top 10 Global Spa & Wellness Trends Forecast for 2015* by industry media, marketing and gifting firm Spafinder Wellness 365.

The report, in its 12th year, points out that after decades of prohibition, cannabis is partially legalised in the US which will lead to cannabis-branded day spas and cannabis wellness tourism packages.

Islamic wellness rituals such as sand bathing and rasul/mud experiences are expected to become more popular, while Middle Eastern, African and Malaysian medicinal plants, spices and ancient grains will be the next 'superfoods'.



Spafinder's Susie Ellis is behind the report

Other trends included wellness homes, cities and communities, hyper-personalised beauty and corporate wellness in the 'blue collar' working sector.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P0k7M>



Tan will develop the business in Asia

WTS appoints two senior team members

WTS International, the global spa management and consultancy firm, has appointed Lily Tan as vice president, Asia Pacific, where she will oversee development and operations in the region. Previously she was a regional director of operations for the Minor Group in north Asia.

In November, WTS welcomed Kim Matheson as its senior vice president. She's based in New York City and prior to the move ran her own spa consultancy called Natural Resources for 15 years.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=g5h3N_S



Davey (left) and Zingraff-Shariff

Pair of fresh faces at Aromatherapy Associates

Spa brand Aromatherapy Associates appointed two new members to its senior team ahead of its 30th anniversary. Muriel Zingraff-Shariff has joined as CEO and Leslie Davey is the global marketing director.

Both Zingraff-Shariff and Davey will work closely with chair and founder Geraldine Howard to further support the global growth of the business.

Aromatherapy Associates was sold last year to B&B Investment, a UK fund which invests in health, wellness and beauty brands.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=K6p6y_S

South African spa revenue up 261 per cent

Spa benchmarks for South Africa have been released for 2014 – following on from previous research conducted five years ago – noting an increase of 261 per cent in the region's industry revenue up to 31 March 2014, reaching ZAR1.4bn (US\$119m, €100m, £78m).

Research company Intelligent Spas has updated the *South African Spa Benchmark Report 2008*. According to the latest data, more than 2.5m people visited a spa in South Africa in the financial year ending 31 March 2014. This is a 162 per cent increase since 2008. Average revenue per spa increased by 49 per cent over the last five years.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=Q2T3r_S



Association chair Charlie Thompson

Inaugural UK spa industry statistics revealed

Average revenue per treatment in UK spas is £40.49 (US\$63, €52), according to the first six months of data from the UK Spa Association.

The association says that it's likely that this number is influenced by the mix of the 67 participating spas, 89 per cent of which are day spas. The average revenue per treatment at hotel spas is considerably higher, at £67.15 (US\$105, €52).

The data, recorded from April to September, also shows that therapist utilisation is 81 per cent, while treatment room utilisation is 41 per cent.

The benchmarking system is a valuable barometer of spa facility performance in the country.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=UGEd8_d_S



The spa, designed by Pierre Yves-Rochon, will sit at the base of the 68-storey hotel

The largest Four Seasons spa is to debut in Bahrain

the biggest spa in the Four Seasons portfolio is set to open in March at the Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay in the kingdom's capital city, Manama.

Interiors of the hotel and its 37,512sq ft (3,485sq m) spa have been designed by Pierre Yves-Rochon, who's behind the décor of other high-end hotels such as Four Seasons George V in Paris, The Savoy in London and Peninsula Shanghai.

The sizeable spa will be located at the base of the 273-bed hotel – designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill – which

rises 68 floors above the bay on its own oval-shaped, man-made island.

Facilities will comprise 17 treatment rooms, five pools – including one for children – a hammam, sauna, whirlpool, indoor spa pool, two relaxation lounges with juice bars, a beauty salon and barber shop. Sodashi and Ila will supply the products, along with treatment beds from Gharieni.

The hotel is one of five new properties that Four Seasons is planning in 2015.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=j6q2Y_S

American Leisure opens spa for Wrigley's gum firm

Twenty-two miles off the coast of Los Angeles, USA, a five-star day spa has opened on the island of Catalina. The majority of the island is owned by the Wrigley's chewing gum company.

US spa management and design firm American Leisure worked on the project, advising its client – the Wrigley company.

The 15,000sq ft (1,394sq m) Island Spa Catalina is located in the island's historic El Encanto building and has nine treatment rooms. There's also a sauna, steamroom, relaxation deck, soaking pool, courtyard, shop/café and a yoga studio.

Reflecting the spa's location, the treatments use locally sourced ingredients such as sage, eucalyptus, rosemary, aloe and a wide array of seaweed. They've



The Santa Catalina Island Company has control of most of the island's resorts

also been designed to be age-friendly as American Leisure's Wendy Bosalavage explains on page 66.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=T8w4J_S



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Pocivalsek used to manage Terme Olimia

Slovenian spa manager becomes economy minister

Slovenia has appointed a national thermal spa resort manager, Zdravko Pocivalsek, as its economy minister after his predecessor resigned over allegations of fraud in October.

The 57-year-old was put forward by Prime Minister Miro Cerar's centre-left SMC Party, despite the fact that he has never been a member of a political party or run for office, according to *Reuters*.

For the past 15 years, Pocivalsek has been chief executive of a state-owned spa resort Terme Olimia. **Read more:** http://lei.sr?a=x7x7Q_Q



Draganov is the national tourism chief

Bulgaria fails to profit from balneotherapy

Rumen Draganov, director of the Bulgarian Institute for Tourism Analyses and Assessments, has recently lamented the poor use of the country's mineral water springs, noting the country should take cues from rival European destinations.

"Instead of building new balneotherapy centres, we destroy and close the existing ones," Draganov said. "We still cannot say that we have reached the level at which these kinds of mineral waters are used in European Union countries."

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=k8U5E_S



The resort is expected to open at the same time as a local airport's renovations come to an end

Philippe Starck's YOO-branded resort launching 2015

Aqua Boracay by YOO, a five-star 168-bed-room hotel, is set to launch in the last quarter of 2015 in the Philippines. The property is designed by YOO Studio, an international development and branding company led by property entrepreneur John Hitchcock and designer Philippe Starck.

Set in 16,000sq m (17,222sq ft) of lush tropical gardens, the beachfront resort on the island of Boracay is the first YOO-branded resort residence in the Pacific, according to CEO

of YOO Hotels & Resorts, Marco Nijhof. YOO Hotels & Resorts is the operating arm of YOO and the facilities' interiors are designed by YOO Studio. The other architecture firm working on the project is Buensalido Architects – which came up with the design for the exteriors.

The resort's 300sq m (3,229sq ft) spa will be complemented by a health club, yoga studio, a lagoon pool facing the sea, another rectangular pool, function rooms and a wedding pavilion.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=c2N8j_S

Two African hot spring spa projects to take off

Lamu Island on the north coast of Kenya is to undergo a drastic transformation costing KES2.3tn (US\$25bn, €19.9bn, £15.6bn) – which includes a hot springs resort devoted to wellness tourism.

The KES3.7bn (US\$42m, €33.6m, £26.4m) Lake Turkana wellness city will have many facilities centred around the area's natural alkaline water hot springs which are said to aid skin problems.

It's one of three resort cities in the development which is aiming to create a new "tourism corridor" for international visitors.

Elsewhere in Namibia, The Reho Spa Recreation Resort is due to reopen in late 2015 now that the Rehoboth Community Trust has signed a 12-year lease agreement with owners Namibia Wildlife Resorts.



Lake Turkana will offer a range of health services centred around the hot springs

The trust is expecting to spend close to NA\$10m (US\$853,000, €717,000, £561,000) upgrading the hot spring facility. **Read more:** http://lei.sr?a=q6z9Q_S

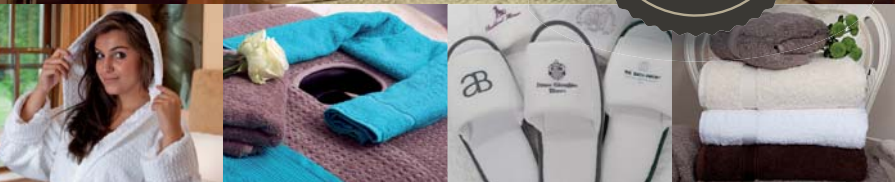
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Czech health minister Nemecek

China and Czech Republic to cooperate on wellness

China's health department will pay for 120 of the nation's children suffering from respiratory diseases to be treated at a Czech mineral water spa in Karlova Studánka as part of an agreement between the countries' leaders to boost wellness tourism in eastern Europe.

Czech health minister Svatopluk Nemecek signed the agreement to care for the children. Nemecek also signed a memorandum on strategic cooperation between the two countries' health systems.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=K7f4H_S



The airport spas will open in March

Sha doubles in size and plans airport mini spas

Sha Wellness Clinic, the Spanish destination spa known for its macrobiotic and anti-ageing programmes, has doubled in size following a 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) extension.

The extra space and facilities will enable Sha to offer new treatments focused on areas such as brain training, back problems, hair loss prevention and hydrotherapy.

In other news, Sha is to open two mini spas at Madrid-Barajas Airport in March 2015. The Esenza by Sha spas will be in separate terminals.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=r4t8N_S



The upgraded seawater pool at the 7,000sq m spa - a well-known wellness facility in Europe

Thermes de Marins Spa Monte Carlo reopens after revamp

Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo, one of Europe's leading wellness facilities, has relaunched with two new cryotherapy rooms, expanded facilities and 28 health specialists after an extensive renovation.

The bigger 7,000sq m (75,357sq ft) wellness centre now has 37 treatment spaces and experts such as sports doctors, nutritionists, physiotherapists, relaxation therapists and hydrotherapists.

Its heated seawater pool has also been fitted out with more high-tech equipment such as powerful underwater jets,

while Unbescheiden has supplied 10 new pieces of hydrotherapy equipment.

Local architect Fabrice Notari worked on the project alongside the interior designer Olivier Antoine.

Established in 1895, Therme Marins is a subsidiary of the Société des Bains de Mer - a public company controlled by the Principality of Monaco. It focuses on preventative health treatments plus rehabilitation, anti-ageing, slimming, beauty and relaxation programmes.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=H2s9d_S

Spa Castle closed in New York due to safety concerns

Spa Castle Premier 57, a 39,000sq ft (3,623sq m) bathhouse style spa in Manhattan, has been temporarily closed by the city's health department.

Although it was in the process of applying for a permit, it had not been granted and the facility also lacked an approved safety plan - both of these are required for all bathing establishments in New York.

The health department was investigating the Manhattan facility after the death of a man at Spa Castle's sister property in Queens in December. Hock Ma, an 84-year-old man, was found floating in a hot tub after suffering a heart attack. The Queens spa had had 28 critical violations in the previous two years but had corrected these by its most recent inspection in September.



The Manhattan facility was investigated after the death of a person at a sister property

NBC New York says there have been "dozens of violations at [other] indoor spas and pools in the city over the last two years".

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=H4u4A_S



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22-23 FEBRUARY 2015

Professional Spa & Wellness Convention

ExCeL, London, UK

A two-day spa convention will take place alongside the Professional Beauty exhibition.

www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

3 MARCH 2015

Healing Summit

Hotel de Rome, Berlin, Germany

The Healing Summit is organised by marketing consortia Healing Hotels of the World. Topics covered include issues such as sustainability, personal wellbeing and the future of the wellness industry.

www.healinghotelsoftheworld.com

10 MARCH 2015

Hotelier Middle East: Spa & Wellness Summit

Dubai, UAE

More than 250 Middle East hotel spa leaders attended the 2014 Spa & Wellness Summit, which was put together by business magazine *Hotelier Middle East*. Now in its third year, the summit enables spa professionals to develop their knowledge and capabilities.

www.hoteliermiddleeast.com/conferences/spa-forum

20-23 MARCH 2015

Cosmoprof Worldwide

Bologna, Italy

Cosmoprof Worldwide is one of the world's biggest trade shows covering all sectors of the international beauty industry. This year it will also host a two-day spa conference.

www.cosmoprof.com

27-29 MARCH 2015

Beauty Dusseldorf

Messe, Dusseldorf, Germany

Beauty Dusseldorf will include a three-day conference for spa operators plus an exhibition themed around spa, wellness, cosmetics and nailcare. Two other trade shows held at the same time will focus on hairdressing and make up.

www.beauty.de



Suppliers of the SamRaam spa include Panpuri Organic Spa, Dibi and D'Vine

Day spa opens in Tbilisi, Georgia, with plans for hotel

An east Asian-themed day spa has opened in Tbilisi, Georgia, created by M-Studio – a design company based in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The SamRaam Spa & Wellness Centre, which was unveiled in December, is located in the basement of an office building that belongs to the Azerbaijan State Oil company. A hotel is under construction, in conjunction with the wellness centre, and will be ready in a few years, according to the wellness centre's general manager Pauline Mbondo.

The spa – the name of which, 'SamRaam', means 'joy' in Thai – has a total area of 1,800sq m (19,375sq ft) and features six treatment rooms, each with its own steam bath.

There's also an Oriental hammam, a flotation pool, a water bed for body wraps, an indoor heated pool, kneipp therapy pools, two saunas, bucket and experience showers, as well as a Himalayan salt cave, heated stone loungers and a fitness centre.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=a7X8G_S

Hitler's seaside resort to be converted into tourism hub

Investors are cashing in on the redevelopment of a beach resort originally built by the Third Reich as part of a Nazi vision for the future of tourism in Germany.

The resort on the island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea was built in the run up to World War II and nicknamed the 'Colossus of Prora' due to its sheer size. Its eight identical six-storey buildings stretch 2.8 miles (4.5km) along the coast.

Construction slowed during the war and the blocks were eventually sold off to independent developers. The complex was considered too expensive and architecturally significant to tear down.

A youth hostel opened in the resort – now known as New Prora – in 2011 and there are plans for a 100-bed hotel



The 'Colossus of Prora' resort includes eight identical blocks stretching 2.8 miles

and spa. Other parts of the site will be transformed into luxury beachfront flats according to *The Independent* newspaper.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=a9w8v_S



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RICH WEISSMANN

Last year, KSL Capital Partners became majority stakeholders of US destination spa Miraval. As the firm prepares to announce two new Miraval resorts, KSL partner Rich Weissmann explains its vision for the brand to Rhianon Howells

M

Miraval Resort & Spa, a nearly 20-year-old destination spa in Tucson, is arguably one of the best-known brands in the global spa industry (see SB12/4 p60) – quite an achievement considering it is, in essence, a single site in the middle of the Arizona desert. But as KSL Capital Partners' Rich Weissmann will testify, this has no bearing on its potential.

"Miraval is a business that clearly punches above its weight," says Weissmann, a partner with the private equity firm, which bought a majority stake in the resort from Steve Case's company, Revolution, last June. "I think that's because of the quality and nature of the experience that people get there."

It was the opportunity to translate this reputation into growth that piqued the interest of KSL's managing director, Mike Shannon, when the firm started looking for spa investments seven years ago. As a specialist in travel and leisure investment (see p32) KSL was already involved in the spa business through its then ownership of destination resorts with significant spas, from La Costa in California to Grand Wailea in Hawaii. But the world of wellness was relatively new territory.

"We needed to focus on wellness, and we came up with two names: Canyon Ranch and Miraval," says Weissmann,



Before KSL, Weissmann headed up the hospitality and gaming practice at Goldman Sachs

who joined KSL in 2008 after 10 years at Goldman Sachs, where he headed up its hospitality and gaming practice. "Miraval dovetails with the demographic we were trying to target."

The KSL clientele, says Weissmann, want to consume leisure in a meaningful, non-prescriptive way and also have a relaxing vacation. Miraval, with its stunning location in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, its focus on life-affirming experiences and its lack of regimens, ticked all the right boxes.

So where exactly is Miraval heading under KSL's steerage? Before the deal, Revolution had announced plans to open several new Miraval resorts in the US. Now there's talk of rolling out the brand both at home and abroad, but where and how?

Hidden value

On its website, KSL claims its investment philosophy is not about financial engineering, but about unlocking the "hidden value" of businesses through targeted capital expenditures, operational efficiencies and enhanced marketing strategies. So where does KSL see the hidden value in Miraval?

"It's a brand," Weissmann says. "Since we've bought the business, we've had significant enquiries on opportunities either to brand new developments as Miraval or invest in other businesses that are related to what Miraval does."

"What we're focused on now is how to connect with guests on a daily or weekly basis when they're not in the resort. So we're looking at all the different aspects [of Miraval's offering]

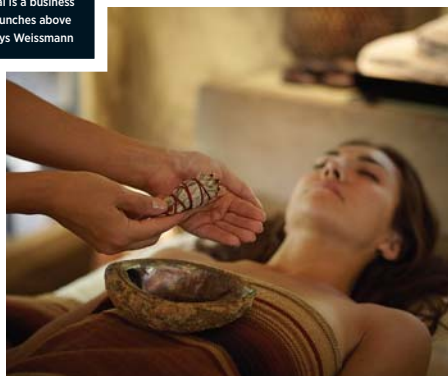
and asking, 'how does that translate into a more ongoing consumer experience?' That might be through creating programming that's portable or by affiliating with or buying like-minded businesses that have distribution in multiple locations."

In terms of the rollout, Miraval will push ahead with plans to open new resorts: "We'd like to see half a dozen or so. East coast, west coast, probably south-east... we could probably do two in California."

Although details of two sites are due to be revealed imminently, Weissmann will only confirm that one is the rebranding of an existing operation in Natirar, New Jersey, already announced by Revolution in 2013 (see SB13/4 p40). "That's one of the two, but we've been doing some revisions to the programming and design," he says. ▶



Despite being a single site in the middle of the Arizona desert "Miraval is a business that clearly punches above its weight" says Weissmann



spa business uniting the world of wellness



KSL, which only invests in travel and leisure, has a share in Whistler Blackcomb

► The design and development of properties is something the company takes very seriously. "We're very involved," says Weissmann. "We're one of the few funds that actually has a development officer and a team [who concentrate on that]... We don't leave it to chance or somebody else, because you can lose a lot of money doing bad renovations."

In terms of locations, it's looking for "places that have a compelling physical presence... in settings that conform with the mindfulness of what Miraval stands for."

When Revolution first unveiled plans to roll out the brand, vice-chair Philippe Bourguignon identified proximity markets – within a two-hour drive – as key to making the model a success (see SB12/4 p7) and Weissmann confirms that this remains a consideration, albeit not a central one. "We want locations that are geographically advantageous as well as having the ability to attract drive-to customers, because they're more likely to generate repeat business. It's not critical, but it's something we're taking account of."

Making money

Back at Tucson, the current priority is to develop and enhance the guest experience and to balance that against profitability. "The way we look at businesses, we look

at all the major departments as businesses within the resort itself," says Weissmann. "So for instance, the spa has to have a P&L [statement] and show that it can be profitable relative to food and beverage and rooms. It's not necessarily targeting [specific areas for improvement]; it's keeping people accountable."

"On the cost side, we're maximising the use of group purchasing and making the most efficient use of labour. In terms of room product, we're managing the room distribution and yielding those rooms in the most effective way... a lot of it is just tweaks here and there."

One area earmarked for extra attention is fitness. The difficulty, says Weissmann, is that while guests will pay for spa treatments, fitness at resorts is typically considered to be an amenity. "Today, fitness isn't really a focus at Miraval," he admits. "Our goal is to have the fitness offering match the quality of the wellness and spa offering [at the Tucson site] by adding programming that creates value for people." In the new resorts, he adds, fitness may offer outside memberships, though this will not be the case in Tucson.

Generally speaking, Weissmann believes too many people in the global industry are guilty of buying into the self-perpetuating myth that spas are not ►

KSL INVESTMENTS

Some of KSL's current investments include:

- The Belfry (UK)
 - ClubCorp country clubs (across the USA)
 - East West Partners (real estate developments across the USA)
 - The James Royal Palm hotel (Miami, Florida, USA)
 - Malmaison and Hotel du Vin hotel chains (across the UK)
 - Miraval Resort & Spa (Tucson, Arizona, USA)
 - Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows ski resorts (California, USA)
 - St Regis Monarch Beach (California, USA)
 - Village Urban Resorts (across the UK)
 - Whistler ski resort (Canada)
- KSL has a 24 per cent share in Whistler Blackcomb Holdings, one of the main companies behind the Canadian ski resort



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“

I think there's a misconception that spas don't make money... We don't make excuses. We ask why hasn't it been [profitable] and what can we do to make it so?

”



While residential villas have worked well at Miraval, spa real estate is not a priority for KSL

► natural profit centres. “I think there's a misconception that spas don't make money,” he says, citing two causes for this: one, the spa operators who make excuses, blaming the hotel for adding the spa as an afterthought and not giving it enough focus; and two, the hotel owners who refuse to believe spas can turn a profit.

“Part of [the challenge of] running a successful spa operation is scale,” he admits. “That's what we focus on. We don't make excuses: It hasn't been profitable, therefore it can't be. We ask, why hasn't it been and what can we do to make it so? And we've been very successful at that.”

Fool's errand

A key element of the resort at Tucson, alongside its 118 rooms and suites, are 16 privately owned villas, which are rented out whenever the owners are not in residence. But although it has proven successful in this context, further spa real estate is not something KSL will be rushing into, following lessons learned from Miraval Living in New York City, a residential building with which the brand parted ways in 2010 following a disagreement with the developer.

“We don't predicate our investment on residential,” says Weissmann. “It was a fool's errand during the last upswing, so we predicate our investment on being able to make the resort itself successful. We think there is an ongoing opportunity to create a Miraval Living concept – it [spa real estate]

has been done successfully at Tucson and elsewhere and I think people are looking to incorporate wellness into their lifestyle, but it's got to be done thoughtfully.”

But creating standalone residential communities is another matter, he feels. “If you lived in a Miraval community, you might take a fitness class but you're not going to have a facial or massage every day. In a resort, your guest is only there for a short period, so is more likely to try those services. The model is very difficult at the pure residential level as opposed to residential and resort combined. First and foremost, it has to be a successful resort.”

Global plans

Further to its plans to roll out Miraval at home in the US, Miraval is also looking at global opportunities for the brand.

“We think the name would translate well internationally,” says Weissmann.

“[We also believe] the international traveller is looking for the same type of spa and wellness experiences as our domestic traveller, so we think it will work. The question is how do we do it and where do we go? I think the very first one outside the US has to be very thoughtful.”

The first site, he adds, is likely to be in Europe – the Denver-based firm has an office in London, and at present its only non-US investments – including The Belfry Hotel & Resort, the Hotel du Vin and Malmaison hotel chains and Village Urban Resorts – are in the UK.

Looking ahead to the future, Weissmann sees the biggest challenge for the spa industry as “discipline, and being able to deliver a relevant product on a cost-effective basis for both the operator and the consumer.”

Part of rising to that challenge, he adds, will be creating spa and wellness opportunities that are meaningful not only for the current generation of core spa consumers – those who are aged 45 and over – but also the millennial generation coming up behind them.

Weissmann is confident, however, that the spa sector – and indeed leisure and travel in general – will continue to be attractive to investors, even in these uncertain economic times.

“While [travel and leisure spending] is discretionary, given the extent of global travel today, recession in one place doesn't necessarily mean your business is going to suffer a significant decline.

“We've invested through good cycles and bad cycles and been successful at it. I think that just reflects having an eye for what is relevant to the consumer and being able to offer value.” ●



Rhianon Howells is a business journalist and the consulting editor of *Spa Business* magazine
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A close-up, profile view of a woman with dark hair tied in a bun, wearing a military camouflage uniform. She has her eyes closed and a serene expression, suggesting she is meditating. An American flag patch is visible on her shoulder. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

WELLNESS

ALL IN THE MIND

The foundation teaches meditation to those facing severe adversity including soldiers, the homeless and HIV/AIDS sufferers

spa business uniting the world of wellness



The Quiet Time programme is transforming schools in some of the most deprived areas in the US

The David Lynch Foundation helps people overcome extreme stress by using the power of meditation. Its goal is to touch 100 million lives in the next decade. Julie Cramer talks to co-founder Bob Roth to find out more



Film director David Lynch meditates twice a day, every day

David Lynch is at the centre of much media attention of late as he starts filming a conclusion to cult TV series *Twin Peaks* after a 25 year break. The US director is famous for his surrealist style in films such as *The Elephant Man*, *Mulholland Drive* and *Eraserhead*. What many people may not know, is that he's also

a firm believer in the beneficial power of transcendental meditation. He says: "I started transcendental meditation in 1973 and have not missed a single meditation ever since. Twice a day, every day. It has given me effortless access to unlimited reserves of energy, creativity and happiness deep within."

After a chance meeting with fellow practitioner Bob Roth a decade ago,

the pair started the David Lynch Foundation and have since helped hundreds of thousands of at-risk people using this form of meditation.

Here Roth, the co-founder and executive director of the foundation, talks about its aim to help 100 million people in the next decade. Given the current surge in interest in mindfulness, now is the perfect time for spas to get involved he says.



Roth met Lynch at a TM conference

What's the main purpose of the David Lynch Foundation?

We're a non-profit organisation, founded in 2005 by the film director David Lynch, dedicated to making transcendental meditation (TM) accessible to many different areas of the population.

In the beginning, our focus was on helping at-risk children in low income urban schools to cope with the extreme stresses that they were facing. In less than 10 years, we've touched the lives of more than 500,000 students.

Over time, our work has spread to a wider range of people, from the homeless

to victims of domestic violence, war veterans with post traumatic stress disorder and HIV/AIDS sufferers.

How did you meet David Lynch?

I was organising a TM conference and David Lynch, who had been practising TM for around 30 years, was invited to attend.

He heard the horror stories about at-risk youth – of kids who witnessed and experienced domestic violence and gangland shootings and were then expected to go to school and learn algebra. The idea of the foundation was born from this meeting and we created it soon after. ▶



Since its inception in 2005, the David Lynch Foundation has worked with more than 500,000 students

“It’s like diving **underneath a choppy ocean** to the **calm waters beneath**. In this state, **deeply relaxing alpha brainwaves** are present”

► **How does TM differ from other forms of meditation?**

According to science, there are three basic approaches to meditation. The first is called ‘focused attention’, where you attempt to actively control your thoughts, clear your mind, or focus on your breath. This produces the gamma brainwaves that are associated with peak concentration.

The second is ‘open monitoring’ which includes many mindfulness techniques, where you learn to observe your thoughts or emotions dispassionately. This produces theta brainwaves, which are very slow and present during the REM stages of sleep.

Thirdly is ‘automatic self transcending’, which is transcendental meditation, where you learn to effortlessly transcend conscious thinking to achieve a profound state of calm, of inner wakefulness. It’s like diving underneath a choppy ocean to the

calm waters beneath. In this state, deeply relaxing alpha brainwaves are present.

Because of its simplicity and naturalness TM is the easiest to learn – even a 10-year-old can practise it.

What are the benefits of TM?

In a society where there’s an epidemic of stress, TM helps people achieve a profound state of rest at will. It’s been shown to instantly drop cortisol levels by 30 per cent – which is more than we get from a good night’s sleep. There’s also evidence that TM reduces high blood pressure as effectively as medication, reduces cholesterol, atherosclerosis and risk of stroke; and reduces anxiety, depression and insomnia.

In addition, much research indicates that TM improves memory, creativity and problem solving. It wakes up the brain!

How did you first discover TM?

I was at the University of Berkeley in California, in the 1960s. It was a time of riots, strikes and anti-war demos. Students were being shot and tanks were parked outside.

I wasn’t a hippie or a druggie but I was looking for a natural way to overcome the intense pressures of going to school full time, working full time and dealing with the social upheaval all around me. A good friend who I trusted suggested I try TM. I’m a naturally sceptical person, but my friend was a no-nonsense kind of person so I decided to try it.

Its effect on me was immediate and profound. I experienced a state of rest and relaxation I never knew I could gain. My mind cleared up, I had so much energy and my grades soared. I knew I’d discovered something really special and I knew I wanted to teach this to inner city kids. ►

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“ I started to teach the technique to kids in the inner city, to death row inmates as well as to people in the business world at companies like Apple and General Motors ”

► **Did you always want to be a teacher?**

Actually no. I was heading for a career in politics – I had worked for senator Robert Kennedy during his 1968 presidential primary campaign. But after he was assassinated and the more I learnt about it, the more I saw corruption and greed.

So I switched my focus to education. Along the way, I learned to meditate and in 1972 I attended a teacher training course by TM founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Europe with 2,000 others.

I returned to San Francisco where I started to teach the technique to kids in the inner city, to death row inmates as well as to people in the business world at companies like Apple and General Motors.

How do you teach TM?


Well, it's not mass meditation – it can't be taught to a crowd of 50 people. It works best when it's taught individually over four consecutive days, for an hour at a time. The first session must be one-to-one with a teacher, while subsequent sessions can be in smaller groups. If we're going into a school with 3,000 kids we might initially send in 25 teachers so that each and every child gets an individual first hour.

How has your work helped people?

There are so many transformational stories. There's one about a young girl who arrived at school with red paint splattered all over her dress. The teacher told her

she had to go home and change – until it transpired that the little girl had just witnessed the shooting of her uncle and those red stains were his blood. She'd run to school for a safe haven and because she didn't want to miss her TM class.

Then there's the [war] veteran mother who returned to her family from active service and was unable to sleep for three months. All she was offered was a handful of pills that didn't work. She learned TM and within a few days she was able to sleep through the night – and she still continues to sleep through the night now, four months after learning to meditate. And the best thing, she says, is that her children got a loving mother back!



A service-disabled combat veteran lets go of anger and stress after learning TM and can finally sleep again

40 spabusiness.com issue 1 2015 ©CYBERTREK 2015



Has meditation and mindfulness now entered the mainstream?

Yes, for sure. I speak regularly about TM at business and medical conferences, including the Google Zeitgeist Conference, which is attended by the top, most innovative thinkers. We are also offering the technique to Wall Street companies. In the 40 years of my practising and teaching TM, it's really only in the last one to two years where I've seen a huge spike in interest.

There could be many reasons for this, but ultimately I think it's the huge amount of scientific research which shows that meditation benefits the mind and body.

People today are plagued by anxiety, depression and insomnia. Their lives are simply unsustainable. Until now, the answer has mostly been medication, like anti-depressants, which only mask the symptoms. Our foundation wants people to self-meditate, not self-medicate.

What are the foundation's goals?

We have ambitious, but very doable, plans to bring TM to 100 million people around the world in the next 10 years. It's a huge task but we think we can do it. We're in discussions with the UN, and talking to NGOs all over the world.

Oprah invited the foundation to work with 400 of her employees and Roth says more firms are starting to realise the value of teaching staff TM

TM is already taught in over 100 countries so all the channels and systems are in place. Our foundation also has a branch in the UK. We want to reach more at-risk populations and work with international thought leaders to spread the teaching of meditation.

We're actively recruiting new TM teachers at college job fairs and we're particularly interested in graduates with masters in education or public health.

How will the field of TM develop?

More companies are switching on to its value for their employees and their health. It can save them so much by reducing healthcare costs and absenteeism.

We've taught 400 employees at Oprah's company and all 200 employees at Dr Oz's TV production company and, as I said, top Wall Street firms. Some companies are even installing meditation rooms.

In schools where we deliver TM, it's been shown to improve academic

performance and behaviour. It's even had an impact on obesity levels as children reduce stress-related eating.

Do you work with spas and is this a growth area for the future?

We work with some spas, as well as with wellness organisations like yoga studios. But we'd love to make more connections.

A spa is the perfect environment for the teaching of TM. People go there for a period of time and want to switch off. So often, when they return to their stressed work or home environments, any cosmetic benefits quickly wash away. If spas can offer their guests TM, they're giving them a powerful tool to improve their health for the rest of their life. ●

For spa operators who want to know how they can work with the foundation, email Bob Roth via the David Lynch Foundation website - www.davidlynchfoundation.org. Or visit www.tmbusinessnyc.org.



Julie Cramer is a health, hospitality and travel journalist and a former online news editor for the BBC
Email: juliecramer@me.com

NOEL ASMAR

Noel Asmar, the forward-looking lifestyle brand for wellness, starts 2015 with its first overseas sales offices in the UK and Dubai. In reshaping the hospitality uniform, the company has earned a global reputation for adding to your brand message in a very tangible way

Emotion' is perhaps not the most likely sentiment associated with a spa uniform but it's the very astute and heartfelt basis from which the Noel Asmar Group has become a globally trusted leader in the field.

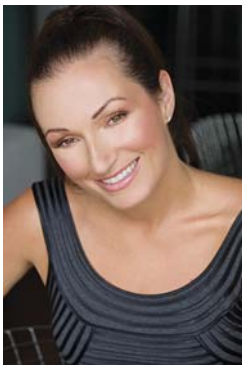
"Just imagine how you feel if you're dressed inappropriately or look drab?" says the eponymous Noel Asmar in relation to her brand philosophy. "This affects you so emotionally, that you're unable to focus on anyone else. We want to make people feel empowered."

The business of hospitality is all about making others feel pampered and well. This starts with feeling good about yourself. Hence the premise behind the company's success: when staff feel comfortable and stylish in their uniforms, they're able to concentrate more fully on the people they serve.

Transforming the often ill-fitting and unflattering into uniforms with flair has been the stock in trade that's taken the Noel Asmar design house to 4,000 sites across 60 countries in little more than 10 years in business, working with top international hotel groups and small day, medical and dental spa operators, as well as cosmetic brands, beauty academies and nail salons.

Until now this vast client portfolio has been serviced from its company headquarters in Vancouver, Canada. Yet 2015 marks a new phase in corporate growth with Noel Asmar's first overseas sales offices in the UK and Dubai (opening soon) and an active search for local distributorships in Europe and Asia.

"The Middle East is a fashion hub and yet I don't know of any designers specialising in design for wellbeing," says



Asmar, born in Canada to Irish-Norwegian and Lebanese parents, led her company for the first 11 years as sole designer. She now employs 25+ full time staff including a design team that works with Asmar to continue expanding the Noel Asmar brand into the trusted name for 'cleverly designed garments and products made for the way you move'

Asmar. She sees Dubai's predicted rise in hotel construction, for a large increase in room capacity by 2020, together with the Emirates' taste for exceptional hotels and high design as favourable indicators for her decision to have local representation.

"Hotels that have tried to team up with a fashion brand to uniform their property have learned that off-the-shelf clothing companies don't have the experience

or set up to be able to service a uniform programme that requires infill orders and fabrics that can withstand uniform use. We look forward to filling that void. We will have samples on the ground to respond to people immediately," she says.

This makes good sense for a brand with 8,000 SKUs in its portfolio. Not only are such numbers unheard of elsewhere in the wellness uniform industry, all variations are held in stock, meaning orders can be serviced quickly on a needs-be basis, thus alleviating budget pressures and space issues around storage, particularly for smaller clients.

DESIGN: FASHION, FABRIC AND FUNCTIONALITY

Noel Asmar has all the allure of a fully-fledged fashion house, turning uniforms from the quasi-medical, boxy smock into runway expressions of style: from mandarin collar, high neck, low neck or polo neck to cigarette or capri pant, even leggings; an empire waist to enhance body length or a longer hemline to flatter a fuller figure. Every design nuance has been considered.

But fashion is nothing without functionality. The choice of designs reflects the demands of different job specs. An aesthetician delivers her treatment in a different way to a Thai massage therapist. A hammam is a starkly contrasting environment to a nail bar. Together with design comes the importance of appropriate fabrics that allow a full range of movement while being breathable, fade resistant and durable enough to withstand the punishment of products and repeated laundering. The average life span of a single piece is – surprising even to the wearers – three to five years when cared for properly.



**“THERE’S A BIG
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
GOING TO A DESIGN
HOUSE AND A DESIGN
HOUSE THAT SPECIALISES
IN SPA UNIFORMS”**



POWER OF BRAND MESSAGE

Isadore Sharp, founder of Four Seasons Hotels says, 'Front line employees represent our product to our customers. In the most realistic sense, they are our product. Those few moments of service delivery are a company's make or break point, when reputation is either confirmed or denied.' Sharp's words are Asmar's mantra. She attests that the way staff look and feel is as valid as their training and expertise for being sound brand ambassadors.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE

It's all about ease with Noel Asmar: from the 'made for the way you move', company tagline, to the way of conducting business. When Asmar says: "We urge our clients to lean on us. We're experts in the field of uniforms and can offer valuable advice that will save both time and money," she's referring to the deliberately personal approach.

Each potential client is appointed their own business manager who gets to know the brand, property and precise job functions they're looking to uniform – from front desk to housekeeping and F&B or even the entire workforce (as at MGM Las Vegas) – in order to seamlessly facilitate the selection and ordering process. This is made easier still thanks to a staff mix of ethnic backgrounds spanning nine languages and a sensitivity to cultural difference.

The company prides itself on being a design house offering custom styling solutions. However with 8,000 SKUs in inventory, in every colour from 'spicy berry' to 'powder blue', it makes fiscal sense to stick with off-the-peg. Every style variation from a cap sleeve or roused waist to a fully tailored suit is available from XXS to 5XL, plus maternity styles.

Yet the in-house designers, including Asmar herself, love creating subtle ways for clients to stay on brand or culturally in-tune, with bespoke embroidery, digital screen printing and dye-casts. The company has recently created original prints based on indigenous motifs to trim the spa uniforms for the Four Seasons in Bora Bora.



There are no minimums and orders received by noon are shipped the same day. Most garments are manufactured in Canada but some production is deliberately outsourced to China for ease of servicing a growing Asian clientele.

NOEL ASMAR'S STORY

Asmar's recent recognition as one of the Top 100 Female Entrepreneurs in Canada, 2014 is testament to life's adage that passion leads to success. She was holding down her 'day job' in hotel management when her love of design took off in the night markets of Ho Chi Minh City. She was having clothes made for her friends and family while working in Vietnam when she realised this was her real metier. Her move into the fashion business took seed once back home in

Canada when she designed a uniform to take her then pregnant, aesthetician sister out of the unflattering 'boxy smock/white lab coat' into fashionable workwear that really made her feel good.

"It was clear that there was a dire need for a feminine, thoughtfully designed tunic made especially for the spa and wellness professional," says Asmar who started her new career officially in 2002 with one style in three colours, under her original brand: www.spauniforms.com, then the first online offering. Still 25-30 per cent of new business comes from online searches.

Here she is, 12 years and one name change later, a pivotal player (and ISPA board member) in an industry that's evolved alongside her strong belief that proper spa uniforms are indeed a key component of their brand.



The company also makes equestrian apparel, attractive pedicure bowls and bespoke-scented candles

PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION

Noel Asmar is in essence a lifestyle brand, with an in-house design team, so branching into equestrian apparel in 2011, provided an opportunity to indulge its design credentials beyond the fit-for-work fabrics of uniforms. In line with her 'everything stems from a need' philosophy, Asmar started her equestrian collection with a rain-friendly riding jacket to keep her dry on her horse during rainy Vancouver winters.

Now the division offers a luxe range using merino wool and cashmere, bamboo and linen as well as technical fabrics for water resistance. It's even designed breeches and boots for doormen for the equestrian themed Salamander Resort in Washington DC, and catered to Olympic riders and dressage teams.

The recent Noel Asmar leather handbag collection has cemented the brand's move into retail, being stocked increasingly in hotel boutiques worldwide.

"It's all about the experience, of making ordinary moments that bit more special," she says. Asmar's other exciting division, www.pedicurebowls.com, took off in 2007 when she designed a range of colourful resin and hand-hammered copper and

Noel Asmar clients include:

Starwood, Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton, Rosewood, OPI, Marriott, Sofitel, Elizabeth Arden, St Regis, WTS International, Canyon Ranch spas and cruise lines

stainless steel pedicure and manicure bowls as a move away from industrial-style foot baths. Most recently Asmar created her own collection of aromatic, hand poured, soy wax candles simply because she is 'nutty' about fragrance and the profound connection between scent and spa experiences. The company offers custom scents with co-branded packaging for elite clients around the world.

WHAT NEXT?

Asmar's latest interest is the hospitality industry's relationship to the environment. She's leading a campaign to create a recycling programme that takes used uniforms in exchange for a credit towards new Noel Asmar pieces. With millions of garments being replaced each year, there's a dire need to stop

dumping fabric in landfill, which anyway, she says, the US government is lobbying to outlaw in America by 2017.

By the end of 2016 Asmar aims to have offices, not only in the UK and Dubai, but also in additional countries within Europe, Latin America, Oceania/South Pacific and Asia.

So much in the spa and wellness industry revolves around bricks and mortar design, treatment development and product houses. Noel Asmar is one company focusing on what really matters: the people who work day to day to deliver the customer experience. "Spa staff are in the business of looking and feeling good, so it stands to reason that they themselves want to feel that way too," says Asmar.

She's claimed the space for uniforms that are both comfortable and chic. The company stands up for 'quality' and is sure to inspire properties to take advantage of the in-stock collections or custom design services. There are tens of thousands of spa and hospitality professionals that are forever grateful for Asmar's vision.

Contact Noel Asmar:

Email: info@noelasmarm.com

Web: www.noelasmarm.com

“We felt a great sense of social responsibility when we acquired the land, and so we undertook a huge project in order to rebuild these two 100-year-old parks”

Paula Marques, Unicer representative and GM of Vidago



GOING TO THE SOURCE

Two mineral spa and leisure developments are making waves in Portugal – all thanks to investment from the country's largest brewer. Julie Cramer finds out more

As one of Portugal's biggest beverage companies, known for its Super Bock beer, Unicer might seem an unlikely business to be operating two leisure, spa and nature parks in the country's lesser developed northern region. Yet its opulently-restored Vidago Palace hotel, spa and park and eco-centred Pedras Salgadas nature park and thermal spa have been putting this corner of Portugal firmly on the tourist map since opening in 2010 and 2013 respectively.

Despite this, the two sites – designed by several acclaimed Portuguese architects – are still, according to Unicer, just a niche part of its €500m (US\$622m, £396m) a year global drinks business (see p48).

So just how did the investments come about and why did the company feel it would be a good move?

Social responsibility

The development story of the parks, located 13km apart around two spa towns of the same name (Vidago and Pedras Salgadas), began when Unicer expanded into the bottled mineral water sector.

In 2001 it purchased drinks company Vidago Melgaço e Pedras Salgadas (VMPS) and automatically inherited 20 hectares (49 acres) containing two nature parks, which were the original source of the naturally carbonated mineral water.

Paula Marques, Unicer representative and GM of Vidago, says: “With the acquisition of VMPS, Unicer achieved one of its strategic

goals – to become the main Portuguese beverage company, with its core business as a brewery and in bottled water – and to extend its activity to tourism.”

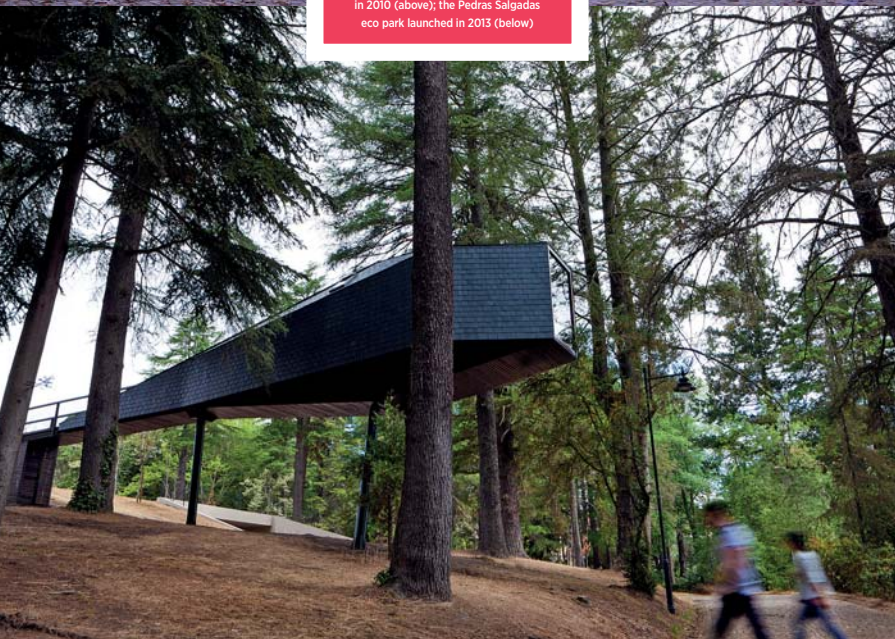
“We felt a great sense of social responsibility when we acquired the land, and so we undertook a huge project in order to rebuild these two 100-year-old parks. Unicer is well known as a company which cares about the preservation of national patrimony and identity.”

Renovation works

The Vidago Palace Hotel, first built for royalty in 1910, reopened during its centenary anniversary year in 2010, with a rich and stylish new look created by interior architects José Pedro Vieira and Diogo Rosa Lã. In contrast to the ornate, ▶



The opulent Vidago Palace hotel reopened in 2010 (above); the Pedras Salgadas eco park launched in 2013 (below)



spa business uniting the world of wellness

“We decided to create two unique projects, allowing us to attract different kinds of tourists to our region”

► marbled and very colourful interiors of the 70-bed hotel, the 2,500sq m (26,910sq ft) spa has been designed with the signature minimalist look of Pritzker prize-winning architect Álvaro Siza Vieira (right).

The nearby Pedras Salgadas Spa and Nature Park opened a few years later, in 2013, with a focus on the environment. Lisbon-based architect Luis Rebelo de Andrade built 13 deluxe eco houses and two striking tree houses that suspend guests in the verdant pine forest. Siza Vieira was again commissioned to work on the spa by restoring the park's art nouveau thermal baths. Marques says: “We've combined the preservation of the natural environment and renewal of the thermal park concept in Portugal with modernism and innovation.”

Unicer says total investment amounted to €70m (US\$87m, £55m) – €50m (US\$62m, £40m) for Vidago and €20m (US\$25m, £16m) for Pedras Salgadas. “One of our main goals was to renew the thermal tourism concept,” says Marques. “[But] as the two projects were so geographically close, it didn't make sense to have the same offer. So we decided to create two unique projects, allowing us to attract different kinds of tourists to our region.”

It seems the tactic is paying off. Pedras Salgadas has captured the imagination of Iberian tourists, with 84 per cent of its guests being Portuguese, and 10 per cent coming from Spain. The Pedras Salgadas brand is the most famous mineral water drink in Portugal, which has no doubt helped attract locals. Vidago, on the other hand, appeals to a wider spread of nationalities: 65 per cent of customers are Portuguese; 12 per cent Spanish; and 11 per cent from Europe.



ÁLVARO SIZA VIEIRA

Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira is known for his minimalist style and his projects range from swimming pools to mass housing developments, offices, restaurants, art galleries and retail.

Some of his best known works are located in his home town of Porto including the Boa Nova Tea House (1963), the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto (1993) and the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art (1997).

He's won numerous awards over his 60-year career, including the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1992.

The jury citation for the position of Pritzker laureate said his work was “a joy to the senses and uplifts the spirit. Each line and curve is placed with skill and sureness... Like the early modernists, his shapes, moulded by light, have a deceptive simplicity about them; they are honest... To paraphrase Siza's own words, his is a response to a problem, a situation in transformation, in which he participates.”

Drawn to the waters

Of course, the USP that ties both sites together is the healthy mineral water, known for its particularly high iron content and for aiding the digestive system, liver detoxification and overall cleansing. Spa manager for both sites, Vera Gonçalves, says: “The Vidago

waters are believed to be therapeutic and curative, with only 0.5 per cent of waters in the world sharing the same mineral properties. These waters are collected directly from deep underground granite rock springs and are now used in several of our exclusive signature treatments.”

In stark contrast to the main building, with its belle époque style, the spa at Vidago Palace Hotel is designed as a modern, Zen-inspired space that Gonçalves says “exudes tranquility and promotes an immediate sensation of wellbeing”.

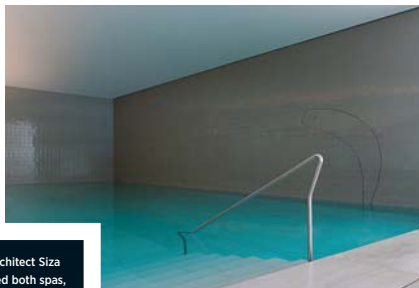
Spa facilities at Vidago include 17 treatment rooms (including five for water therapies and two suites); a doctor's room; a beauty room; two relaxation areas; a hydro pool, plus an indoor and outdoor pool; and a gym with Matrix equipment. ►

UNICER

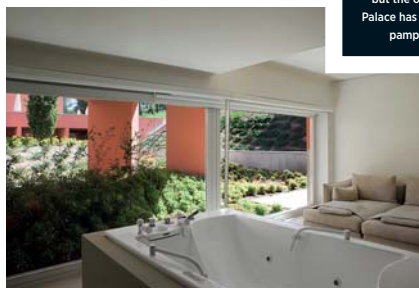
► Unicer is one of Portugal's largest beverage companies, with multiple brands and 13 production centres around the country. Focused mainly on

brewing and bottled water, the business also comprises soft drinks, wine, malt production and sales, and latterly, tourism assets
 • Fifty-six per cent of Unicer is owned by Portuguese shareholders

– Viacer Group (BPI, Arsopi and Violas) – and 44 per cent is owned by the Carlsberg Group
 • The company has a strong international presence, with brands now in 50 countries



Minimalist architect Siza Vieira designed both spas, but the one at Vidago Palace has more of a soft, pampering feel



The contemporary spa stands out against the restored belle époque-style hotel



spa business uniting the world of wellness

MINERAL SPA

The USP that ties both sites together is the therapeutic water. At the eco park, many guests relax in the warm pool after a day of outdoor activities

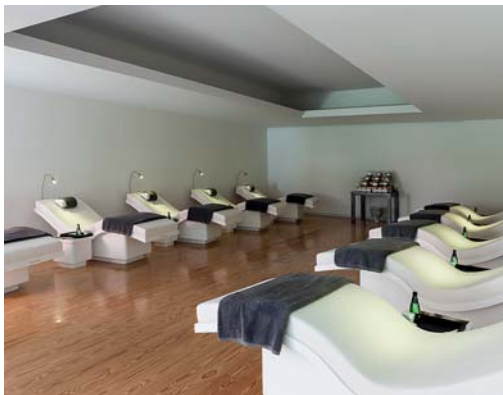


The renovated thermal baths offer a mix of original art nouveau details (above) and modern design (below)



SPA CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

Helen Merchant, a spa consultant based in the UK, oversaw the final phase of development and pre-opening of the Vidago spa. Although she's been involved in a number of international projects, the Portuguese spa – and working with Siza Vieira – is a highlight. She says: "Vidago Palace is a truly unique property. Its modern, minimalist spa sits in complete contrast to the historic palace yet blends in beautifully... In homage to the location's natural springs, the spa's therapeutic water treatments are a signature offer."



- Products are supplied by Clarins, with Aromatherapy Associates used for more holistic treatments, says Gonçalves.

While the emphasis at Vidago is on relaxation and pampering, the focus at Pedras Salgadas is very much on being outdoors in nature. There are many cycling, walking and nature trails and the thermal waters are there to revive guests as a complement to the physical activity.

The renovated thermal baths are much starker and pared down. Architectural details such as the art nouveau doors and original signage remain intact, while modern light wells added by Siza Vieira ensure healthy amounts of light are projected down into the spa spaces.

The spa has 14 treatment rooms (including five for hydrotherapy). Other facilities include a heated indoor pool, an outdoor pool, sauna, hammam and two relaxation areas. Spa products at the thermal baths are supplied by La Phyto.

FACTS & FIGURES

VIDAGO PALACE HOTEL

Room rate: €200 for two people (B&B)

Annual occupancy: 40 per cent

Type of guest: 70 per cent

leisure, 30 per cent MICE

PEDRAS SALGADAS SPA AND NATURE PARK

Room rate: €200 for four guests (B&B)

Annual occupancy: 50 per cent

Type of guest: 98 per cent

leisure, 2 per cent MICE



Water wellness

Gonçaves says that extensive wellbeing programmes (with themes such as Purifying, In Balance and Keep Moving) are offered at both spas, with seven- or 14-day packages both being popular. Programme prices start from around €2,600 (US\$3,240, £2,060).

A typical package would include medical and nutritional consultations, a biometric evaluation, personalised spa cuisine, facials and massages, water treatments and traditional therapies like shiatsu, as well as fitness activities such as PT sessions, tai chi, yoga and walking.

Gonçaves adds: "Our guests also like to experience our waters even when they have shorter stays with us and the most popular is the Vichy scrub [treatment] and the personalised relaxing massage made with the best olive oil of the region."

Currently both spas average the same amount of treatments per month, with 82 treatments being delivered at each site as of October 2014. At Vidago, 20 per cent of

Spa capture rates are 20 and 25 per cent says spa manager Gonçalves. She's confident these will increase as the reputation of the resorts grows

hotel guests have spa treatments, but the capture rate at Pedras Salgadas is slightly higher at 25 per cent.

Combined overall revenue for the Vidago and Pedras Salgadas spas was €250,000 (US\$311,060, £197,860) in 2013, with expectations for 2014 around €325,000 (US\$404,370, £257,220).

The two parks may have started out as an incidental business for Unicer, but in a world where wellness tourism is growing year on year, they're holding their own. The mix of history, luxury, nature, therapeutic waters and eco-consciousness has created a twin centre that's sure to attract an increasingly international and affluent group of health tourists.

As Gonçalves concludes: "We want to present to the world the quality and effects of our waters. Our goal is to help the maximum number of people achieve a healthy lifestyle without using medication – for them to see an immediate improvement in their health with the help of nature... and our reputation is growing." ●



Julie Cramer is a health, hospitality and travel journalist and a former online news editor for the BBC
Email: juliecramer@me.com



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RETREAT

NAKED AMBITION

As Naked Retreats embarks on expansion beyond its flagship resort, Neena Dhillon meets the husband-and-wife team who are successfully cultivating an award-winning, sustainable hospitality brand in China

■ The first two Naked Retreats are set in the stunning foothills of the Moganshan mountains, 220km west of Shanghai

spa business uniting the world of wellness



The concept for Naked Retreats did not emerge from a carefully constructed master plan. Instead the idea was deeply personal. When South African entrepreneur Grant Horsfield arrived in Shanghai over 10 years ago, he found himself yearning for the open spaces of home. Having recently met Hong Kong-born architect Delphine Yip, his wife-to-be, he knew he wanted to remain in China. But to survive the hustle and bustle of his adopted city, he realised he would have to find his own rural retreat. "Cape Town offers people an incredible lifestyle - it's easy to find fresh air, simple luxuries and peace," says Horsfield. "While Shanghai was extraordinary, there was nowhere for a country boy like me to escape to on the weekend. So we started to actively look for a location, a place of genuine quiet."

The Horsfields stumbled upon the secluded farming village of Sanjiuwu while exploring Moganshan, a bamboo and pine-clad mountain 220km west of Shanghai, which once served as a haven for the city's foreign elite until communism set in. Home to a small, ageing community, with no throughway, Sanjiuwu seemed ideally suited to their idea of a rural refuge.

Naked is born

Although they had no previous hospitality experience, the couple committed to raising their own finances for a 'back to basics' guesthouse and struck up a relationship with the local Deqing government. Eventually acquiring and renovating eight farmhouses, they opened Naked Home Village in 2007 with 21 rustic rooms. Here was the chance to test out their theory that the stress, noise and pollution of city life was creating a need

■ Hong Kong-born architect Delphine Yip and South African entrepreneur Grant Horsfield are behind the retreat

for accessible retreats that would allow people to return to nature and regain balance. They chose the name 'naked' because it encapsulated their philosophy of temporary retreat from an urban lifestyle to a more elemental rhythm.

Foreigners reacted well to the simple offering but the Chinese weren't so positive. "Our Chinese guests weren't as excited by our rustic style," confirms Delphine Yip-Horsfield. "Since their grandparents and parents had grown up in village settings, the farmhouses weren't considered ideal holiday destinations. They longed for more luxury amenities. They wanted fewer stairs to climb in their high heels, air-conditioned rooms, more activities including a spa, and F&B choices." ▶



“

There was little doubt that they would need to start catering for the affluent Chinese living in and around Shanghai if their business was to build critical mass

”

► For the Horsfields, there was little doubt they would need to start catering for the affluent Chinese living in and around Shanghai if their business was to build critical mass. With this in mind, they raised CNY300m (US\$48.8m, €39.1m, £31m) to fund a larger resort in the same valley. Occupying 60 acres (24 hectares), Naked Stables opened in 2011 with 121 bedrooms, three restaurants, a clubhouse, a conference centre, horse stables and an array of recreational facilities – including the Naked Leaf Spa.

“Our relationships with the local government body and village council proved crucial,” observes Horsfield. “Every step you take in developing and constructing a project like this requires local government approval so the fact we had already nurtured ties with villagers and officials made a big difference.

■ A number of healthy activities are provided for Chinese consumers who consider choice a luxury

“Village people are understandably nervous about outsiders so with our first project, we had to work hard to gain their trust. We provided employment, looked after their families and improved the environment. When we chose the land for Naked Stables, the local government couldn’t understand why we wanted to build somewhere so steep, with no water, and no through road. But that’s exactly how we preserve the integrity of our locations.”

In pursuit of wellness

The protected reserve of the Moganshan foothill ideally serves the Naked way of life, where a combination of healthy activities – hiking, biking, yoga, swimming,





horse riding, tea picking, archery, fishing, pottery, weaving – fresh food, outdoor living and therapy is promoted. Though relatively new in China, the popularity of Naked Stables underlines that local consumers are becoming interested in restorative escapes – occupancy in 2014 stood at just over 70 per cent and almost 90 per cent of customers are Chinese. Indeed the Horsfields were inspired by another wellness destination – Thailand's Chiva-Som. "If you have a luxury resort in China, you absolutely need a spa just as you do a good restaurant," Horsfield points out. "But Naked is about achieving inner balance so the green location, design, cuisine, activities and spa all support that ambition."

Comprising 14 treatment rooms – six in the main spa building and eight individual huts – Naked Leaf Spa is found in a pine forest glade. "In China, a spa treatment

■ The eco rooms have an African feel (left); the Naked Leaf Spa offers a number of innovative therapies (right)

will satisfy four of the five senses," says Yip-Horsfield. "What's different about our spa is the way it caters for the sense of sound – how guests are surrounded by the relaxing sounds of the forest. That's not always easy to find in China, where hotel spas are often tucked away in basements."

Accordingly, the spa rituals have been inspired by sound – thought to harmonise energy fields in Chinese tradition. The 150-minute, CNY1,280 (US\$208, €167, £132) Wind Detoxifying Ritual, for example, takes place in one of the huts, affording a peaceful outdoor setting and comprises a coconut charcoal body scrub, Oriental tui na & gua sha massage, plus signature Naked Leaf facial, to combat tiredness.

Attracting Chinese consumers

Beyond the signature therapies, the treatment menu is comprehensive, incorporating TCM, Asian and European therapies, massages – CNY680 (US\$111, €89, £79) for 60 minutes – facials, body and beauty treatments. Aromatherapy Associates and Thailand-based I plus Q are the two spa product lines used.

Although the Naked Leaf Spa does not cater to a specific profile, it's clear the 35-plus spa services are designed to appeal to potential repeat clientele and those who like to sample new things. As with other hoteliers in China, the Naked team recognises that Chinese consumers are switched on by new experiences and by trying as many activities as they can afford. Seasonal promotions therefore offer price discounts in combination with other activities such as horse riding, or provide ▶





■ During development, Naked worked closely with the local government – a move which proved crucial

- a selected additional complimentary treatment when one treatment is booked.

"It's important that we present something new and interesting besides standard treatments," Yip-Horsfield comments. "When our guests go back home, they have a story to tell to friends and relatives. Our spa director, Lisa Lam from Vietnam, puts together a new treatment every season, from a black sesame scrub for the winter to green tea therapy in the spring. She has also recently introduced one of the first detox programmes in China, ranging from three to five days, with complete healthy meal plans, exercise routines and spa therapies."

Sustainability, another cornerstone of the Naked philosophy, has been applied to ground-up construction of the resort, including the spa. Yip-Horsfield, who led the design, employed cutting-edge techniques to realise their goal that Naked Stables qualify as China's first LEED Platinum Certified resort. Indeed, it's already been recognised as Asia's Leading Green Resort at the 2012 World Travel Awards.

Stabilised, insulated, rammed earth walls (SIRE), used for the main spa



building and one-bedroom Earth Huts, have allowed local earth from the site to be recycled. Reclaimed wood features strongly in the spa huts while energy-saving technologies across the resort include heat recovery units, a closed loop water system, bamboo pellet boilers for heating and carbonised bamboo flooring.

Using SIP (structurally insulated panels), the resort's Tree Top Villas have been designed as prefab kit houses made of recycled plywood and Styrofoam. Complementing the local vernacular building styles, interiors draw on raw materials designed with an African lodge aesthetic, in a nod to Horsfield's roots. ►

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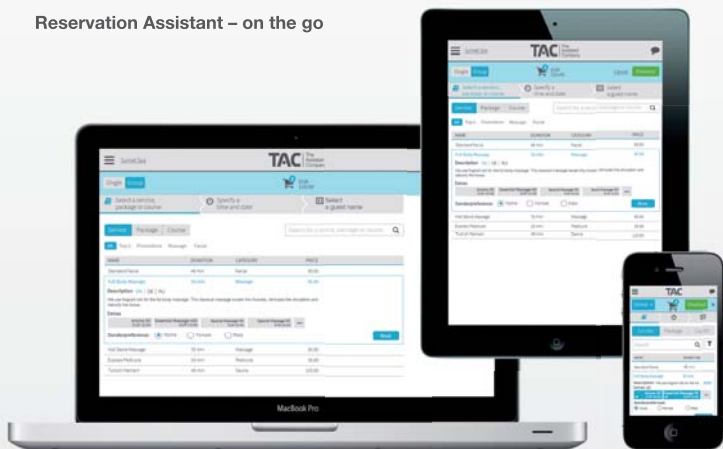
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Properties need to be less than 2.5 hours from a major city but remain private and remote. We're working with local governments to secure land in areas protected from vast development

”

► Brand expansion

Around 50 per cent of the accommodation units onsite are privately owned, which helped the Horsfields to recoup their initial capital and has contributed to year-round occupancy. While weekends at the retreat are pitched at the leisure market, the Naked team has also developed a sizeable corporate business intake during the week, accounting for 30 per cent of monthly revenue. Groups typically work in the Chinese branches of multinationals, spanning industries from fashion to automobiles, healthcare to sports.

To date, marketing efforts have focused solely on Shanghai. Rates vary, but a recent two-night promotion offered an Earth Hut from CNY1,688-CNY2,888+ (US\$274-US\$470, €220-€376, £174-£298) per person (minimum two persons). Still, Horsfield estimates the company turns away up four enquiries per room booked in high season. With this in mind, the original Naked Home Village (now closed) is being expanded and transformed into Naked Castle, due to open later this year, with 80 rooms and its own spa. Having discovered the ruins of a castle on-site, Naked will tap into the glamour of 1920s Shanghai to revive the structure, in addition to self-contained villas. “We think the Chinese will be attracted to this newer product,” Horsfield says. “It should appeal to those who like to share their experiences with different groups of family and friends each time.”

Naked's projects have attracted the attention of government bodies and developers across eastern China but



■ Four more Naked sites are being developed and all will feature a signature Naked Leaf Spa component

Horsfield is proceeding cautiously, only giving the green light to partnerships that offer natural locations away from existing industry or tourist attractions. “Site selection plus orientation is important,” he confirms. “Our properties need to be less than 2.5 hours from a major city for weekend accessibility but remain remote and private. We're working with local governments to secure land in areas protected from vast development.”

Naked Water, set to launch in the historic Jiangsu Province in 2016, is being developed in collaboration with the Suzhou Haojing Investment and Development Company. Meanwhile, local partners in Zhejiang Province have been secured for Naked Spring – a lakeside

property set on 230 acres (93 hectares) in Shaoxing – and Naked Hill, a 300-acre (121-hectare) country retreat in Yiwu. Both are scheduled to debut in 2017. All the retreats will be built and run by Naked's 60-strong operational team in Shanghai, including 16 architects and designers, and all will have a Naked Leaf Spa component.

“Naked aims to be a leading brand for sustainable luxury hotels in China,” concludes Yip-Horsfield. “We want to bring pioneering techniques to the design, construction and operational aspects of the country's hospitality industry.” ●



Neena Dhillon writes about spa, hotel and travel trends around the world
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Ask an expert

AGEING CONSUMERS

What do spas need to change as the majority of their customers reach retirement and older age? Katie Barnes investigates

The sheer number of baby boomers makes them one of the most influential generations in the world. Born between 1946 and 1964, these 51- to 69-year-olds represent some 450 million people worldwide according to the AgeLab research organisation at MIT university, USA. They've shaped the world as we know it today and they're growing faster than any other age group as a result of longer life expectancy and declining fertility rates.

They're also the main market for spas. In the latest *State of the Spa Travel Report* by Spafinder Wellness 365, 63 per cent of travel agents in North America report that 46-65 year olds were the age group most likely to book spa travel in 2013.

But as people age, their biological, psychological, social and economic characteristics, needs and expectations change. "Global consumer product and service companies that start now to assess, adjust and update their product offerings to best serve this evolving and increasingly influential 50+ market will be far more likely to grow their consumer base and to reap great rewards," according to a Deloitte study *Wealth with Wisdom*. The report suggests a framework for understanding the 50-plus consumer segment and we outline the findings on page 72. Euromonitor's *Later Lifers* briefing, which gives a breakdown of this demographic globally makes for compelling reading too.



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/GOODLIZ

What if you can't afford high-end facilities? Is there a market for less expensive active adult communities?

The question is: are spas really ready for this demographic shift? How can they adapt their design, treatments and service style to make them age-friendly? Given that boomers reject the idea that they're 'old', how can changes be made without singling them out or taking away from a luxury environment?

Although it may seem like a while off yet, especially for the younger boomers, there will inevitably be an increasing demand for wellness-focused retirement communities and facilities. Serenbe, the sustainable, progressive community in Atlanta, USA, is developing a healthy-living hamlet with special assisted-living services for older

adults (see p68). Meanwhile, in the UK, Richmond Villages has seven wellness-focused retirement homes (see p66).

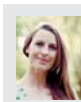
But what will happen to those who can't afford high-end facilities? Is there room in the market for more affordable, active adult communities? Or could spas team up with retirement homes? And if so, what do they need to do to position themselves as being age-friendly? We ask the experts.

■ Read the Deloitte report:

<http://lei.sr?a=poe7T>

■ More about *Later Lifers*:

<http://lei.sr?a=G3PzV>



Katie Barnes is the managing editor of *Spa Business* magazine
Email: katiebarnes@spabusiness.com
Twitter: [SpaBusinessKB](https://twitter.com/SpaBusinessKB)

In Asia, most spa development is about ultra-design: facilities are modern, built using the latest materials and imagined by hip designers for trendy, rich millennials. But this consumer is a rare breed. On the other hand, the older population is the fastest growing, wealthiest and least contested consumer sector. Yet they're just simply not being properly addressed and this is where there's a huge opportunity for businesses, including spas.

We help companies understand the needs of older consumers and how to satisfy their demands via workshops and our age-friendly AF Audit™ tool.

At 50, the body begins to creak and groan. Muscle mass, strength and flexibility start to deteriorate. Cognitive impairment starts as early as 45 years and around the same time people begin to need reading glasses. Nearly half of those aged 65 and over struggle to take the lid or caps off bottles and a third have some form of hearing loss.

The AF Audit covers 25 effects of ageing including sensory, cognitive and physical issues. We measure these across an entire customer journey – there are 350 steps in our hotel audit covering communications, online, the property and support services.

We've evaluated a lot of spas in hotels and generally they're not age-friendly because they just haven't given thought to it. You can get surfaces that are non-slip, but they also need to look as if they're not slippery because cognitively people will change the way they walk if they sense a change in the floor – which means there's still the same level of potential for a fall.

The older population is the fastest growing, wealthiest and least contested consumer sector says Walker



Kim Walker,

Founder & CEO, Silver Group, Asia



I can envisage a time when there will be legalised impositions for the hospitality industry to make changes



When you enter a spa you're bombarded with instructions that most people would struggle to remember, let alone older adults who may have cognitive issues. Staff are usually soft-spoken or have a foreign accent, making it harder for an older person to hear or to understand them.

It will be up to an individual spa to judge how far to go. It's probably too much to design everything for people of extreme ages. Although I can envisage a time when, just as with disability laws, there will be legalised impositions for the hospitality industry to make changes – especially as the demographic grows.

You certainly don't want turn a hospitality business into a hospital. Nobody wants assisted rails everywhere, least of all older adults because they don't want to be stigmatised or grouped together in one homogenous '50-plus' age bracket. The key is to make the experience user-friendly for all ages.

Take Apple as an example. Fifty per cent of Apple products are sold to people over the age of 50 (it's a common myth that ageing-consumers aren't tech-savvy). Its advertising, website, retail

environment and product interface is simplistic which makes it easy for young and old people to use. It doesn't actively exclude the older person.

The lighting, phone and TV systems in hotels are a minefield. I can't even work out how to turn the coffee machine on! And if I had a dollar for every time an older person washed their hair with body soap I'd be a rich man... but who takes their glasses into the shower? The point is, if you made these things age-friendly everyone would benefit.

The other absolutely critical thing is staff training. Employees need to be sensitive to older people's needs. What chair would be best for them to get in and out of? They have weaker bladders, so can you factor short breaks into a multi-hour treatment? At the end of the day, design and infrastructure changes will be useless if you can't anticipate a customer's needs.

Launched in 2009, Silver Group works with a number of leading product and service companies in Asia including Accor, GSK and Swiss Re. Details: <http://silvergroup.asia>



It's a common myth that people over the age of 50 aren't tech-savvy

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American Leisure has been operating recreational amenities and spas for more than 30 years and we're seeing the growth of the ageing population first hand. We manage close to 80 locations in the US and I'd say that 40 per cent of our demographic falls in the 50-plus category. We also oversee an active adult community, Four Seasons at Great Notch in New Jersey, for people aged 55 and above.

These are people who want to age in a healthy way and they're clamouring for information on how to do this. I believe the spa industry has the wherewithal to deliver that information and to offer the appropriate services. It's a great teaching space and it's a non-threatening environment (unlike a doctor's office).

However, this age group doesn't want to be cast as 'senior citizens'. Our menu, called 'Your Well-being™', weaves in age-friendly services, but they're not exclusive to older adults: they're intergenerational. Our hot sand therapy treatment at the new Island Spa Catalina in Los Angeles (see p22), for example, addresses joint pain for



Wendy Bosalavage

President, American Leisure, USA

older people as well as deep relaxation for anyone else. We also developed a Cat Nap treatment which everyone can enjoy, but we know full well that it will benefit older people who have different sleeping patterns.

We think water-based activities will become more popular because they have less impact on the joints. Other things spas might want to pick up on are balance, which is very important as you age and become prone to falls; and skincare, not just anti-ageing/aesthetics, but the health of skin which thins as you get older.

Going forward spas will need to think about accessibility and age-friendly design. Socioeconomics comes into play too – what happens when people don't have deep pockets? Not-for-profit organisations such as the YMCA and JCC have the capability to reach out to the

masses and have historically served older populations, so they could expand their scope of services [to include treatments].

There's also a big opportunity for affordable age-friendly spas, and proven franchise models such as Massage Envy would have success. They could offer condition-specific therapies for active adults and interweave them with education about the importance of spa services in whole body wellness. Our industry is in the perfect position to help older adults understand the ageing process and to point out the services spas offer that can make them feel better.

American Leisure designs, brands and operates spas, residential lifestyle, sport and recreational facilities across the USA. Details: www.americanleisure.com



Our industry is in the perfect position to help older adults understand the ageing process and to point out the services spas offer that can make them feel better



Do I think there's a rising need for wellness-focused facilities that cater to older adults? Yes – because people are living longer and want activities and facilities that will help them achieve a happier, longer life. As well as helping them lead healthier lifestyles, such facilities also bring generations together and provide them with a chance for socialising (which is also important for wellbeing).

We've seen the benefits of age-friendly facilities first hand at Richmond Letcombe Regis (see SB10/2 p72). Our site launched in 2010 with a £1.75m (US\$2.74m, €2.21m) spa which is used by 60 per cent of residents who are aged 75-80 on average.

Our spa was designed by Sparcstudio with older people in mind so they feel comfortable and don't feel conscious about their age or disabilities. It makes a big difference. For example, having specialised, yet less complicated gym equipment, means more people are likely to use it.



Sharon Hunt

Spa manager, Richmond Letcombe Regis, UK

An age-friendly design also ensures safety and one of the most crucial elements is having hand rails in the shower cubicles. Other not-so-obvious features include raised seats which are easier to get in and out of and a lower reception desk for people in wheelchairs.

To ensure treatments are age-friendly, we offer a wide range to suit all needs. Massages, facials, reflexology and even waxing all help with general wellbeing and to boost the feel-good factor. In addition, we offer physiotherapy, chiropractic and chiropody services.

It's the same with our fitness classes where we offer easy, intermediate and hard sessions. Many of them involve stability

and core balance exercises to help reduce the risk of falls. Most importantly, we're not afraid to offer more modern classes such as zumba, t'ai chi and 'posture perfect' – just because our residents are old, doesn't mean they don't want new things.

With a one-bed, independent-living apartment starting at £250,000 (US\$392,020, €315,170), Richmond prices will naturally be out of reach to some people. But we also offer spa memberships which cost £65 (US\$102, €82) a month.

Richmond Letcombe Regis is one of seven high-end retirement villages in the UK owned by healthcare specialists Bupa. Details: www.richmond-villages.com



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Although we'll offer living sections specifically for older adults, our overall aim is to develop a community where all generations can interact and live well together in a non-segregated environment



There's definitely a rising need for wellness-focused facilities that cater to older adults. Why? Because countries can't afford for baby boomers to age in the same way that our parents' generation aged – treating sick people rather than proactively preventing illness. Plus there are not enough caregivers to take care of them.

We started developing Serenbe in 2004. It's a sustainable, progressive community that's full of fresh food, clean air and is focused on wellbeing. We have 400 residents from all walks of life – families, couples, single working professionals and older adults. Around 45 per cent of our residents are aged 50 and above.

Studies reveal that baby boomers want to age in multi-generational communities. So we're developing our new Mado Hamlet with clusters, neighbourhood pockets of small cottages that will have common use of a larger house for those times when residents want to entertain groups when family and friends are visiting.

Although we'll offer living sections specifically for older adults, such as homes with live-in nurses, our overall



Steve Nygren

Founder, Serenbe, Atlanta, USA

aim is to develop a community where all generations can interact and live well together in a non-segregated environment. I hope we can eventually eliminate the term 'retirement communities'.

In practice this means that arts, sports, cultural and educational services that may be enjoyed primarily by older adults, and be more helpful for mindful senior living, will still be available to people of all ages.

Similarly, our goal at the new destination spa and wellness centre we're developing is not to make services age-specific but to introduce elements that appeal to everyone who wants to live well. Therapies will incorporate eastern and wellness techniques and there will also be a multi-purpose health centre.

Mado Hamlet will have a particular focus on health and wellness and it will take advantage of the many electronic

devices – from technology in the home to wearables that monitor biometrics – that allow family and healthcare workers to track people's health, so that the individual can stay in their home and age in situ.

The projected starting price for a home at Mado Hamlet is US\$350,000. In comparison, the average price of a new home in the US is US\$401,100. As we continue to develop, there will be models that can be scaled at various entry points. Everything does not have to be at this price point, nor should we shy away from testing ideas for the higher price points.

Construction of Mado Hamlet is due to start in early 2015 and the aim is to complete 60 homes by the end of the year. More than US\$500m (€405m, £319m) is being invested in the development. Details: www.serenbe.com



The next phase of development at Serenbe will include a health and wellness focused hamlet

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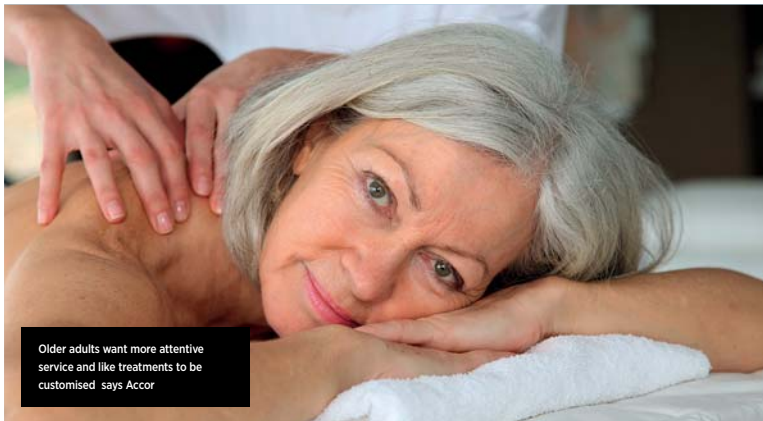
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Older adults want more attentive service and like treatments to be customised, says Accor



As part of our policy of diversity and inclusion, Accor employs many mature and older staff and we've found that older guests feel more comfortable around these more experienced employees



Over 50 per cent of Asia's high net worth individuals are above 56 years old, according to the 2014 *Asia Pacific Wealth*

Report by Capgemini and RBC Wealth Management. It's clearly an important demographic in the tourism industry.

Yet today's mature travellers defy the stereotypes that some people ascribe to them. They're younger in spirit, more technologically-minded and more active than many generations before them. How do we attract them without advertising the fact that we're age-friendly? We do this by appealing to things that mature travellers find important: the reassurance and trust of a global brand; value-for-money; and especially conscientious staff who genuinely care about their experience.

We've introduced several programmes to ensure our staff are trained to be more attentive to mature guests, who prefer closer interaction and appreciate it when employees spend more time with them and ask questions to get to know their specific needs better. In the spa, this also means we ensure staff give full instructions on what will happen during a treatment so there's no confusion or uncertainty and that



Graham Wilson

Chief marketing & distribution officer,
Accor Asia Pacific

adequate after-treatment advice is given. As part of our policy of diversity and inclusion, Accor employs many mature and older staff and we've found that older guests feel more comfortable around these more experienced employees.

This mature demographic is one that values wellness. People not only want to feel healthier, but also want to look younger and so we're increasingly offering experiences to meet these demands at our hotels and resorts. We've implemented cosmedi treatments, including non-invasive face lifts, at the *Vietura Spa* at *Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua*; and at *Sofitel Philippines Plaza* in Manila we offer beauty staycations that include slimming treatments, skin tightening, nutritional coaching and more. We've also worked to implement healthier food choices.

The treatments and special spa packages have proven very popular with

the mature demographic looking for an all-inclusive holiday where they can relax, rejuvenate body and mind and return home looking and feeling younger. Accor has around 100 resort hotels throughout Asia and we're now looking to expand these kinds of services across the region to cater to growing demand.

Where would we draw the line in catering to older customers? I think we're open to anything that makes all of our guests feel welcome and special when they stay with us. I'm not sure there's much we'd say no to, unless it meant alienating younger guests, because obviously our hotels and spas have to cater for all ages.

Accor has more than 600 hotels in Asia under brands such as *Sofitel*, *Mercurie* and *Pullman*. It works with the *Silver Group* to ensure its properties are age-friendly. Details: www.accor.com



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spa business uniting the world of wellness

Wealth with Wisdom report

A Deloitte study on
the 50-plus market

Deloitte's 2008 report *Wealth with Wisdom: Serving the Needs of Aging Consumers*, presents a framework for thinking about the changes confronting consumers over the age of 50. It highlights issues which businesses need to understand in their product and service design and delivery. Below is an outline of points that might be of interest to spas.

Biological changes

As consumers age, biological changes occur in their mobility, flexibility, strength, vision and hearing. They won't be as stable when they walk or as flexible in the shower, two points spas should be mindful of, along with thinking about whether products/amenities are easy to grip or open. Clear font size and colour on signs, menus and marketing collateral, as well as strategically placed lighting, could help with vision challenges such as long-sightedness, colour detection and delays in eyesight adapting to the dark. Overall the senses are reduced, so how will this impact on the way older adults experience spas?

Deloitte suggests managers "walk a mile in the customer's shoes". Take a group of guests aged 50-plus through a spa and ask what's going through their minds. Better still, experience it first-hand by wearing the Third Age Suit which simulates the physical limitations of older adults. The suit, designed by researchers at Loughborough University, UK, is already used by firms such as Ford and Boeing. The report states: "Unless managers immerse themselves in the world of ageing consumers, observing and conversing with them, they are unlikely to understand the customers and recognise their true needs. The same is true of employees and customer service representatives."

Psychological changes

Deloitte identifies memory and information processing as two of the main cognitive functions that deteriorate with age. Mood, emotion and attitude formation also change.

In terms of information processing, older adults aren't as able to block out noise or irrelevant stimuli – whether aural, visual, tactile or language-related. While they still have the ability to learn new information, they process details more slowly. Spas wanting to attract this market should eliminate distracting stimuli and make messages clear and easy to remember, says Deloitte. Convoluted treatment descriptions and packages could put this market off, as could the way spas orientate customers – sometimes bombarding them with instructions in a rushed manner.

It also suggests that businesses sensitise and train staff to the needs of older adults.

Economic changes

"The accumulated wealth of the age 50-plus consumers in the United States gives them more spending power than any other age group", says the Deloitte report. And numbers are expected to grow exponentially.

Social changes

The Deloitte report indicates that as people mature, their networks – familial, professional and social – become increasingly complex. It suggests that businesses "provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their family and friends in multiple contexts," and highlights Disney as a best practice example.

It underlines the importance of personal relevance. People aged 50-plus are often bundled together in one group even though their socioeconomic status, cultural and religious outlooks and where they live all impact on how they pick services and products to meet their many differing needs. "Influencing these consumers with the right message depends on 'speaking their language' to communicate in a personally relevant way," says the report. This is perhaps the biggest challenge spas will face given the many variables.

Deloitte advises companies to tap into active or older adult social networks to uncover consumption patterns. Ask 'what experiences and cultural icons do these customers value, and how will these shape their preferences?' Observe and interview prospective and current customers in that age bracket to better understand their needs and wants. ●

PHOTO: LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY, UK



The report suggests managers "walk a mile in the customer's shoes" by wearing an age simulation suit



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RIPPLE EFFECT

Spa revenues in US hotels are healthy and wellness elements are now being incorporated into other departments, according to PKF's latest *Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry* study. Andrea Foster outlines the key statistics



The research shows that spa profits and capture rates are increasing

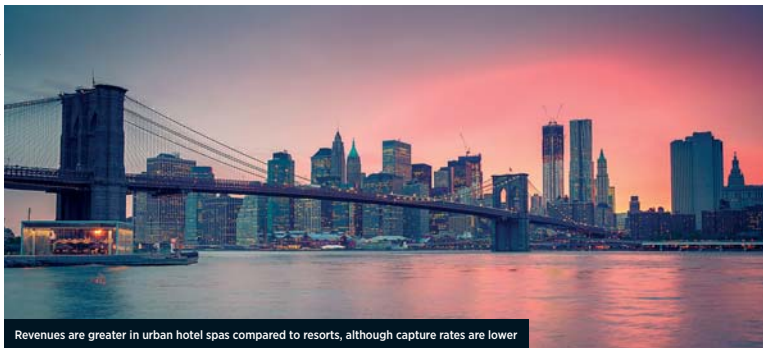
The US lodging industry has climbed out of the economic downturn as demand for hotel rooms reaches record levels for the fourth consecutive year. After room revenue, spa and wellness were standout performers in revenue increase according to the 2014 edition of PKF's *Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry*, which was revealed in October and based on the previous year's numbers.

While room revenues grew by 5.9 per cent in 2013, spa revenues in US hotels increased by 4.6 per cent. In comparison, the combined revenues from other departments such as food and beverage and retail, rose by 4.4 per cent on average.

Hotels, after recouping occupancy and now capturing higher rates, are slowly seeing the return of guest spending. In addition, PKF has identified a wellness ripple effect too. Both spa and wellness are becoming more prevalent in today's society and hotels are starting to take

notice of this. Fuelling the growth of the interest in spas is a combination of an improved economy and a shift in perception – previously spas were seen as an exclusive, luxury experience, but now they're increasingly viewed as having wellness-orientated offerings. Spa, at its root, is about health and wellbeing.

As trends in society are shifting to healthier, more active lifestyles, hotels are incorporating aspects of spa and wellness into other areas of the hotel. Speciality spa menus are being introduced in restaurants/bars; meeting rooms and guestrooms are getting healthier – the Stay Well® rooms by Delos Living (see SB14/1 p28) are a prime example; and there's a rise in fitness programmes such as hotel bike shares. Spa and wellness is growing outside the spa department and to facilitate healthier lifestyles and meet the needs of guests, hotels are seeing a positive impact when integrating spa and wellness into their entire operation.



Revenues are greater in urban hotel spas compared to resorts, although capture rates are lower



Aspects of spa and wellness are being incorporated into other areas of the hotel creating a ripple effect

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/GOODLIZ

“ Both urban and resort hotel spas achieved a greater growth in revenues compared to their change in operating expenses, showing that these departments are becoming more efficient in their operations ”

Rising spa revenues

The *Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry* survey shows that in 2013, both urban and resort hotel spas in the US saw revenues grow by 7.7 and 3.6 per cent respectively. On a per occupied [hotel guest] room (POR) basis, urban hotel spas saw a greater increase in total spa department revenue, driven by a combination of a rise in customers and an upturn in revenue per treatment and revenue per customer.

Revenue per treatment increased 3.2 per cent in urban hotels, while resort hotels experienced a decrease of 1.2 per cent. Revenue per customer in urban hotels went up by 1.3 per cent, compared to going down by 1.3 per cent in resorts. Yet, capture rates – calculated by dividing total occupied hotel rooms by total number of treatments from hotel guests – was much lower in urban hotel spas. On average spa capture rates sat at 7.8 per cent in 2013. Resort spa capture rate was 11 per cent and the urban spa capture rate was 4.6 per cent. With this in mind, PKF attributes a portion of the success in urban hotels to effective revenue management and selling techniques.

TABLE 1

Select Hotel Spa Revenues.
Change from 2012 to 2013

Revenue source	Change
Total department revenue	4.6%
Massage	4.9%
Skincare / body work	2.6%
Salon services	3.1%
Daily facility use	11.1%
Fitness and personal training	16.8%
Membership fees	5.5%
Retail	4.8%

Source: PKF Hospitality Research,
2014 *Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry*

Hotels are continuing to reach out to locals to boost spa revenues. By pursuing local patrons, they can decrease the volatility of spa revenues relative to occupancy patterns and shift demand to off-peak periods. Daily facility use, fitness and personal training and membership fees, typically associated with locals and non-hotel guests, grew by 4.5 per cent

combined (see Table 1). This is slightly more than the increase in total treatment revenue which grew by 4.2 per cent.

The good news is that spas are finally seeing a return to spending on retail and product merchandise in addition to treatments. Retail revenue rose at urban and resort hotel spas, by 10.4 and 3.3 per cent respectively, which is a healthy sign.

Controlling expenses

An increase in hotel spa revenues is welcome and, even better, these were passed through to the bottom line. Both urban and resort hotel spas achieved a greater growth in revenues compared to their change in operating expenses, showing that these departments are becoming more efficient in their operations.

As spas are a 'high touch' experience, labour remains the highest expense. As spa department revenues increase, it's no surprise that staff costs accumulated compared to the prior year as well. Labour expenses at all hotel spas in the US increased 2.6 per cent in total in 2013, while the percentage of total labour

Total treatment revenue grew by 4.2 per cent, slightly less than the rise in revenues from daily facility use

- expenses to total spa department revenue decreased from 60.8 per cent in 2012 to 59.6 per cent in 2013. As demand increases for hotel spas, higher staffing levels are needed to create the same personal high-quality experience. One notable change PKF saw in 2013 was a decrease in payroll related expenses for spas with less than US\$1m in revenue. It seems reasonable that this would be driven by a shift from full-time employees to part-time, on-call, and/or contract labour for which benefits are not offered. For spas with lower volume, this can be an effective cost-saving strategy.

Due to an increase in revenues and the controlling of expenses, hotel spas were able to see high percentage increases in total spa departmental income. Combined, all hotel spas averaged a 13.9 per cent growth in profits. Leading the way were urban hotel spas, which grew their bottom line by an outstanding 40.1 per cent (see Table 2), although it should be noted that as baseline numbers are not high to start with, a small rise in revenue can result in a higher percentage increase. Resort hotels achieved a smaller department profit growth of 8.4 per cent. Despite a lower overall growth in spa departmental profit, resort hotel spas saw higher profit margins than urban hotel spas, at 23.1 per cent compared to 17.7 per cent.

Unique opportunity

With rising revenues, controlled expenses and a resulting increase in profits, the hotel spa industry in the US is performing

well. As societal trends are moving towards healthier lifestyles, there's a clear opportunity for spas to offer experiences to a broad guest base. The challenge for hotel spas will be to offer unique, high-quality experiences to more customers, while continuing to control costs.

It will be important for hotel spas to offer innovative treatments as consumers are ever-more driven toward unique experiences and this is what generates posts and shares and creates online trending. This is significant because a presence on social media is no longer a competitive advantage, but a necessity – all hotels and spas must engage with their customers online to remain in the mix. At the same time though, spas will still need to maintain approachability and an essence of wellness.

Hotels can also use spa and wellness elements throughout their properties to rise above rivals and differentiate



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AMBERKARAMELIA

TABLE 2

Hotel Spa Department Profits* Change from 2012 to 2013

Type of hotel spa	Change
All hotel spas	13.9%
Urban hotels	40.1%
Resort hotels	8.4%

*Does not include undistributed or fixed charges of hotel

Source: PKF Hospitality Research,
2014 Trends* in the Hotel Spa Industry

themselves. This will drive innovative and meaningful experiences that are Facebook- and Instagram-worthy, which will, in turn help increase the awareness of these offerings organically.

Projections for economic growth in the US remain strong and record occupancy levels are expected in 2015. The future looks bright for hoteliers and hotel spas have the opportunity to capture more guests and revenue. By offering engaging experiences, combined with the shifting societal trend to healthier lifestyles, the health and wellness of the hotel spa industry looks equally as bright. ●

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry* is an annual survey of hotel spa departments in the US by PKF Consulting (PKFC). A total of 152 hotels submitted 2013 data for 20 of the most important revenue and expense categories in their spa department.

The report is intended to give hotel spa owners and operators data to benchmark their revenue and expense ratios. It should be noted that day, destination and leased spa operations were not included in the survey sample.

Jenna Finkelstein, a consultant at PKFC, contributed to this article.

To see results from the 2013 edition see *Spa Business*, issue 1 2014, p62
To purchase the full 2014 edition of *Trends* in the Hotel Spa Industry* visit www.pkfc.com/store



Andrea Foster is the national director of spa & wellness consulting for PKF Consulting USA
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"The founding of Spafinder was a milestone in the spa industry."

— The New York Times



SWITCHED ON

A survey from ISPA focuses on how US consumers, especially spa-goers, use social media. Leonor Stanton analyses the findings and gets insights from operators



Instagram is a hub for spa-goers according to the survey

Spas now represent the fifth largest leisure industry in the US with revenues in 2013 of US\$14.7bn (£12bn, £9.4bn) according to the 2014 *US Spa Industry Study* unveiled by the International Spa Association (ISPA) in October. With more than 20,000 spas attracting some 164 million visits, the opportunities this creates for social media are clearly an area of interest, particularly given that 92 per cent of the US population has interacted with at least one social media platform.

With this in mind, ISPA also released a consumer survey which takes a deeper look at social media trends and preferences. Separate to the ISPA's spa industry study, *Social Media and the Spa-Goer* looks at social media habits in US consumers as a whole, as well as highlighting spa consumer usage. Despite the prevalence of social media space, however, it found that social media sites have "so far failed to really engage the majority of consumers". We dig deeper to find out why.

Popular platforms

Spa-goers are much more likely to be active users and contributors of all social media platforms than the population in the US as a whole, the survey found.

Facebook is the platform used by most (Table 1). However, it's Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Twitter which are more likely to be used by spa-goers. (Diagram 1)

As a result, the survey suggests that, "despite the fact that Facebook and YouTube are the platforms used by the highest percentage of spa-goers (and the general population as a whole), in some circumstances it may be more beneficial to post to other sites... over half of the users of Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Twitter have visited a spa in the last 12 months, whereas the majority of Facebook and YouTube users have not. In particular,

TABLE 1

Most Popular Social Media Sites

	General Population		Frequent Social Media Users
	Ever Used	Frequently Use (at least once/week)	Spa-Goers
Facebook	82%	68%	80%
YouTube	75%	40%	55%
LinkedIn	42%	16%	30%
Twitter	41%	23%	30%
Pinterest	38%	18%	31%
Instagram	31%	18%	34%

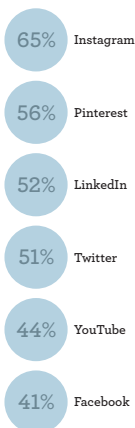
Source: *Social Media and the Spa-Goer, Consumer Snapshot - Volume V, ISPA 2014*

Men are more likely to book a spa treatment using social media websites than women

SHUTTERSTOCK/PETER IERNIK

DIAGRAM 1

% of users of each social media platform who are spa-goers



Instagram, the picture posting platform, is a hub for spa-goers, so posts to this site might be more frequently engaged with and shared". Some 65 per cent of Instagram users are spa-goers.

Driving business

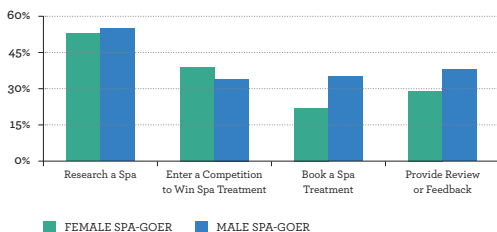
Social media is more likely to be used in pre-purchase activities – gathering and sharing information. Far fewer customers engage in post-purchase interactions, such as providing reviews. Men are more likely to book a treatment or engage in post-purchase activities than women, while women are more likely than men to enter competitions (See Graph 1).

The social media survey confirms ISPA's previous findings that discounts are important to drive revenue and promote loyalty, especially for women. "Spa treatment discounts" scored 4.16 out of 5 in terms of importance for women and 3.95 for men. In fact, three of the top four influencing factors for visiting a spa relate to promotions/discounts.

Also important are "mentions from friends/family" which are given a much higher influence than "mentions from someone you don't know" – 4.04 versus 2.99. "Photos of a spa facility" are also relatively key scoring 3.80, while "information about the benefits of a spa treatment" and "healthy living tips" score around 3.45.

GRAPH 1

Spa-Goers Using Social Media to Connect



Source: Social Media and the Spa-Goer, Consumer Snapshot – Volume V, ISPA 2014

The researchers suggest that one way spas could capture customer attention is to use social media to engage users in health and wellness discussions. To do so effectively, they should look at using the most popular health and wellness topics that people research on social media. Interestingly, the top three researched topics are the same for both spa-goers and members of the general public – namely issues associated with "fitness", "nutritional advice" and "stress".

Obstacles to overcome

But why has social media failed to engage the majority of consumers? The survey finds that this is down to the perceived reliability of information. It reports that "while 43 per cent of the general population feel social media helps them to research products and services, only 27 per cent of people trust the reviews they read."

The figures are slightly more positive for spa-goers – 61 per cent of them feel social media is a helpful tool for



“

We need to protect the privacy of our customers... On the other hand, we need to consider how we give them a chance to capture a moment photographically, so they can share it with others

”

- researching products and services and 45 per cent trust social media reviews.

Nevertheless, spa operators feel that gaining consumer confidence in social media is something the industry still needs to address. Jeremy McCarthy, Mandarin Oriental's group director of spas, says: "The trust in content will depend entirely on what the content is, by whom it's posted and the context in which it appears." This view is endorsed by Shane Bird, director of spa operations at Turning Stone Resort, US, too: "Trust needs to be earned on social media just like in real life. Good trustworthy interactions via social media will improve the public's perception [of spas]."

Another part of the survey focused on challenges surrounding consumer reviews. The researchers found that "businesses appear to already be aware that one of the best ways of securing new revenue streams is through consumer endorsements. The key question here is how to encourage consumers to make endorsements and whether incentives are necessary. This survey found that a relatively low proportion of people (three in 10 in the general population, and four in 10 spa-goers) expect to receive an incentive when making an endorsement."

Wendy Chamier owner of UK-based Sesame Internet Marketing says: "the whole incentivisation for endorsements is a very emotive area with people selling



McCarthy says spas should give a great experience to get more social media exposure

review services. This is one reason why reviews on social media can struggle with reputation." McCarthy suggests that "the best way to encourage consumers to endorse you on social media is to give them an experience that is worthy of talking about."

In addition, McCarthy believes that "the spa world needs to figure out how to incorporate technology in the spa". But there are two conflicting interests when it comes to this. "On the one hand, we need to protect the privacy of our customers and the tranquility of spas as a place to have a respite from technology," he says: "On the other hand, we need to consider how we give customers a chance to capture a moment photographically, so they can not only reminisce about their visit, but also share it with others."

The survey also found that despite the traffic on social media, adverts on the platforms aren't especially effective. "Only one in five people click on the advertisements they see on social media, although this increases to two in five spa-goers," it reports. Canyon Ranch's social media specialist, Alex Williams concurs: "[Social media] adverts are not particularly effective specifically for

Canyon Ranch since our stays are tailored to each individual need."

According to Bird: "We get more response through experiential interactions and word-of-mouth [than from adverts]. Obviously, social media is a great medium for this sort of interaction." Meanwhile, Chamier adds: "success depends on how social media is used with regards to relationship building and being 'real'. It's not just about clinically running ads." That said, both Williams and Bird believe that two in five clicks on adverts is actually considered very high.

A further challenge according to Andrew Gibson, the spa & wellness vice president for FRHI, is that, "what's best for one property does not necessarily correspond to another." Therefore, one social media strategy alone may not be sufficient in a multi-unit business.

More to come

It's clear that social media has, and continues to, revolutionise how spa operators and owners can target their marketing. According to Chekitan Dev, an associate professor of strategic marketing and brand management at Cornell University: "social media is critical to fully unleash the 3Cs of digital marketing and branding - communication, commerce and community. This is the new imperative for all businesses."

There's still some way to go, however, to fully realise the potential of marketing via social media channels. Further, in such a rapidly evolving and dynamic area, spas should also consider other uses of social media such as predicting trends and the popularity of different types of treatments or using social media to enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration between therapists and management. ●

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The ISPA Foundation's *Social Media and the Spa-Goer* survey was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers' Research to Insight (r2i) team. It was based on the response of 1,014 people from a sample of US consumers which it says were "representative of the age, income and regional distribution of the population as a whole". It did not specifically target spa-goers. To find out more about ISPA and its foundation, visit www.expertinceispa.com



Leonor Stanton is an independent hospitality and spa consultant
Email: lstanton@spabusiness.com



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SENSE OF PLACE

With a pan-Asian economy coming into play this year, a study by Stenden Rangsit University gauges industry opinion on spas across the region. Thai spa consumer trends were also observed. Research coordinator Prantik Bordoloi reports



Findings were first unveiled at the World Spa & Well-being Convention

The impact of the 2015 ASEAN Economy Community (AEC) and spa-goer habits were the focus of Thailand's 2014 *Spa Industry Study* which was revealed in September. The study by Stenden Rangsit University, in collaboration with the Thai Spa Association, was based on a survey of nearly 300 spa consumers and over 100 spa operators (see right) and provides some interesting insights.

SPAS IN THE AEC

This year, the anticipated AEC comes into effect, influencing businesses in Southeast Asia. The AEC is a single market initiative

led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which represents 10 member countries – Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Likened to the European Union, it will see the free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour and capital flow between the 10 countries.

With this in mind, the 2014 *Spa Industry Study* asked operators to compare certain aspects of the spa sector in eight ASEAN countries by ranking them on a scale of 1 to 5 (poor to excellent). It should be noted this part of the study was optional and is based on the views of 20 spa managers. The answers give some idea

TABLE 1

Industry Rating of Therapist Skills in ASEAN Countries*

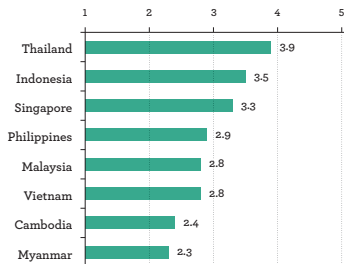
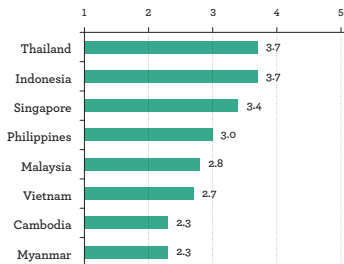


TABLE 2

Industry Rating of Therapist Availability in ASEAN Countries*



KEY: 1 POOR / 2 FAIR / 3 GOOD / 4 VERY GOOD / 5 EXCELLENT

*Source: Thailand's 2014 *Spa Industry Study*, Stenden Rangsit University. Answers given by spa managers



RarinJinda Wellness Spa Resort was one of a number of top operators which sponsored the study

about which countries in the region will have the most robust spa industries in the wake of economic integration, as well as pinpointing those that will need to raise their game if they want compete with their neighbours. Overall strengths of spas in the region were also highlighted.

● **Therapist skills, training and availability.** Survey respondents (spa managers) feel spas in Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia are clearly in the strongest position when it comes to employees, and in many other areas too. They believe Thailand has the most skilled therapists out of all ASEAN countries – it scored an average of 3.9 out of 5 – followed by Indonesia and Singapore (see Table 1).

Meanwhile, it's perceived that the best therapist training is available in Indonesia, with Thailand and Singapore a very close joint second. Although, training is thought to be the most frequent in Singapore.

When it comes to recruitment, survey respondents feel that both Thailand and Indonesia have the highest availability of therapists, after which comes the Philippines, then Singapore (see Table 2).

● **Spa hygiene/standards, and infrastructure.** In terms of hygiene/standards, and infrastructure, it was noted that spas in Singapore were

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Spa consumer findings for Thailand's 2014 *Spa Industry Study* report were based on a survey of 295 spa-goers including Thai nationals (75 per cent), non-Thai expatriates (10 per cent) and tourists (15 per cent) who gave international representation to the sample.

Thirty-two per cent of respondents were men and 68 per cent were female.

In addition, 115 national and international spa managers were also surveyed online, and 20 of them took part in an optional questionnaire asking them to compare the ASEAN countries

on certain aspects of the spa industry.

Stenden Rangsit University has offered a Spa & Health Management minor programme, regularly collaborating with the Thai Spa Association, for eight years. The research was an extension of this partnership.

ranked the highest by far (scores of 3.9 and 4.3 respectively) and that those in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia followed some way behind. Facilities in Cambodia and Myanmar are perceived as having the worst hygiene/standards and infrastructure. In fact, these two countries were consistently the bottom two scorers across all aspects, suggesting that there's much room for improvement.

● **Innovation.** As far as innovation in spa therapies and products is concerned, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore came top once again, with a better rating than other ASEAN countries. Yet respondents felt spas in Singapore had the most

dynamic approach to marketing, giving a score of 3.9 points on average, compared to Thailand and Indonesia in joint second place on 3.2 points each.

SPA-GOER TRENDS

As well as getting feedback from spa managers, the 2014 *Spa Industry Study* focused on the preferences of 295 spa-goers. Most questions were presented in a multiple-choice format with respondents indicating how often they do something, or how they rated things on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being least often or poor).

On average, spa-goers had visited a spa seven times in the previous 12 months ▶

RESEARCH

► and when choosing where to go, online is the favourite source for spa consumers in Thailand, followed by recommendations from friends and social media. Websites and social media are also the two marketing tools used most frequently by spas.

Relaxation remains the primary reason for visiting a spa in Thailand, the study found. Rewarding or spoiling oneself, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and health issues are the three purposes that came in a close second. Meanwhile, Thai massage, foot massage and aromatherapy massage are the most popular treatments.

In the future, it's felt that facilities would benefit from highlighting the efficacy of services – 61 per cent of the spa managers questioned believe it's important that treatment claims are scientifically validated. Using or linking up to resources like wellnessevidence.com – a search engine for existing research on spa modalities – might be useful in this case.

Most consumers in Thailand have a significant preference for female therapists, especially female consumers – 73 per cent of them said they prefer to have women administering their treatment. And the top three important characteristics of therapists for spa consumers are pleasant behaviour, the ability to explain treatments and responding to individual customer needs.

In addition, spa managers feel quality is key – 52 per cent of the managers questioned believe consumers are willing to pay more for certified therapists, while 66 per cent feel that voluntary standards – such as belonging to a marketing consortia with qualifying benchmarks – attracts customers too. Yet in reality, the take up of voluntary standards is low. Out of 10 standards the study listed, Spa



PHOTO: ©GO SPA AT SCOTTIE BANGKOK

Spa-goers expect to visit spas more in 2015 and spend more money, but they want discounts for their loyalty

Excellence – a benchmark by verification company SGS Thailand and the Thai Spa Association – was the most popular and even then only 24 per cent of spa operators were signed up to it.

As part of the study, spa-goers were asked how much a spa visit usually costs. Most think they spend between THB750-THB1,500 (US\$23-US\$46, €18-€37, £14-£29), a category picked by 31 per cent of the respondents picked; followed by THB1,501-THB3,000 (US\$46-US\$91, €37-€73, £29-£58), the range that 18.8 per cent of customers chose.

When buying products, it's no surprise that price remains the most important consideration for all customer types. But after that, the top priorities are natural ingredients, organic ingredients and having a recognised brand.

A PROMISING FUTURE

In its conclusion, the 2014 *Spa Industry Study* asked spa-goers about future visits and expectations – and the results were promising. Eighty-three per cent of survey respondents say it's likely, or very likely that they'll visit a spa in the next 12 months. What's more, they expect to visit an average of nine times, compared to seven visits in the previous 12 months.

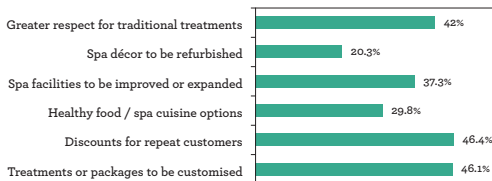
Spend could potentially increase too. Forty-nine per cent of Thai spa-goers think they'll spend more than THB1,500 (US\$46, €37, £29) in the next 12 months – that's 8 per cent more people than last year.

But in return, spa-goers have some clear demands. They'd like to see more discounts on treatments or packages for repeat customers, as well as customised services (see Graph 1). Next on the list was an expectation for spas in Thailand to have more respect for traditional treatments. Consumers are less bothered about the improvement or expansion of facilities, décor refurbishments or having healthy food/spa cuisine options.

Given the findings of the study, it seems operators who meet these requests, will be setting themselves up as recipients for that all important extra spa visit or increased revenue spend. ●

A full copy of this report is available from the Thai Spa Association.
Details: www.thaispaassociation.com

GRAPH 1 What Thai Consumers Want to See from Spas in 2015*




*Source: Thailand's 2014 Spa Industry Study, Stenden Rangsit University



Prantik Bordoloi is a research coordinator, Stenden Rangsit University
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FUNCTIONALITY FOCUS

PART
1

Spa software CEOs tell Jason Holland about their system's top module and explain what makes it stand out

“ It costs six times more to acquire a new client than to keep an existing one... That's why the SpaBooker Promote retention module is so powerful ”



Josh McCarter
CEO
SpaBooker

What's your top module for spas?

Promote, which launched in November 2013, is SpaBooker's automated email retention marketing feature. This module makes it easy to set up automated appointment reminders and special offers to drive repeat bookings and increase sales.

How does it make life easier for spas?

Retaining clients is one of the biggest challenges spas face. On average, 60 per cent of first-time customers never return to a spa and it costs six times more to acquire a new client than to keep an existing one. Continually replacing customers who only make one visit is both time-consuming and expensive. That's why the Promote retention module is so

powerful. With minimal investment of time and money, spas can boost repeat business, foster client loyalty and grow revenue – without having to manually create and send emails week after week.

What are the key module features?

Automated email sends, unique special offer codes and a dashboard make it easy to see how many appointments, in-person visits and mailings have been generated. Spa owners never have to wonder if their investment is paying off – they can see at any given moment how many clients they've retained and what financial impact those clients have made on their business.

Spa-kit.net keyword: **SpaBooker**

“ As spa and other hotel amenities overlap to enhance the overall wellness experience, system integration will become increasingly important ”

What's your top module for spas?

ResortSuite Ambassador which tightly integrates our spa software with other modules and/or other vendor solutions.

How does it make life easier for spas?

The spa experience typically extends beyond the treatment room and may involve hotel stays, classes, activities, golf, club membership and food & beverage options that need to feel seamless to the guest – from online reservation to the actual spa journey which may combine these other elements.

What are the key module features?

It provides many capabilities between operational systems. When ResortSuite Spa integrates with vendor property



Frank Pitsikalis
Founder & CEO
ResortSuite

management system (PMS) Micros Opera, for example, Ambassador enables guest profile and itinerary synchronisation as well as a detailed posting interface.

How do spas use it?

Omni recently implemented ResortSuite at four of its hotels for spa/activities, golf, retail and club and integrated with Opera PMS and Micro F&B. The spa is no longer a standalone experience. As spa and other hotel amenities overlap to enhance the overall wellness experience, system integration will become increasingly important at all touch points including face-to-face, email, online reservations and mobile apps.

Spa-kit.net keyword: **ResortSuite**

“ The key to generating more revenue is giving customers multiple channels to book appointments – from online to mobile ”



Roger Sholanki
Founder and CEO
Book4Time

What's your top module for spas?

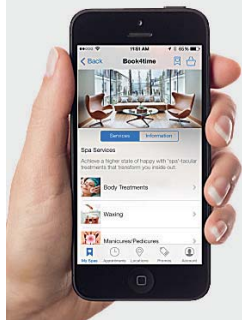
The Book4Time iOS and Android consumer mobile booking app was launched in mid 2014. The app allows guests to search and book spa appointments with a few simple taps. Because it sits on the home screen of a customer's mobile phone, it also becomes a marketing avenue for the spa.

Why is it important?

Mobile is the future – across industries, mobile commerce is a major trend. More and more consumers are buying products using their mobile devices, so booking a spa appointment with a mobile phone is just an extension of m-commerce.

What are the key features of the module?

Spas have the ability to push out appointment availability in real time. Once the appointment is booked, it's automatically reflected in the spa's scheduler. Book4Time has provided spas with an omni-channel approach to generating revenue with online booking, online gift cards and mobile booking.



Book4Time launched a booking app for both Apple and Android phones in mid 2014

What are the results of using the app?

Since the launch, we've seen a net increase in new revenue for spa clients who have started using the app. The key to generating more revenue is giving customers multiple channels to book appointments – from online to mobile.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Book4Time

“ The spa completely controls the online [booking] offering, choosing what services to make available and when ”

Larry Hall
President & CEO
SpaSoft/PAR Springer-Miller

What's your top module for spas?

SpaSoft Online Booking Engine enables spas to increase revenue and spa bookings by offering them an intuitive, easy to navigate online booking platform. The latest version debuted at ISPA 2014.

How does it make life easier for operators?

Online booking is a tremendous opportunity for spas – it's like having a knowledgeable reservationist 24 hours a day, every day of the week. It enables spas to capture additional appointment bookings as well as revenue from sales of gift cards. We believe that all spas should add online booking to their websites.



What are the key features of the module?

It's a responsive site, meaning that it works seamlessly whether you are on a computer, tablet or mobile phone. Guests can browse service offerings and book anywhere at anytime. The spa completely controls the online [booking] offering, choosing what services to make available and when, as well as lead time allowance for any reservations. Finally, spas can take advantage of dynamic cross-selling and upselling opportunities to recommend services to guests based on their selections.

How do spas use it?

Spas add the SpaSoft Online Booking Engine to their website and deploying it is simple as it's hosted in the cloud. There's a user-friendly administration site to make the solution easy to set up and manage.

Spa-kit.net keyword: SpaSoft

“ It provides one single database structure which allows instant access to guest profiles and enables staff to schedule appointments for any site ”



Robert Whitehead
Corporate sales manager
Premier Software



The module means that central reservation teams can book appointments

What's your top spa module?

Multi Site Solution, launched in 2010, is a fundamental part of Core by Premier which covers all areas of a spa business.

Why is Multi Site Solution important?

It provides a single solution to suit both standalone and multi-location environments. The design of the system provides one single database structure, which allows instant access to guest profiles and enables staff to schedule appointments for any site.

What are the key module features?

Central reservation teams can utilise the Call Centre functionality, providing a

seamless service for guests. The revenue from all bookings, mail-order products and vouchers can be allocated to the relevant location, while still keeping an eye on the performance of the operator. Stock inventory can be monitored by head office using the module, reports can be set up and pricing and promotions can be created and set for all sites.

How do spas use it?

The Multi Site Solution module offers a seamless management tool, allowing all activities to be monitored and controlled by a head office location.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: Premier Software

“ Another key aspect is the management of information, spas can market to the voucher purchaser as well as the redeemer ”

What's your top module for spas?

Voucher Management, which came to market in 2008, enables operators to manage voucher expiry, redemption, fulfilment, online purchase and giving change via voucher credit as well. This is all handled quickly, swiftly and only for those with the right access levels.

What are the key module features?

Most software systems allow operators to manage vouchers, however we manage all aspects of voucher management and fulfilment. Customers can buy a voucher in the spa or online with our fully integrated websites, and our system does the rest. We also offer the ability to hold stock on behalf of spas if required. Another key aspect is the management



Stefan Drummond
CEO
EZ Runner

of information, spas can market to the purchaser as well as the redeemer.

How do spas use it?

Spas have their own vouchers linked to products and services, such as packages or treatments. They also manage third party vouchers such as those by Groupon or the likes of Spa Breaks. Using Voucher Management, spas can track these third party redemptions and cross reference any reports to reconcile. A number of spas offer gift cards as well, so our system will track, load and manage usage of these too. Operators use various reports to track and manage liabilities. The other main area is fulfilment and marketing.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: EZ Runner

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CORE's activity timetable is perfect for group activities such as Spinning or Pilates - set your class size limits, assign an instructor and monitor their performance as well as the popularity of the class.



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TEA TIME

Jason Holland picks a selection of teas and drinks for spas which are thirsty for knowledge



Up to 120 tea types are available

CAMELLIA'S TEA HOUSE

Camellia's Tea House offers wellness teas which can be combined with spa treatments. Its teas are designed by Lubna Madan – a homeopath, herbal medicine expert and trained therapist – and are often offered as hot or cold healthy beverages in relaxation rooms. In total, there are up to 120 different tea types.

Only premium spas in the UK, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Greece, Georgia, Turkey, Singapore and Japan are supplied. These include facilities at Sani Beach Resorts and Spas, The Address Downtown Dubai and Corinthia London.

The teas are handmade using only natural ingredients and many target specific health and wellbeing issues such as improving skin health, providing detoxification, reducing cholesterol, helping gout, or improving sleep. A recent launch was Luscious Locks, which helps promote hair growth and hair health.

Spa-kit.net keywords:
Camellia's Tea House

THALGO

Consumers are looking for drinks which complement their relaxation or beauty schedule for an all-round benefit, according to marine cosmetics company Thalgo.

Its five organic teas – Refining, Draining, Serenity, Light Legs and Digestion – each offer a specific health focus, while Slim 7 is a body refining drink to help fight physical fatigue and restore the energy balance.

Collagen Booster, which will relaunch imminently under the name Collagène 5000, is a beauty drink designed with anti-ageing benefits.

Océa Draine is Thalgo's detoxifying nutritional drink containing 100 per cent natural active ingredients. It's designed to help recover a sense of



Organic teas help certain health issues

wellbeing and lightness and, with 21,600 units sold worldwide in 2013, remains a popular choice. Finally, nutritional 'shot' drinks, including one for cellulite and for circulation and comfort, are also offered.

Thalgo distributes to 80 countries and approximately 500 hotel spas.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Thalgo

MIGHTY LEAF TEA

There's a rising demand for tea-based cocktails, says Mighty Leaf Tea. Making an Earl Grey infused martini, for example, involves steeping four of its Organic Earl Grey pouches in a 750ml bottle of vodka for two hours to add a plethora of taste nuances. Those not interested in alcoholic iced tea – which the company also offers – can add an exotic flavour to mocktails.

Mighty Leaf Tea has developed its own pouch to hold whole tea leaves, which are hand-stitched with unbleached cotton string. The pouches, it says, give the tea leaves space to unfurl, creating a richer, more full-bodied cup. The company also prides itself on offering teas that are all-natural and free of sugar, calories and artificial flavours. The handcrafted blends include ingredients such as cacao nibs, organic Moroccan spearmint, hibiscus



Earl Grey martini: tea with a twist

blossoms, pineapple bits, orange peels and more. Mighty Leaf Tea products are available in around 25 countries and well-known spas it supplies include ESPA at Peninsula Hotels, Miraval, The Kura Door, Four Seasons, SpaTerre and The Spa at Trump.

Spa-kit.net keywords: Mighty Leaf Tea



TEA FORTÉ

Tea Forté's stated goal is to "reimagine and redefine the tea experience by delivering delightful, luxury products". Its 40-plus blends are not mass-produced and are typically sourced from small estates or single family gardens.

A particular speciality are the Skin-Smart antioxidant amplifier teas which have been blended to work with the body's chemistry to help protect and take care of the skin from within. These teas have been created to deliver the detoxifying effects of plant-based antioxidants, a strong tool in skin recovery and the fight against visible signs of skin ageing.



Tea Forté aims to redefine the tea experience with its luxury products

The collection comes in five blends: Cucumber Mint with green tea for youth recovery; Honey Yuzu with green tea for natural renewal; Cherry Marzipan with green tea for corrective repair; Swiss Apple with red tea for skin support; and Lychee Coconut with white tea for radiant skin.

Tea Forté is distributed in more than 35 countries and key spa clients include the St Regis Aspen in the US; the Trump Hotel in Toronto, Canada; and the Four Seasons George V in Paris, France.

Spa-kit.net keywords: Tea Forté



Ikaati uses whole leaf, natural ingredients that are minimally processed

IKAATI

The company name Ikaati is derived from the Indonesian word 'ikat', which means 'to tie by hand'. This is because each Ikaati pouch is individually hand-tied, with the time taken to achieve this reflecting its philosophy that teas should be worth spending time with. Added to this is a belief that an individual's wellbeing is enriched by health, pleasure and beauty - with the company's three collections of teas, Nourish, Savor and Heritage corresponding to these ideals.

Ikaati aims to use ingredients which create the most pleasurable drinking experience. It says its products are sourced from the world's finest tea gardens, tended by "devoted

farmers" and crafted with only the "most exceptional" tea leaves, herbs and flowers. The key to this is using whole leaf and plant ingredients that are minimally processed and free of artificial flavourings and preservatives.

Ikaati is available in the US, Mexico, Bahamas, Antigua, Qatar and the Philippines and supplies high-end spas such as those in Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental and Ritz-Carlton hotels. In such spas, Ikaati's Protect tea, which was created for its antioxidant properties, is popular because it complements facials and many other treatments.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Ikaati



Yemaya's red tea with buds of rose

YEMAYA

Yemaya's Simply Be philosophy encourages people to 'live in the moment' and the French company offers five tea collections (encompassing 16 types of tea) to help them do this. These include: Chocothé, combining oolong and white tea; Thé à Moi, which is red tea with buds of rose; and Elixir de Fleurs à Infuser.

Its latest collection, 7 Moods, is based on seven recipes which mix spices from Madagascar with a black tea from China. Meanwhile the popular Bonbons de Thé à Infuser is a collection of puerh teas which are believed to help lower cholesterol and burn fat.

Additionally, the company can offer exclusive and bespoke products. Current clients include gastronomic restaurants and hotels around the world.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Yemaya

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For full company and contact details of any of the products, equipment and services featured here, please visit www.spa-kit.net



Noel Asmar expands for curves

Noel Asmar Uniforms has expanded its collection to incorporate a greater range of sizes. The spa and hospitality uniform manufacturer now offers sizes 3XL-5XL. The collections by designer Noel Asmar are intended to be flattering, functional and elegant, with styles that follow the natural curve of a woman's body. The company says the signature spa material it uses features four way stretch to provide the best fit for every body type.

Recently, Noel Asmar Uniforms has entered into a formal relationship with WTS International and the Woodhouse Spa Group – two well-known spa companies based in the US. WTS will choose from a range of fashion-forward designs for the top-tier spas it manages. Meanwhile, the manufacturer created an upscale wrap tunic for Woodhouse in a chocolate colour to complement its branding.

Spa-kit.net keywords: Noel Asmar



Enveloping night cream by Phytomer

Phytomer has launched an 'ultra-comfortable' enveloping cream. Based on the synergy of two marine ingredients, HydraSea Night Plumping Rich Cream has been created to provide optimum skin hydration during the night. Using the company's concept of 'hydrafusion', the cream includes a high concentrate of red algae, fucellaria limbricalis, which is hydrolysed by a green method and then made into a complex with marine minerals. This ingredient blends into the epidermis to provide the skin with a moisturising infusion – it's designed to plump up and hydrate the epidermis from its deepest layers right up to the surface.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Phytomer



Spastream shower offers expert water massage

Aquademy's Spastream is a vichy shower featuring 1,200 water points designed to replicate the manual skill of an experienced masseur. It will provide rejuvenating, de-stressing and anti-ageing water massage treatments – there are 16 pre-set programmes and a manual mode is also available. The 1,200 water points are grouped into 50 massage jets and the unit also boasts six colour therapy spotlights, integrated speakers/audio system and an essence diffuser. Spastream is monitored and controlled via a touch screen keyboard.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Aquademy



ITW reveals waterbed capsule

New from ITW Waterbeds is Concoon – an encapsulated 32°C system which gives the user a feeling of weightlessness and tranquility. According to ITW, back pain and general aches are relieved. Undisturbed by external influences, an integrated light

therapy system ensures further relaxation. Additionally, an integrated sound system offers different acoustic options – a special subwoofer transmits the sound through the water mattress to the user's torso.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **ITW**



Bells ring out for Gloster side tables

Gloster, which makes traditional and contemporary outdoor furniture, has created a small side table made from joining two bells together. The Bells tables form an elegant shape, and are made from aluminium and teak, with the teak elements featuring a buffed finish. Available in four colours – white, black, light blue and orange.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **Gloster**



Relaxing ceramics from Sommerhuber

Sommerhuber has combined the gentle ceramic heat and traditional hammam treatments in its latest product. The Hammam Oval bed has been designed with soft lying surfaces to foster a sense of

deep relaxation. The ceramic is heated via infrared technology which, Sommerhuber says, boosts circulation, dissolves muscle tension and enhances the immune system.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **Sommerhuber**



Treatment room kits from BC Softwear

The treatment bed makeover kits by BC Softwear have been put together to help spas to create a new look while reducing room turnover times and laundry levels. The kits are available in Gold, Silver, and Bronze editions and include pure Egyptian cotton 650gsm luxury towels for professional use. Separately, the company has launched its 'super deluxe' Monaco – a 770gsm towel of "exceptional quality" for the most luxurious spas and hotels.

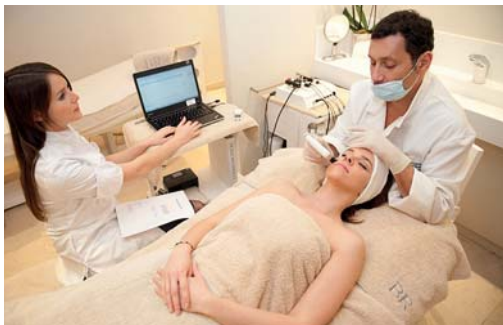
[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: **BC Softwear**



E-commerce solution links to Nymphéa spa software

SequoiaSoft, founded by ADN-informatique and SoftBooking, and hospitality agency Spa Collexion has launched an online booking solution dedicated to spas, which is modelled on and connected to Nymphéa software. An e-commerce and web marketing platform, E-Nymphéa Collexion is designed to allow spas to combine the online booking of treatments with the sale of gift vouchers. The solution also enables users to book fitness and group classes in real-time.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **ADN**



Biologique Recherche adds a personal touch

A new treatment programme from Biologique Recherche offers a bespoke approach to skincare. The personalised Haute Couture 1-month Programme focuses on specific skin issues and begins with a Skin Instant measurement session, backed by a visual analysis, photographs and a dermo-cosmetic questionnaire. Products from the Biologique Recherche skincare range are then selected for

a customised treatment. Following that, customers are presented with a made-to-measure cream and serum and an at home prescription sheet.

The package provides a more targeted approach to skincare than Biologique Recherche's existing six-month programme, which some customers found difficult to commit to.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: **Biologique Recherche**



Infrared marble massage bench

Carved from a single block of marble, Fabio Allemanno's 'Square' brings infrared technology to the treatment table market. It's been designed for a range of wet massages and body treatments, or can be used as a relaxing daybed. The internal radiating heat system goes up to 41.5°C and the bed can be used both indoors and outdoors. It's also available with different marble and colour combinations.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: **Fabio Allemanno**



Vine tuning by Christina

Fine wines have been taken as the inspiration for a new product line from the Christina Company. The Château de Beauté range applies the antioxidant benefits of grapes, wine and their byproducts to skin rejuvenating and cell energising cosmetics. The product line consolidates a number of active ingredients in order to deliver age-control benefits and the formula has been designed to restore moisture in skin, blurring away lines and wrinkles.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **Christina**



Hommage skincare caters to Asian men

Hommage Asia has launched a paraben-free skincare line especially for the Asian man. The products in the Grooming Collection will be available at The Wynn Macau, Pacific Cigar and other select outlets in early 2015. Among the products in the 10-strong range are the Prime shave oil and Rescue, a new age defence lotion.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **Hommage**

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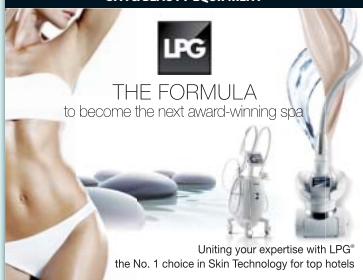
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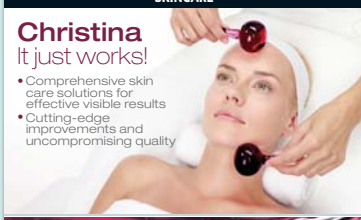
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MEMORY UPGRADE

How could spas adapt their design and services to help people with cognitive impairments? We cover this in our feature focused on age-friendly facilities on page 64

A small trial suggests that personalised wellness plans may help reverse memory loss in Alzheimer's sufferers

Since it was first discovered more than 100 years ago, Alzheimer's disease has been without an effective treatment. Worldwide, nearly 44 million people are believed to be living with the brain disorder or other forms of dementia. By 2030 this could rise to nearly 76 million according to the US-based BrightFocus Foundation.

But the outlook may not be so bleak if the findings of a small US pilot study are anything to go by. Scientists at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and the University of California, Los Angeles have discovered that lifestyle and wellness interventions have reversed memory loss in patients with Alzheimer's disease for the first time. Although the results are anecdotal, the findings are "very encouraging" says study author and neurology professor Dr Dale Bredeisen.

Individualised intervention

As part of the trial, a group of experts put together a 36-point plan for 10 patients with Alzheimer's. The plans included taking up yoga and meditation twice a day to reduce stress, exercise and getting an optimal seven to eight hours of sleep. They also comprised strict diet changes, including fasting (see SB14/4 p50).

Each plan was personalised, based on extensive testing to determine what was affecting brain signals in each patient. Although the programmes were difficult to follow – none of the participants were able to fully adhere to them – Bredeisen believes a multiple-component approach is key. "The existing Alzheimer's drug affects a single target, but the disease is more complex," he says. "Imagine having a roof with 36 holes, and your drug patched one very well... You'd still have 35 other leaks, and so the underlying process may not be affected much."



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RENEIDERLONDON

Daily yoga and meditation were part of the wellness intervention plans

Promising results

The results were promising, with nine out of the 10 patients seeing advancements in three to six months. The only patient not to benefit had late-stage Alzheimer's.

Such were the improvements that six participants, who'd been struggling at work or had to stop because of cognitive issues, were able to return to their jobs. Meanwhile, those who stayed in employment showed increased performance. Bredeisen adds: "It's noteworthy that the major side effect of this therapeutic system are improved health and body mass index: a stark contrast to the side effects of many drugs."

Further research

Overall, the results suggest that memory loss may be reversed, and improvements sustained, by following a tailored therapeutic plan. Yet Bredeisen cautions that further research is needed.

"The current, anecdotal results require a larger trial, not only to confirm or refute the results reported here, but also to address key questions raised, such as the degree of improvement that can be achieved routinely, how late in the course of cognitive decline reversal can be effected... and how long improvement can be sustained," he says. ●



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