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Competition is everywhere

Spas are expensive to build, and in creating them, owners, developers and operators either tie-up capital or have large debts to service.

So spa operations have to generate enough operating profit to clear a number of big hurdles: covering their direct operating expenses; in some cases contributing to overheads; then servicing debt; then maybe paying back some of that debt; and then, finally, creating an actual return. And all this before vital refurbishment is taken into account. There's no doubt it's an eye-wateringly expensive undertaking.

As a fixed-cost business, the upsides can be very attractive and this is one of the reasons the industry continues to thrive. However, there are signs new competition is coming down the line which isn't shouldering the weight of this capital investment burden.

This January, I was browsing the usual new year diet and wellness magazine supplements and it was good to see spa figuring so prominently: "Take a spa break – top 20 places to get away," shouted one headline, but on closer inspection, only one of the 20 places in question turned out to be an actual spa. The rest were a higgledy-piggledy bunch of other options – basically where someone with imagination and a flair for PR had decided to grab a slice of the New Year good resolution pie.

There were hotels offering wellness retreats which were bringing in specialist spa chefs, star speakers on relevant topics and offering short breaks which involved hiking,



The industry faces new competition from pop-up operations offering spa breaks and experiences without the burden of capital costs carried by true spa businesses

spa cuisine and wellness lectures. There were others doing bootcamp spa breaks with celebrity trainers and mobile therapists offering sports massage in unusual settings – it was an attractive list of options.

But the one thing common to them all was the low cost base they were working from. The starting point was clearly, 'how can we create a 'spa' experience without having to carry the capital costs of actually building a proper spa and permanently employing spa staff?'

While it's great to see the wellness lifestyle gaining traction and a higher level of consumer awareness, I was left wondering where the spas were? Why weren't they there, listed alongside the pop-up spa options?

We need to get seriously better at consumer PR and at marketing the value of our strengths if we're to counter the challenge presented by this kind of activity, because competition – and impressive competition at that – is everywhere and more of the same is on the way.

Liz Terry, editor twitter: @elizterry



Read all our editor's and contributors' letters on our blog at blog.spabusiness.com

CONTACT US:

Spa Business magazine, Leisure Media, Portmill House, Portmill Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1DJ, UK

TEL: +44 (0)1462 431385 EMAIL: theteam@spabusiness.com

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USA
+1 (954) 733 3939 ext 2234
usa@elemis.com



READER SERVICES

SUBSCRIPTIONS

DENISE GILDEA +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

NEWSDESK

TOM WALKER +44 (0)1462 471934

AOIFE DOWLING +44 (0)1462 471938

JESSICA TASMAN-JONES +44 (0)1462 471922

NORTH AMERICA EDITOR

PETER SARGENT +1 239 949 3394

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

JAN WILLIAMS +44 (0)1462 471909

ADVERTISING SALES - WWW.SPA-KIT.NET

STEPHANIE ROGERS +44 (0)1462 471902

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

ED GALLAGHER +44 (0)1905 20198

SPA RECRUITMENT/TRAINING SALES

SARAH GIBBS +44 (0)1462 471908

WEB TEAM

WWW.SPA-KIT.NET

PRODUCT SEARCH ENGINE

KATE CORNEY +44 (0)1462 471927

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 GILDEA +44 (0)1462 471930

CREDIT CONTROL

REBEKAH SCOTT +44 (0)1462 733477

Andrea Foster

PKF Consulting's Andrea Foster is the publisher of its annual *Trends* in the *Hotel Spa Industry* report. 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: +1 617 330 8189



Jennifer Harbottle

Jennifer Harbottle has been a regular contributor to *Spa Business* magazine for the last six years and has established herself as a leading commentator in the industry. Currently based in Malaysia, she focuses on writing about the Asia-Pacific leisure sector.
Email: jennifer@harkcommunications.com.au
Phone: +60 016 3381910



Rhianon Howells

Rhianon Howells was the launch editor of *Spa Business* magazine 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: rhianonhowells@btinternet.com



On the cover: Wellness Warrior champion Deborah Szekely p32

Samantha Foster

Based in Asia, Samantha Foster's 20-year career includes experience as a spa operator, author, trainer and speaker. She's on the board of several associations, a director of consultancy Destination Spa Management and is driven by her passion for wellness.
Email: sam.foster@dsmgurus.com
Skype: [samanthafoster](https://www.skype.com/user/samanthafoster)



Anni Hood

Previously the group director of spas for the Jumeirah Group, Anni Hood consults in the industry at a global level and has just relocated to Saudi Arabia from the UK. She's also the founder of K.I.S Lifestyle*, a group dedicated to making world-class wellness accessible to the mainstream.
Email: anni@kislifestyle.co.uk
Twitter: [@kis_lifestyle](https://twitter.com/kis_lifestyle)



Jay Williams

Jay Williams is a physiologist, medical nutritionist, author and international health and wellness consultant. She brings science, technology and research to consumers via testing, tracking and stress reduction programmes – most recently helping to launch the telomere focused TeloTest.
Email: Jay@JayWilliamsPhD.com
Phone: +1 808 895 8080



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Letters

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

Take sensible precautions with spray tans

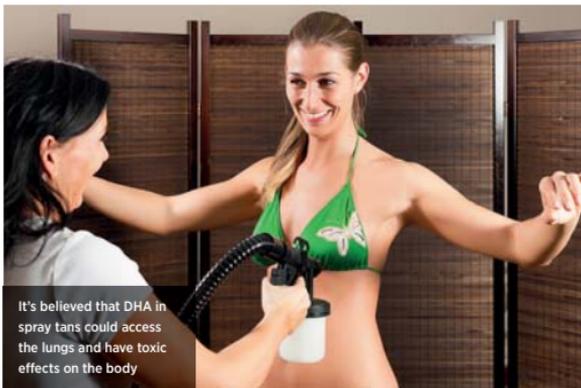
Dr Reynold Panettieri, toxicologist and lung specialist, University of Pennsylvania

Recently, public attention has focused on the use of dihydroxyacetone (DHA) – a major component of spray tans – and its safety when inhaled.

DHA has been approved for use in darkening of the skin for the last 30 years but only in topical creams or lotions which were limited to layers of the skin.

Yet over the past decade, DHA was developed for use in sprays or aerosols which became popular as they provided a more even tan. Concerns have been raised that the aerosolised DHA would also access living cells of the lungs, and as such, would promote absorption throughout the body or have direct toxic effects on such cells. The paucity of data on the safety of spray tans and the ubiquitous nature of the use of sprayed DHA raise questions of safety that those who offer spray tan services – from tanning salons to spas – should be aware of.

Yes a large study, *Opinion on Dihydroxyacetone*, by the European Commission examined the safety of aerosolised DHA in rodents and found no direct effects on short-term (30 days) exposure in promoting cancer-like behaviour in cells. Due to the short duration, however, these studies



may not be applicable to operators of tanning salons or those who frequently use sprayed DHA. Accordingly, recent news articles have focused on a need for further investigation to characterise the safety of sprayed DHA. The dose and duration of exposure will likely impact on the health consequences of DHA. It is highly unlikely that casual exposure to sprayed DHA for five minutes every several months will have any health impact. But greater concerns are for those who frequent tanning salons or the operators of such salons who are exposed to sprayed DHA without aerosol protection.

Overall, the long-term effects of sprayed DHA in humans remain unclear. Given the current evidence, there is no reason to completely prohibit the use of sprayed DHA. But until further studies directly address the safety of such approaches, I think some sensible precautions should be considered. If one is exposed frequently to DHA, or has underlying lung disease, then masks should be advocated. In addition, operators of such establishments, where sprayed DHA occurs, should take even greater precautions – such as facial masks and extractor fans – to decrease the inhalation of sprayed DHA.

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DHA in spray tans is safe at current use levels

Christopher Flower, director-general, Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association (CTPA)

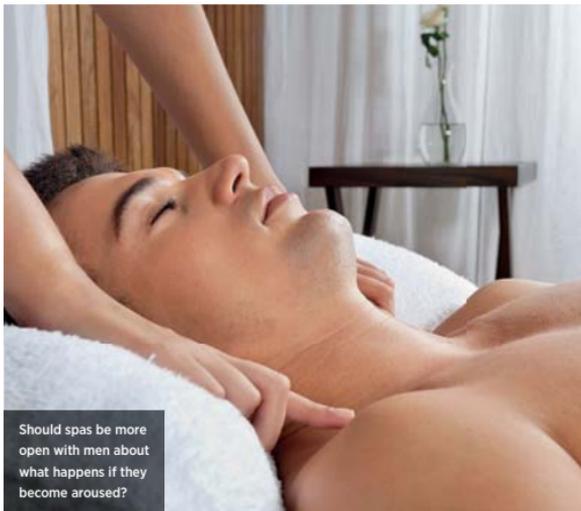
The safety of the self-tanning ingredient dihydroxyacetone (DHA), which changes the skin colour by chemically reacting with amino acids, has recently been questioned in the media more than once. Yet these questions weren't based on new studies and focused on American practice.

The European Cosmetics Regulation (ECR) requires manufacturers and importers to carry out a rigorous safety assessment – on a finished product and its individual ingredients – before placing any cosmetic product on the market. This includes products used in the professional setting.

In addition, the European Commission's expert panel, the Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety recently assessed the safety of DHA in the report *Opinion on Dihydroxyacetone* – see <http://lei.sr?a=d1q3G>. It reviewed many studies, including the use of DHA in spray applications and took into account worst-case scenarios involving the largest reported volume of spray product (60ml) containing the highest concentration of DHA (14 per cent). The report concludes that DHA is safe at current use levels in spray cabins.

But if spa and salon owners have concerns, they should check with their suppliers to ensure products meet the legal UK and European requirements and that they're fully compliant with the ECR.

On top of this, the CTPA's website www.thefactsabout.co.uk provides information on the science behind products (including self-tanners). There's also a section on the safety legislation and links to external organisations and experts for people to make informed decisions about cosmetic products – whether as a consumer or a salon professional.



The elephant in the (treatment) room

Mark Smith, owner, Mark Smith Media

As a spa journalist I've trialled treatments around the world – good, bad and indifferent – but one thing that's never been addressed is the issue of arousal. Now I lay my cards on the table from the outset. This happened to me recently and I was supremely embarrassed. It wasn't sexually motivated, but massage is, by its very nature, stimulating. I live in fear this will happen again and always refuse a full body massage.

It got me thinking – how should I have responded? Should it simply be ignored – a bit like the elephant in the room? I know therapists are trained to deal with arousal – but that leaves male clientele in the dark about the appropriate boundaries. Google the topic and you'll find some trade mag-

azines addressing the issue for therapists (see SB08/3 p96) – which is good – but what about the poor client? Sadly there's very little about the issue of arousal and spa etiquette, particularly in Europe and Asia. But there's a lot more help for men online in the USA where advice comes from blogs, forums and websites. It's nothing sordid or dirty – just candid requests for information and in turn, guidance on what guys should expect and how it should be dealt with.

It used to be tough enough to get men into the spa, so now they're catching on, let's be clear about what will happen if and when they become aroused, how it will be dealt with and the consequences of crossing boundaries or accompanying arousal with lewd or inappropriate behaviour. It's perhaps easier said than done – but a simple statement on a treatment menu or website or a note at the time of booking would be a great start.

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Neil Jacobs announced as new CEO for Six Senses

Operator Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas is embarking on an "era of expansion" after appointing a new top team and announcing plans to build five more resorts by 2016.

Neil Jacobs has been named the new CEO, while Wolf Hengst has joined as executive chair and Anna Bjurstam has been appointed vice president (VP) of spa and wellness.

Jacobs joins Six Senses from Starwood Capital, where he was president of global hotel operations. Prior to that he was VP of operations for Four Seasons in Asia (see s805/2, p18) and headed up its spa task force.

Wolf Hengst, a former president of Four Seasons, was instrumental in introducing full-service spas to hotels in the 80s. He's also chair of health and beauty website Wahanda.

Bjurstam co-founded spa consultancy Raison d'Etre in 2000 (see s806/3, p66) and became its sole owner in May 2011. She will spend 75 per cent of her time with Six Senses and has appointed Annika Jackson as managing director of Raison d'Etre.

The group's five new builds will include properties in St Lucia, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Bhutan and China.

Six Senses operates 37 resorts globally and is owned by private equity group Pegasus Capital Advisors, which acquired the brand in April 2012. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=q4t8M>*

European Spas Association publishes med-spa standards

The European Spas Association (ESPA) has published a book of quality standards for medical spa and wellness providers.

The 181-page book includes around 1,000 quality and safety criteria for medicinal water, peloids, pools, saunas, diagnostics, types of treatment, quality management, cuisine, accommodation and facilities.

The criteria in the book has been compiled by a scientific committee on the basis of over 30 national and international laws; and must be met to obtain ESPA's EuropeSpa med certificate. It's the first time such comprehensive material has been published. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=j1Q5z>*

Revenues up for US hotel spas

Figures released in January show that spa department revenues increased by 8.3 per cent in US hotels in 2011.

PKF-HR's 2012 *Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry* report indicates a recovery in the sector's fortunes, following a 10.5 per cent decline in hotel spa revenues in 2010.

The beginning of the recovery in 2011 was enjoyed by all types of hotel spas regardless of location, volume of revenue, or size of the facilities.

In general, mid-sized hotel spa operations registered the greatest gains in revenue from 2010 to 2011. Analysing the data by type of hotel, the PKF-HR report shows similar revenue increases for spas located in both resort (8.4 per cent) and urban (8.2 per cent) hotels.

While total spa department revenue increased 8.3 per cent, when measured on a



IGOR SHIBROVSKI/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Spa department revenues increased by 8.3 per cent in 2011

dollar per occupied hotel guestroom basis, the revenue increase was just 3.3 per cent. This implies that spa managers benefited more from an increase in the capture of in-house guests, as opposed to a higher spend per guest. *To read more on the PKF report, see p40*

The Conways buy Golden Door for US\$25m

The original Golden Door Spa in California, a famous US spa property owned by equity fund business Blackstone, has changed hands for a reported US\$24.8m (€18.7m, £15.7m).

The private sale was to husband and wife Bill and Joanne Conway. Bill is the co-founder of asset management firm Carlyle and a US billionaire.

The sale of Golden Door was free of existing debt and included ownership of the Golden Door brand and licensing rights for possible future resorts. It did not include ownership of the four other branded Golden Door Spas (see s808/1 p58) at the El Conquistador Resort in Puerto Rico; Boulders Resort in Arizona; Naples Grande Beach in Florida; and Waldorf Astoria Park City in Utah. Indeed, as part of the deal, licence agreements at the first



The sale was free of debt and includes ownership of the brand

three properties were cancelled, with only the one at Waldorf Astoria Park City remaining.

Golden Door was founded in 1958 by Deborah Szekely (see our interview with her on p32 and in s804/q1 p86) as a luxury health resort. It was inspired by Japanese *hoshin* – country inns that welcome weary travellers. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=H2u1W>*

YouTube to lead way for beauty product marketing

Market researcher L2 predicts YouTube will be among the social media brands leading the way in 2013 for beauty product marketing.

While it said Facebook remained the largest source of referral traffic, its influence had declined to 71 per cent in 2012 from 89 per cent

in 2011, and Twitter had "fallen off the map". In contrast, YouTube had become a top source of upstream traffic for twice as many brands in 2012 as last year, and L2 said vloggers (video bloggers) were an important tool for promoting products. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=L9LoN>*

US\$90m refit for Tokyo's Chinzanso

Japanese hospitality company Fujita Kanko will invest US\$90m (£67.7m, €56.8m) renovating its flagship property in Tokyo, Hotel Chinzanso, over the next three years.

The hotel – which had operated under the Four Seasons' name for 20 years – is home to one of Tokyo's largest hotel spas, Yu, and has 260 bedrooms and suites, 12 restaurants, and 36 meeting rooms.

The 22,550sq ft Yu Spa includes five single and two double treatment rooms with 40 services on offer including a wasabi body treatment and pregnancy treatments. It uses ELEMIS and Aromatherapy Associates skincare products, and camellia oil, known as tsubaki oil, is also used in many of its treatments.

Rooftop wedding and event space Serenity Garden and Café Foresta, are recent additions, and the hotel is set to renovate some guest rooms with feature bathrooms to maximise views, though further details of the renovation are to be released at a later date.

Hotel Chinzanso is set on a 17-acre (7-hectare) botanical garden which includes around



Yu Spa is one of the largest in the city

1,000 camellia tree and its new name means "villa on a mountain of camellias".

Established in 1955 and headquartered in Tokyo, Fujita Kanko has more than 50 properties – under the brands Gracery Hotels and Washington Hotels – and is a publicly-traded corporation. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=v8qoT>

Sheila McCann appointed GM at Chiva-Som

Sheila McCann has replaced Paul Linder as the general manager (GM) of Chiva-Som – one of Asia's most well known destination spas.

With few female GMs in the hospitality sector, let alone those with a spa background, McCann has taken up the position with much enthusiasm. She told *Spa Business*: "I'm delighted to have been chosen as the guardian of such an iconic wellness property. Joining at the commencement of peak season and budget preparation has provided a steep learning curve, however, in the true caring spirit of Chiva-Som – all the team have been welcoming and supportive throughout."

McCann, who's been in the industry for 30 years, started out as a therapist. Prior to this move, she was corporate director of spa for Asia-based Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, working alongside Ian Brewis who was director of projects & group spa & health clubs (see SB04/2 p18).

Brewis left Shangri-La last August for a GM post at leading Hong Kong hotel Lanson Place. The roles of McCann and Brewis have not been



The Chiva-Som destination spa is in Thailand

replaced at Shangri-La, although the company is still moving forward with spa openings with ones in Singapore and Paris in the last two months.

Linder, who was GM of Chiva-Som for the 10 years, was being appointed GM of two COMO Shambhala properties in Bali – Uma Ubud and the Shambhala Estate.

Doha yields highest revenue in Middle East spa survey

A survey comparing the spa markets in Doha, the Dead Sea and Beirut shows Doha to yield the highest revenue across all key metrics, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers research. It also revealed the Dead Sea market differed from Doha and Beirut for its lack

of local, affluent population, and 91 per cent of spa bookings being made by hotel guests. In Doha and Beirut this figure is 20 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. The report attributed the Dead Sea's less affluent population for a lack of revenue. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=w9N8d>



Kyricos runs her own spa consultancy

Kyricos and Singh join GSWS board

The Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS) has appointed Mia Kyricos, president of Kyricos & Associates, and Veer Singh, CEO of India's Max Group and Vana Retreats & Hotels to its board of directors.

Kyricos is a former director of global spa brands and programming at Starwood Hotels & Resorts (see SB10/3 p24) and founded her own spa and wellness consultancy in 2012.

At Vana, Singh is looking to combine results-driven wellness offerings with luxury hospitality. He also heads other initiatives of the Max Group, which has divisions in healthcare, research, insurance and film. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=X7h3u>



The move is in response to spa growth in Asia

Hyatt Spas' Niamh O'Connell takes up new role in Asia

Hyatt Hotels has appointed its former vice president of international spa operations to a new role in Hong Kong, as it focuses the majority of its development in Asia.

Niamh O'Connell, who's been with Hyatt for eight years, took up the post of Asia-Pacific director of spa in November, leaving her former role at the group's Chicago head-office where she had previously worked two years (see SB11/4 p32).

Hyatt has eight new spa facilities planned for Asia in 2013, including six in China, one in Korea and one in Cambodia.

O'Connell's former colleague in the US, Krista Carucci, who had been Hyatt's director of spa operations in the US, has left the role to launch her spa consultancy business *Benessere*. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=S8njf>



McCarthy's tutored course focuses on leadership

Jeremy McCarthy takes up teaching post in California

Starwood Hotels & Resorts' director of spa operations Jeremy McCarthy will share his 20 years' experience in opening and operating luxury spas as he returns to teach at the University of California in Irvine, US.

His online learning course, first offered in January 2012, focuses on positive leadership and covers workplace culture, employee engagement and motivation and strategies for goals and accomplishment.

The course, which runs from 21 January to 3 March, can be taken alone or as an elective paper for the university's Spa and Hospitality Management Certificate. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=5P8U6>*



Thompson (right) with De Carvalho and Semonin

New board members for UK Spa Business Association

Charlie Thompson, head of health and beauty for Virgin Active UK, has been elected chair of the country's Spa Business Association (SpaBA), ahead of its relaunch this year. Thompson takes over from Suki Kalirai, who stepped down but remains a board member and will become honorary president.

Thompson currently oversees 80 spas for Virgin Active, and previously held roles at ESPA and Anne Sémonin. He said the UK spa industry had little structure to unite it outside of conferences and hoped this could change. "With SpaBA's relaunch, we will become a central hub for the spa industry and help solve the operational issues," he said.

The two new deputy chairs are Champneys' Group managing director Alex De Carvalho and Lesley Bacon, group health club and spa manager for Hand Picked Hotels. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=j0E4y>*

Multi-sensory spa resort for Längenfeld

Multimedia has been used to create an extra multi-sensory spa touch at AQUA Dome – a brand new spa resort in the Austrian alpine town of Längenfeld.

SPA 3.000, the 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) spa at AQUA DOME, has been planned and supplied by Schletterer International. It is divided into a themed areas which all focus on natural elements, offer thermal sequences and – to add a new dimension – feature multimedia effects.

In the herbal-themed area, for example, guests start by watching a film – which outlines the health benefits of Alpine herbs – then heat up in the herb-infused sauna, experience a weather effect shower and then relax in a lounge with a herbal tea.

Other interesting features include a brine steam bath; and a glacier cave with ice rain.



SPA 3.000 has been designed by Schletterer International

Längenfeld is famed for its thermal waters. And as a contemporary take on the town's traditional baths, SPA 3.000 has included hot tubs filled with the waters, which are spectacularly situated on an outdoor terrace overlooking the Oetzal valley below. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=U6p4y>*

Disney to take spa operations in-house

As of January, all spas, salons, and fitness centres across Walt Disney World are to be owned and run by Disney under a new in-house spa brand, instead of being operated by external companies such as a Niki Brayn Spas which had managed spas on behalf of Disney for more than 25 years.

The new spa concept, Senses – A Disney Spa, will make its first appearance at its Grand Floridian Resort in Lake Buena Vista in February. This is the first location to be renovated and to reopen under Disney control. Designed by Walt Disney Imagineering, the inaugural Senses – A Disney Spa will have 15 treatment rooms. Guests will be able to choose from three journeys: relax, renew and imagine, to determine their treatments during the visit.



The first Senses spa will open at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort

The second resort to feature a Senses spa will be Disney's Saratoga Springs in Florida, which is scheduled to reopen in mid 2013.

Disney created its first in-house spa, Lanivai (see SB11/4 p42), in 2011 at its new Aulani resort in Hawaii. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=W8K8n>*

Day spa franchise Planet Beach plans 40 site in 2013

Day spa franchise Planet Beach is to open 35 to 40 new sites globally in 2013.

Over the past two years the 250-strong chain, which is based in New Orleans, US, expanded domestically and in the regions in Saudi Arabia, Canada and Egypt.

The aim for this year is to grow internationally and add sites in Florida, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Utah and other states.

Another plan is to develop technologies to meet the need of customers and franchisees. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=f7V2w>*

Medical spa revealed in Moscow

Vienna International is set to unveil a luxury wellness facility at a hotel in Shcholkovo near Moscow, Russia at the end of 2013. Astrum Hotel Shelkovo is owned by Shelkowskij Holding and will be under the management of Vienna International Hotel Management (VIHM).

A main feature of the 184-bed hotel is the 3,6597sq ft (3,400sq m) Wellness and Medical Spa. It will offer a series of minor medical services, such as minimal-invasive aesthetic treatments, as well as post-operative care for cosmetic treatments performed at national beauty clinics. There will also be two- and three-day preventative health check-ups, nutritional science advice and a burnout prevention package.

On top of this, there are plans to add an ayurveda centre in the spa. The plan is for



The hotel's interior design was created by Italian artist Francesco Molon

this to be staffed by a team of physicians and specialists from India.

Dr Andreas Karsten, CEO of VIHM said: "The Astrum Hotel represents something new in the sense of a city resort in Moscow. We expect that it will become a new landmark with corresponding appeal."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=R4H9e>



An artist's impression of the Capella Niseko site

Spa resort set to open on Japanese Island of Hokkaido

Capella Hotels & Resorts is preparing to launch Capella Niseko Resort on the Japanese Island of Hokkaido in 2013.

It will be part of the 462-hectare (1,142-acre) Niseko Village ski resort, which was bought for development for a reported ¥176bn (US\$67m, €50m, £42m) by YTL Hotels in March 2011 (see SB11/3 p46).

The Capella resort has been designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando with a 70-suite hotel and 149 residences. Capella worked with spa consultant Sylvia Sepielli to develop the treatments at Auriga Spa. They will incorporate Chinese and Japanese practices and reflect phases of the lunar cycle.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=R3m1O>

Spa and waterpark debuts in Gubbio, Italy

A new Wellness & Spa Water Park has launched at Park Hotel Ai Cappuccini in Gubbio, Italy. It has been designed by Italian architect Simone Micheli – the man behind the award-winning and standout design of the Atomic Spa Suisse 'bubble spa' in Milan (see SB11/2 p60).

Cappuccini Wellness & Spa Water Park is formed of two separate areas. The first – Acque Emozionali (emotional waters) – is a 3,767sq ft (350sq m) open access space featuring a swimming pool, kid's pool, countercurrent pool, spa pool, hydro-jet tub and thalasso bath.

The second, more intimate area is the Hydromassage Room includes an ark-shaped hydromassage tub that uses magnesium and potassium enriched water.



The eye-catching design is by 'bubble spa' architect Simone Micheli

Other spa facilities include a Mediterranean bath, a sauna, a Turkish bath and a relaxation room. There are also emotional showers that revitalise guests using a variety of aromas, changing temperatures and varied lighting.

Signature treatments include facial rejuvenation. Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=D8s1A>

Comfort Zone spa sets sail on Baltic sea eco cruise ship

The €240m (US\$320m, £202m), 2,800-passenger M/S Viking Grace cruise ship – complete with a spa offering Comfort Zone treatments – has taken its maiden journey from Sweden to Finland.

The vessel is the first large passenger ship to use liquefied natural gas – an eco-friendly fuel.

Spa facilities include two large hydro pools, numerous steamrooms and saunas, plus a snow cave with falling snow. There are also two VIP suites for up to six people. Comfort Zone has provided eco-friendly products and 10 treatment options.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=17U1K>



The spa houses a luxury double suite with bath

Chateau Elan's US\$3m spa revamp completed

Spa at Chateau Elan, part of the Chateau Elan Winery & Resort in Atlanta, Georgia, US, has completed its two-part, US\$3m (€2.2m, £1.9m) redevelopment.

The second phase of renovations at the 275-bed property cost US\$1.5m (€1.1m, £0.9m) and included a makeover of all suites, the Fleur de Lis restaurant, two spa library areas, a gift shop and lobby.

Last year, phase one of the renovation saw the refurbishment of the spa's 35 treatment rooms and relaxation areas.

The spa, nestled inside a lakeside mansion, includes 14 overnight guest suites and – apt for its vineyard setting – has a particular focus on anti-oxidant winotherapy treatments. It also offer couple's treatments, massage and wellbeing therapies, hydrotherapy, skincare treatments and nailcare.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=0T3q3>

DIARY DATES

21-23 February 2013

Forum Piscine Pool & Spa Expo

Fiera di Bologna, Bologna, Italy

Combining two shows – Forumclub and Forumpiscine – this event combines a strong seminar programme and congress with an exhibition floor. First held in 2000, it showcases the best of the spa and wellness market.

Tel: +39 051 255544

www.forumpiscine.it

8-11 March 2013

Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna

Fair District

Bologna, Italy

One of the world's most important international beauty events, Cosmoprof Worldwide will again include a special focus on the spa industry.

Tel: +390 2796 420

www.cosmoprof.com

9-11 March 2013

Mondial Spa & Beauté

La Grande Halle

Paris, France

The eighth edition of Mondial Spa & Beauté exhibition will take over La Grande Halle, in Paris. Last year the trade show hosted 175 exhibitors and 13,626 visitors. An international exhibition that is both upmarket and convivial, the Mondial Spa & Beauté exhibition was designed keeping project drivers in mind.

Tel: +33 493 06 58 80

www.msbparis.com

3-4 April 2013

SPAMEETING Europe and Africa

Hotel Mazagan

El Jadida, Morocco

Spameeting is a two-day event of one-to-one meetings between 50 project holders and 50 suppliers from Europe and Africa.

Tel: +331 44 69 97 67

www.eu.spameeting.com

7-10 April 2013

SPATEC Spring – North America

The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans, US

A three-day forum of one-on-one meetings between corporate spa owners, operators, directors and design & management companies and suppliers. On 24-27 April, sister event SPATEC Europe, for the UK and Europe, will be staged at the Ritz-Carlton Abama Golf & Spa Resort in Tenerife, Spain.

Tel: +1 214 592 4270

www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

Three new Guerlain spas open

French cosmetics brand Guerlain is expanding its spa portfolio with the launch of three new spas – in Edinburgh, Scotland and Berlin, Germany – are Guerlain-branded and already open while the third in the Maldives exclusively uses Guerlain products in its treatments and will launch later this year.

The Caledonian, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Edinburgh, launched the UK's first Guerlain Spa in January, following a £24m (US\$38m, €28.5m) redevelopment of the property. Facilities at the spa include three treatment rooms, a pool, a steam-room, a sauna and a relaxation space.

Meanwhile, the newly opened Waldorf Astoria Berlin houses a 10,764 sq ft (1,000 sq m) Guerlain spa with eight treatment rooms and extensive wet areas.



The Guerlain Spa at Waldorf Astoria Berlin has extensive wet areas

Located on the island of Randheli on Noonu Atoll, the Cheval Blanc Randheli resort is operated by LVMH Hotel Management and includes a Cheval Blanc Spa. With four single and two couple's treatment villas, Cheval Blanc and Guerlain have created a retreat offering exclusive tailored treatments. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=c8R8F>*

Luxury resort and spa launches in the Himalayas

A luxury all-season resort and spa has been launched at the foot of the Himalayas.

The Khyber: Himalayan Resort and Spa will be managed by JHH Interstate India, a joint partnership between Interstate Hotels & Resorts and JMH Hotels. The resort will house

an Alaya Spa, which opens mid-2013 and will feature three single and two double treatment rooms, each with its own steamroom. A range of ayurvedic treatments will be on offer as well as aromatherapy deep massages to ease muscle tension. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=f7CoL>*

Taj Marrakech scheduled to launch in June

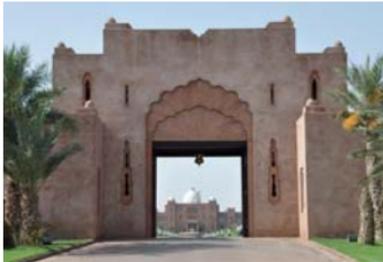
Taj Hotels is to enter Morocco with the opening of its latest resort – Taj Palace Marrakech – by June 2013.

Located in La Palmeraie – a peaceful district outside the centre – Taj Palace Marrakech features 161 guestrooms including 25 luxury suites.

Set on 136 acres, the hotel will house a Jiva Grande Spa featuring 14 treatment rooms and two hammams – one for men and one for women.

Spanning 40,903sq ft (3,800sq m), the spa will offer Indian healing and wellness therapies, such as ayurveda and meditation, blended with Moroccan practices. A fitness centre and yoga temple will also feature.

The resort was originally due to open in 2011 under the management of the Mandarin



The property was originally due to be operated by Mandarin Oriental

Oriental Hotel Group. The contract was withdrawn, however, and taken over by Taj.

The hotel has Moorish, Indian and Venetian architecture and will also house four traditional Moroccan riads, housing 1,668sq ft (155sq m) suites *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=A4R9Z>*



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TOP-HOTEL PROJECTS

FLOATING POINT

Amsterdam's Floating Gardens spa will be built out of recycled polystyrene, covered with vegetation and offer treatments that promise to help the brain adapt and heal itself

MAGALI ROBATHAN, JOURNALIST, SPA BUSINESS

Developed by Michel Kreuger and ex-footballer Kizito Musampa of Studio Noach, together with architect Anne Holtrop, the €9m (US\$12m, £8m) Floating Gardens spa is due to open toward mid-2014.

The two-storey building will be located on a lake just outside Amsterdam's city centre. It will feature four pools, two restaurants/bars, five saunas and three treatment rooms and will be covered with a 'living wall' of plants designed by renowned botanist Patrick Blanc. Its treatments will be based around concepts such as psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), which looks at how emotions and health are linked; and neuroplasticity, a science focused on the brain's potential to react to change, heal and renew itself.

The idea has been presented at various exhibitions since 2010, and has attracted high levels of interest. Michel Kreuger explains how the concept was born.

When was Studio Noach founded?

I founded it in 2008 with my business partner (ex Ajax Amsterdam player) Kizito 'Kiki' Musampa. It was based on our Green Floating concept, which uses recycled polystyrene to create floating buildings. The original idea was to build houseboats, but when the housing market stalled we move into wellness – a niche market that's still in demand.

What is the Green Floating concept?

It's all based on building on a foundation of recycled polystyrene, which is as strong as

steel, but can flex by 17 per cent and is also buoyant and provides excellent insulation. This structure is coated by fibreglass and a layer of vegetation covers the top of the building. We always knew that the carbon footprint of our buildings had to be neutral – we've actually gone one step further and made it carbon negative because the vegetation will convert CO₂ to oxygen.

How did the partnership with Patrick Blanc come about?

The idea of having vegetation on the walls and roof came from the floating gardens created in the 1970s and 1980s by the Dutch artist Robert Jasper Grootveld. We wanted to create a structure similar to that; when we teamed up with architect Anne Holtrop



Once the flagship spa is open in Amsterdam, there are plans to roll out the concept globally



Botanist Patrick Blanc used his living wall technique to cover the outside of the building in vegetation

he said there's a better way of doing this – a new technique developed by Patrick Blanc, the creator of the living wall.

Blanc's technique is based in the idea that you don't need soil to grow plants – all you need is sunlight, nutrients, minerals and water. He wraps a composite cloth material around buildings, which just needs to be sprinkled with water for a few minutes each day – using this technique you can have plants on the side of walls.

It wasn't easy to contact Patrick, but when we did he got very enthusiastic about our idea because what we had created was an ecological loop – normally his vertical gardens use rainwater with added nutrients and minerals, but our building floats on freshwater so the plants can use that.

How did you choose the location for the first Floating Gardens?

We're based in Amsterdam, and we have a freshwater lake around 15 minutes outside the middle of the city. It's a place where you can relax and look over the horizon, while being very close to the city centre and the 17th century canals.

The Amsterdam local government is trying to move away from the image of the red light district and the coffee shops and encourage more visitors interested in Van Gogh, Rembrandt and the canals. I think that sort of audience would be keen to go on a boat trip, and come and spend half a day in the spa.

What facilities will the spa have?

On the ground floor there will be four pools, including an outdoor infinity pool and a hot tub. There will also be two restaurants/bars and five saunas. The top floor will feature three treatment rooms and a large room for group therapy such as hot yoga.

What will set the Floating Gardens apart from other spas?

We are competing with four- and five-star city centre hotels. In these hotels, the spa facilities tend to consist of a pool and a sauna – sometimes in the basement – where the view is of someone else's genitals! In our case you have a beautiful view across the lake and gardens.

How did Musampa get involved?

I live on the canal close to the red light district, and one day I saw a Lamborghini with a Spanish licence plate. I kept seeing it and noticed the owner paying a parking meter. Parking meters in Amsterdam are some of the most expensive in the world. A few weeks later I recognised him in a restaurant and I offered him my spare parking permit – I was quite surprised when he turned out to be the professional footballer Kiki Musampa. Months later we got closer, he got enthusiastic about my plans and he said he'd like to get involved.

Kiki is originally from the Congo. His father is a professor of botanics, so he already had an interest.

How is the project being funded?

Kiki is mainly funding it. We are also in the process of negotiating a roll out of the concept to the rest of the world, but I can't say too much about that yet. We need to get the first spa out so that we have a flagship.

Who will the spa attract?

It will be quite high-end – it will attract four and five-star visitors.

What kind of treatments will you offer?

Spas shouldn't just offer treatments for relaxation purposes: change is what people are really looking for.

Areas such as psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), which looks at how emotions and health are related, and the links between stress and disease, will be explored in some of our treatments.

I've travelled the world researching treatment ideas. I met many teachers, but it was the Tibetan Lamas in India and Nepal who really opened my eyes. I learned that it's possible to not only change the mind, but also the structure of the brain. Today, pioneering experiments in neuroplasticity, a new science studying the brain's potential for change, reveal that we are capable not only of altering its structure but also of generating new neurons. There's now clear evidence that the brain can adapt, heal and renew itself. Our spa will offer this wealth of knowledge to its customers. ●

Everyone's talking about...

ONLINE REVIEWS

A half-star rating in online reviews can make or break a business say economists. How can spas raise their profiles?

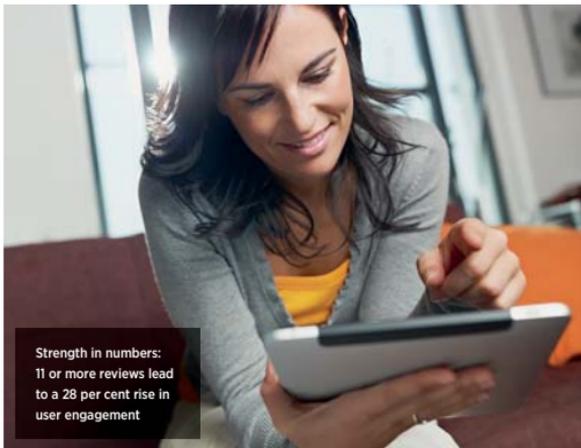
KATIE BARNES, MANAGING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

Just a half-star rating given by customers in online reviews could potentially make the difference between a business increasing its bottom line or going bust, according to a recent study by economists at the University of California, Berkeley.

The study, which is the first to link consumer feedback with the popularity of a business, was based on 148,000 reviews of 328 San Francisco restaurants on local business review site Yelp.com. On the website, customers score their restaurant experience on a scale of 1 to 5 and it was found that a rise from 3 to 3.5 stars increases a restaurant's chance of reaching capacity during peak times from 13 to 34 per cent. Furthermore, a restaurant that moved from a 3.5 to 4-star ranking was 19 per cent more likely to sell out in peak dining times.

While this study focused on restaurants, it's still interesting to consider transferrable lessons for any business which is subject to the growing number of online customer forums and websites from the likes of TripAdvisor – one of the world's largest travel websites, to more sector-specific ones like SpaFinder Wellness and Wahanda.

And it highlights the power of online customer reviews. "Online reviews play a major role in our industry and many of our guests stay with us because of them," says Mark Maggiotto, co-manager at The Phoenix Resort in Belize, which came top for review



DIEGO CERVO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

and opinion ratings in TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice Hotels list last year.

So, just what should spa operators be doing to raise their ratings in online reviews? With many companies caught up in the frenzy of Facebook and Twitter, it would be interesting to see if and how operators also monitor what's being said about their businesses in customer reviews. In addition, to understand what tools they use and whether they outsource this element of their marketing or handle it in-house?

If a complaint is published for anyone to read in cyberspace, how should an operator react? Christine Petersen, the head of TripAdvisor for Business, says 84 per cent of its users agree that "an appropriate management response to a bad review improves the impression of the hotel". But is there a right or wrong way to deal with such a public complaint? And whose job is it to handle the situation?

In some cases, it might be that a customer has had a wonderful experience at a spa – yet if they don't write about it online who's going to know? There's certainly strength in numbers as a TripAdvisor study found that properties with as few as 11 reviews see a 28 per cent rise in user engagement compared to those with 10 or fewer. While those with 50 or more reviews saw a hefty 38 per cent increase in engagement.

So how can spa operators encourage customers to write reviews – especially when it could create an abrupt end to an experience which has been designed to help them escape from it all? And, if something positive has been said about your company, how can you make the most of it from a marketing point of view? We ask the experts...

See p30 for advice on how spas can increase their chances of winning awards at the submission stage

It was found that a rise from 3 to 3.5 stars increases a restaurant's chance of reaching capacity during peak times from 13 to 34 per cent

According to a recent PhoCusWright survey, commissioned by TripAdvisor, 87 per cent of our users agree that TripAdvisor reviews help them feel more confident in their booking decisions and more than half (53 per cent) said they won't book a hotel that doesn't have any reviews on our site.

We launched TripAdvisor for Business in 2010 to help hospitality businesses, including those with spas, to thrive online. Firstly, we encourage owners to register in our Management Centre and claim their listing on TripAdvisor so they can make the most of the tools at their disposal: signing up for email notifications for when they receive a new review, analysing the feedback they receive from reviewers; and comparing their business' performance with a competitor's in the region.

One of the most important tools is the Management Response feature, which ensures that business owners are able to



Christine Petersen

President, TripAdvisor for Business

provide their side of the story and thank guests and customers for their feedback. The PhoCusWright study found that 84 per cent of users agree that an appropriate management response to a bad review improves their impression of the hotel. I'd encourage all business owners to register and make use of this essential tool.

Another major initiative includes Business Listings – our paid-for service for hoteliers and accommodation owners that enables them to add their direct contact details to their TripAdvisor property page and encourage more direct bookings. The product also allows them to post special offers on our site for more visibility.

In addition, we've focused heavily on helping more than 500 travel brands – from the Wyndham Hotel Group to Thomas Cooke and British Airways – leverage the power of our traveller content. We provide them with a number of widgets and badges, which they can use to display their TripAdvisor ratings, reviews and awards on their own website or Facebook page.

We also have an educational aim. We've created a programme of webinars and TripAdvisor Master Classes, as well as a wide array of informational material, to better inform business owners on how to make the most of their presence on TripAdvisor and how to collect more reviews.

■ *TripAdvisor has websites in 30 countries in 21 languages with more than 75 million reviews and opinions on the site.*

Details: www.tripadvisor.com

A study by PhoCusWright found that 84 per cent of our users agree that an appropriate management response to a bad review improves their impression of the hotel

Although it seems counter-intuitive, we discourage operators from asking for, or soliciting, reviews from customers as we feel the most useful reviews are those that occur naturally.

We take a number of steps to ensure that our content is trustworthy, including implementing an automated review filter to detect suspicious behaviour. Imagine, for example, a business owner who solicits a review by sticking a laptop in front of a customer and smilingly invites her to write a review while he looks over her shoulder. So, while solicited reviews may be perfectly legitimate, the harsh reality is that they often fall somewhere in between.

What we do encourage business owners to do is let their customers know they have a presence on Yelp. We provide a number of logos for them to use on their website, business cards and marketing collateral.

Ultimately, we feel the best way to get positive reviews is to offer great customer



Darnell Holloway

Manager of local business outreach, Yelp Inc

service offline in their day-to-day business. Last May we conducted some research which showed that customer service plays an incredibly crucial role when it comes to having a strong or poor rating on Yelp.

If a Yelper mentioned good customer service, they were more than five times as likely to give a 5-star review rather than a 1-star. Similarly, nearly 70 per cent of bad customer service experiences were given a 1-star rating, compared to less than 5 per cent that got 5 stars.

Saying 'focus on great customer service and the ratings and reviews will come' is easy, but what do Yelpers think is good or bad? We grabbed the words that showed

up more often in positive customer service reviews and it turns out that most of them care about the simple things. Aside from the generally positive feeling about a place that Yelpers love, 'friendly', 'nice' and 'helpful' were often mentioned with positive customer service.

If businesses are serious about improving their customer service, we suggest they take time to read their reviews and see what they're doing consistently well and not so well. From there, Yelp has a number of free tools and tutorial videos in its Business Support Center to help improve their rating, raise their profile and respond to reviews.

■ *Yelp was founded in 2004 to help people find local businesses. It had a monthly average of 84 million unique visitors in the third quarter of 2012.*

Details: www.yelp.com or www.biz.yelp.com

If a Yelper mentioned good customer service, they were over five times as likely to give a 5-star review... and nearly 70 per cent of bad customer service experiences were given a 1-star rating

The impact of online reviews on our business is enormous and seems to be growing steadily – more guests we talk to say they checked other customer reviews on the internet first before booking. One of the most important and credible websites for us is TripAdvisor and around 50 per cent of our clients say they looked us up on there beforehand.

When we receive wonderful praise from guests checking-out, we simply encourage them to write an online review to let other like-minded potential guests read about their stay. We don't offer incentives, as that doesn't give you a fair and true outcome.

Most industry operators are familiar with online reviews, but they may not have the time or resources to actively manage them. We used to outsource our social media and online activity, but found it too corporate for our intimate retreat. Now we gather our own internal information and find it gives us a much more accurate report.

We check websites every few days and also have alerts set up, so we know when something new has been written. We use the comments to improve our services and facilities – discussing them in weekly



Gregg Cave

General manager and co-owner,
Gaia Spa & Retreat, Australia

head of department meetings and talking about action points. It's this team dedication and commitment to attention to detail, plus guest loyalty, that has been key to our high ranking. On TripAdvisor, we have 160 reviews and usually get around one to two new ones a week. We have the highest 5-star rating and are also ranked as their fifth best relaxation/spa hotel in the world.

It's dangerous not to monitor how you're perceived in cyberspace, as social media has such a powerful impact. We pride ourselves on impeccable service, so when I see something written about my team in a negative way it feels like a knife in the heart. The best way to deal with a complaint is personally and with full attention to detail, but don't get off on the back foot and respond emotionally. The number one rule is to gather all the facts and have a clear understanding of what happened first. If you find it to

be a genuine complaint, then respond with empathy and listen, as this will enable you to move forward positively.

Usually, the relevant head of department will respond to comments, but if it's a more serious matter, I take on a full investigation and reply personally. Recently, I had a guest who wrote a very negative comment online. While here, I spent each day talking to her and accommodating her every need and at no time did she seem unhappy, to the contrary. After a thorough investigation, I discovered that 80 per cent of the complaint had credence (which I responded to) and the rest was truly unjustified.

A lot of our guests come with issues and have different stories to tell and while we do our best to nurture, sometimes online reviews become a platform for a gripe. So, I would advise operators to closely watch out for this too.

■ Gregg Cave set up Gaia Retreat & Spa in Byron Bay, Australia, with singer Olivia Newton-John in 2004 (see SB10/3 p46).

Details: www.gaiaretreat.com.au

When I see something written about my team in a negative way it feels like a knife in the heart... but don't get off on the back foot and respond personally: gather all the facts first

Our data shows that customers actively research online reviews before making a purchase. Having a strong collection of positive reviews helps consumers make their purchasing decisions, builds reputation and can drive people to actively seek out a spa.

We've discovered many 'hidden gems': spas and salons that might not – on the face of it – stand out as being extraordinary and yet receive hundreds of 5-star reviews, making potential new clients take notice.

Thai London in London has no shop front and little signage. Yet, thanks to the positive reviews on Wahanda, its business has grown so much it's had to add treatment rooms and recruit more staff. Out of its 106 reviews, 76 have a 5-star rating.



Lopo Champalimaud

Co-founder, Wahanda

We're living in the internet era, making your online reputation and image management absolutely critical to secure bookings. We have locations on our website whose businesses run very profitably, almost solely based on reviews, as it's such a crucial part of marketing. Ignoring this as an opportunity is seriously restricting for a business.

Spas could offer an incentive to encourage customers to post reviews. After every booking at Wahanda, we email the cus-

tomers offering them a £5 voucher if they come onsite and review their experience. And we get 1,000s of reviews a month.

My advice would also be for spa owners to constantly monitor what's being said about their business online and, just as importantly, react to comments. Operators should check reviews daily and set up Google alerts to make sure they don't miss anything. They should also check other businesses on customer review sites too – you need to see what your competition is up to.

■ Wahanda is one of the largest online communities for wellness related companies.

Details: www.wahanda.com

Some businesses on our website run very profitably, almost solely based on reviews, as it's such a crucial part of marketing. Ignoring this as an opportunity is seriously restricting for a business

Discover the world's most elegant expression of infrared-therapy

Today's spa-goers want more than pampering – they're seeking results-oriented treatments to significantly enhance their wellbeing. Alemanno Design's innovative collection of infrared-heated chaise lounges is meeting this demand. Backed by peer-reviewed clinical evidence, infrared therapy is emerging as a treatment that can progressively move the body toward a state of optimal health. By providing the most elegant and effective form of this natural therapy, Alemanno Design's handcrafted lounges are helping spa patrons achieve their quest for optimum health, while imbuing distinctive spas around the globe with an aura of unsurpassed luxury.



AN EVIDENCE-BASED THERAPY

Infrared heat penetrates deep below the skin's surface providing unprecedented health benefits and a profound sense of deep relaxation. In addition, clinical evidence indicates infrared therapy:

- provides significant relief for people with chronic pain (up to 70 per cent)
- improves the general health and wellbeing of those with type 2 diabetes, congestive heart failure, chronic fatigue and mild depression
- aids in weight loss by boosting the metabolism
- stimulates the production of blood cells that help the body fight infections
- increases the amount of toxic waste released by the body – making it a safe, pleasant means of detoxification
- increases joint mobility, reduces inflammation and accelerates the healing of injuries; and
- helps stimulate the production of collagen and increases skin regeneration

Inherent in this wide range of therapeutic applications is infrared therapy's multi-generational appeal – a critical factor in increasing any spa's revenue

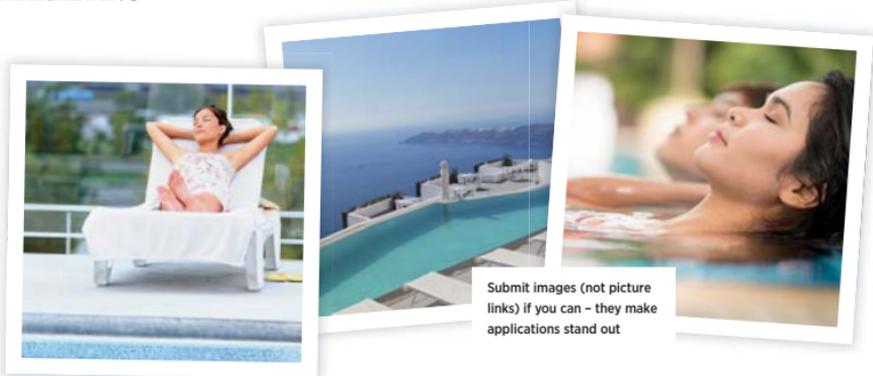
THE ALEMANNO ADVANTAGE

Alemanno Design's stylish chaise lounges offer some key advantages over traditional infrared saunas. Each ergonomically perfect lounge is carved from a single marble block and can be customised to suit any décor. In addition they:

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- come equipped with a three- independent-zone heating system (legs, hips, back) allowing for "personalised" treatment
- are completely mobile and can be used in combination with other treatments (ie body wraps) enhancing their effectiveness and utilisation
- enable hotels of all sizes to offer guests a unique in-suite spa experience
- can be outfitted with plugs for laptops, iPhones, audio equipment etc; and
- offer custom-made and budget-oriented solutions with a five-year guarantee.

To view the collection, including the new Cesar Lounge and hammam beds, please visit www.alemanno.de

WINNER of the prestigious European Health & Spa Award in the category: **Best Technical Spa Innovation**



Submit images (not picture links) if you can – they make applications stand out

AWARD WINNING ADVICE

Awards can be a very powerful marketing tool, yet many great spas are missing out because of poorly written submissions. Spa judge Samantha Foster has five tips to give your spa's submission that winning edge

SAMANTHA FOSTER, DIRECTOR, DESTINATION SPA MANAGEMENT



Over the past 10 years I've had the privilege of judging several different spa awards internationally. It's always with a sense of excitement that I receive the nominations. However, the excitement soon turns to dismay, as I turn through page after page of marketing hyperbole and missed opportunity. If your spa is worthy of winning an award, here's some advice on how to do it justice:

1 Does your spa really fit the criteria for the category? This is important.

Don't apply the shotgun approach of entering a heap of awards in the hope that you'll win one, as it irritates judges if you waste their time. For example, the destination spa category always fills with resort spas claiming to qualify because they hold yoga classes. Before submitting your application, carefully go through the criteria and make sure you can meet every one.

2 Craft your submission specifically for the award category. The worst

thing you can do is cut and paste general blurb from your brochure or website. It demonstrates a lack of care or forethought, so I'm staggered how often it happens. Ask 'why should I win this award?' and remember that you don't need to describe every

aspect of your spa – focus only on those that would make you an outstanding recipient.

3 Avoid marketing hype. Judges are industry professionals, not consumers.

Your mission is to inform them of your strengths relative to your competitors; not to get them to book a treatment. Explain how your spa meets the criteria and offer

The worst thing you can do is cut and paste general blurb from your brochure or website. It demonstrates lack of care, so I'm staggered how often it happens

tangible proof – often I'll get to the bottom of a submission having not found one meaningful piece of information.

4 Keep it concise and complete.

Respect the judge's time and keep your submission as concise as you can, while still including all the necessary information. If it's too long, you'll quickly lose your reader's attention. However, don't go to the other extreme and just include

a link to your website, as few will have time to explore it. Make it easy for judges. Use bullet points to summarise key parts that justify your spa's worthiness to win the award. Focus on competitive advantages – things that you do that are unique or demonstrably better or different compared to others in your category.

5 Include images where possible. If

the award organiser permits, attach images – not links – of your spa's facilities, floor plans or other graphic elements. They will make your submission far more memorable than others.

Applying for awards isn't difficult. You just need to have a clear understanding of your spa's strengths and competitive advantages. Judges typically have more than 200 pages of nominations to sift through, so if you put yourself in their shoes before you write you'll be ahead of the game. Good luck!

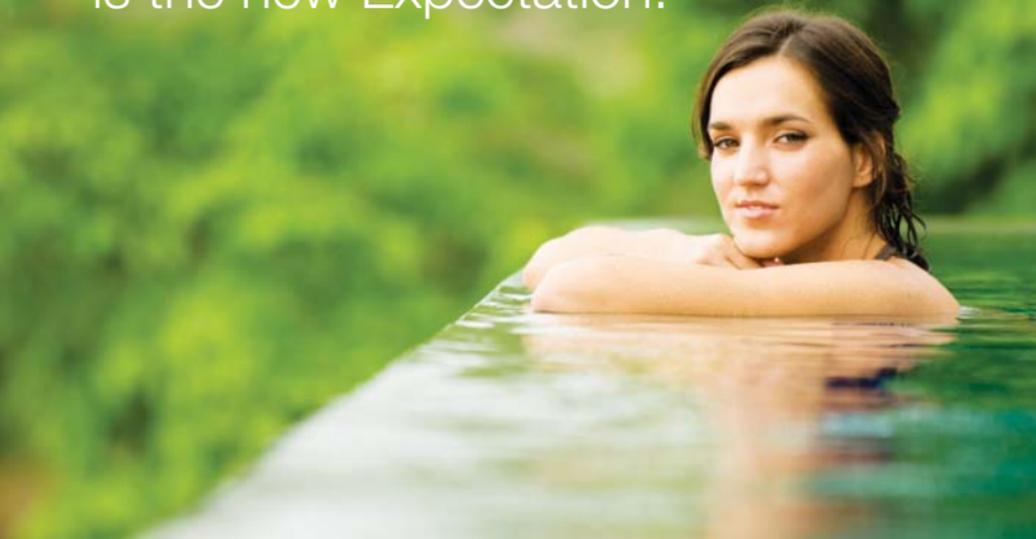
● For more marketing advice, this time on how spas can improve their online consumer reviews, see p26.



Samantha Foster, director, Destination Spa Management
Email: sam.foster@dsmgurus.com
Skype: samanthafooster

PHOTOS: MARIANO/SOPIEM/GETTY IMAGES/DRAGON IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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DEBORAH SZEKELY

The extraordinary Deborah Szekely has spent 73 years working in the spa industry and announced the launch of a new career on her 90th birthday. Liz Terry went to meet her

LIZ TERRY, EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

“Nothing in my body is 90 years old apart from my knowledge,” explains Deborah Szekely to her attentive audience. “Because the body largely renews itself every seven years, so very few things in me are any older than that.

“And our bodies are nobody’s responsibility but our own. Don’t forget that ultimately no one else really gets the rewards for taking care of that body apart from you.”

I’m at Szekely’s weekly lecture at Rancho La Puerta, in Tecate, Mexico – the destination spa she founded, initially as a health retreat, with her late husband Edmond Szekely 73 years ago – and she’s playing to a full house of spa-goers. We’re in a beautiful wood-beamed room with sweeping views over gardens and mountains.



The crackle of concentration in the room is palpable, because when a 90-year-old with the vivacity, passion and focus of Szekely gives you health advice, you tend to pay extra special attention.

She has great power to influence people with her words, as witnessed at the 2012 Global Spa and Wellness Summit in Aspen, when, as a keynote speaker on health, she moved many to tears with her powerful oratory. “I’m so fortunate I’m able to communicate my feelings about subjects I feel passionately about,” she remarks in our ongoing email correspondence.

The Rancho La Puerta lectures give Szekely the chance to share her knowledge and philosophy with guests and to encourage the attitudes and behaviours that underpin the ethos of the place.



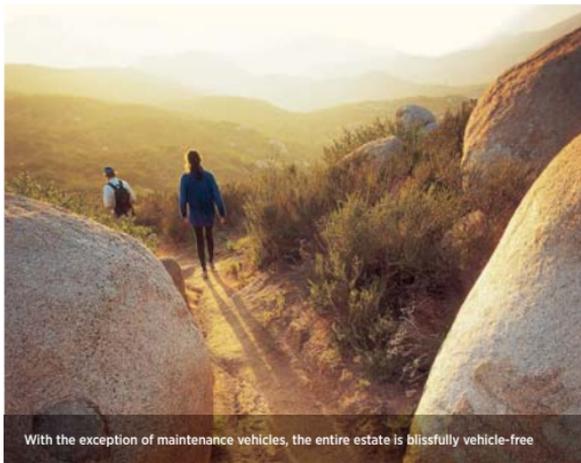
The Szekely family owns 3,000 acres of land around Rancho La Puerta and has protected the area against development

"What you're doing at the Ranch," she tells everyone, "is not worrying about losing a few pounds, it's beginning a conversation with your body – which means listening. You can't have a conversation without listening. It's a two-way partnership.

"And once you begin to listen, you'll be amazed at the rewards – the body wants to live and to thrive, it loves to be healthy and it can be our choice to be healthy. There are a few who have health issues, but for most of us it is a choice. Gaining and losing weight, for example, is a lot of work for the body. It copes, it manages, but it would manage a lot better if we paid it more attention and didn't make it work so hard at pointless things.

"Everything at the Ranch is designed to teach you to hold hands with yourself," says Szekely, "to encourage you to learn to listen to the messages your body's giving you: when you get a headache, for example, there's a reason. You might not have slept enough, not eaten enough, had a fight with your friend or be dehydrated. Whatever the reason, it's a message and you need to pay attention and fix it. Our aim is for you to go home with a new respect for your body.

"As you wake in the morning," she advises, "take time to stretch and feel your body moving. Check it over bit by bit – awaken



With the exception of maintenance vehicles, the entire estate is blissfully vehicle-free

it to the day – wiggle your fingers and toes, feel the energy and be aware of the miracle of it. Then breathe deeply three or four times, take a moment to feel blessed – the body likes that – to feel blessed, because we are. We have much to feel blessed about.

"Then I'd like you to say out loud, 'Good Morning!' Because it is a good morning, with all kinds of possibilities and you're sending that thought out into the ether.

"It makes a difference, that little routine of acknowledging your body at the start of ▶

INTERVIEW: DEBORAH SZEKELY

► the day,” she explains, “you’ll find that if you’re faced with a decision about how you treat your body – heading towards food you shouldn’t be eating, for example, or trying to make time for exercise – you’ll be more respectful of it if you acknowledge your partnership with it and your ability to control how you behave. It’s the absolute key.

“If you want your body to serve you well, then serve it well: it’s self-regulating, self-healing and it knows what to do, don’t wait until things fall apart before you take action, cherish it and pay attention to it.”

DEEPLY EMBEDDED PHILOSOPHY

The joy of Rancho La Puerta is that this philosophy of self-reliance and knowledge-sharing can be found in all aspects of the operation. Guests enjoy access to a huge choice of wellness options during their week-long stays – healthy food, wellness lectures, great hiking, a ‘health centre’ offering a good range of spa treatments, four swimming pools and a choice of fitness classes to match any destination spa in the world. It’s no surprise that ‘The Ranch,’ as Szekeley lovingly calls it, was voted World’s Best Destination Spa by readers of *Travel & Leisure* magazine in 2010 and 2011.

Just as important to the overall experience is the physical environment and it’s here that Szekeley and her daughter, Sarah-Livia Brightwood, a landscape designer, have collaborated to create a place which cradles and nurtures guests in a thousand delightful and unexpected ways.



Early morning hikes take guests up Mount Kuchumaa

Brightwood has created a sustainable, permaculture landscape which supports a rich biodiversity. Flocks of birds fly by, drifts of wildflowers come into view, insects hum and hammocks slung under trees create shady restful sanctuaries to while away the midday hours. It’s a healing place.

The work has taken decades “Each time my mother came to me to say she wanted

to add a feature or a building,” says Brightwood, “I had to work out where best to place it.” The result of her deliberations is wonderfully pleasing – lawns roll across a landscape planted with herbs, fruit trees and vines, red footpaths, laid with local, hand-made red brick pavers meander for miles connecting buildings and activities. “We make you walk here,” says Szekeley. ►



Dinner at Rancho La Puerta is prepared to a very high standard. It’s largely vegetarian, with a fresh caught local fish dish offered each day



The vast grounds have been landscaped by Szekely's daughter Sarah-Livia Brightwood - a landscape designer

FIRST PERSON: NOA SCHECHTER-KATZEN, CONTRIBUTOR

Before the visit, I didn't know what to expect, but I never anticipated it would change my life as it did by creating a 'reboot' experience just for me.



When you arrive at Rancho La Puerta, you're given a pedometer and it's fun to track how you can walk two or more miles a day without even going out of your way.

And every step is a treat, with views of the mountains, rabbits, sculptures, trickling fountains and the scent of rosemary, sage, geranium and lavender.

The grounds spread across 35 acres just across the US border in Tecate, Mexico. They're dry, yet landscaped with amazing flowers, olive trees and herbs. Everything which grows looks healthy.

If you're lucky with timing you even get to fill yourself with snacks from the abundant crop of figs and grapes, many varieties of which decorate the property.

When it comes to activities, there's so much on offer it's a challenge to select what to do. The morning hikes are as close to finding religion as I've ever come.

There are multiple routes with unbeatable scenery and a pace you can make your own. Even in the rain or hot sun, panting and sweating, I loved every minute of it.

A visit to the Ranch isn't complete without a hike to its six-acre organic farm - Rancho Tres Estrellas, where head gardener, Salvador Tinajero, gives tours. He's a complete joy to be around, sharing his passion for his produce. The bounty is used at the adjacent culinary centre and cooking school, La Cocina Que Canta, as well as supplying meals for guests in the dining hall at Rancho La Puerta.

While the farm was amazing and inspiring, I was a little disappointed with the cooking school. It's a spectacular place with modern facilities and guest chefs who teach alongside executive chef Denise Roa. I took a class with one of the many visiting chefs and while we used much of the gorgeous produce from the farm, the food we cooked wasn't as tasty or inventive as anything served in the dining hall.

I have (and love) the Rancho La Puerta cookbook and would have much preferred having a lesson on how to take the Ranch way of cooking home. How about a lesson

on how to make their delicious granola?

The food at Rancho La Puerta is just perfect - fresh with good choices. We ate delicious grilled vegetable pizzas and a chayote lasagna I still dream about. A guest who'd been eight times said her motto was "never miss a meal or a hike".

Breakfast is a special treat, as there's a choice of eating by one of the pools or in the dining room. My favourite was the Bircher muesli, which I'm still making at home. One day I thought I'd died and gone to foodie heaven when we were treated to quesadillas by the pool with a chef making fresh tortillas.

I never felt deprived and even after eating seconds, never felt over-full and all my clothes fitted better when I got home.

But for me, what makes the Ranch extra special and contributes to it being a rejuvenating experience that stays with you long after you've left, is the energy you get from the community that forms each week. From the moment you board the Ranch bus at the airport, everyone's happy to be part of the experience and so many friendships are made that people return together year after year.

INTERVIEW

“I can’t begin to tell you the extent of my anger when I hear decisions about health policy. The US government declaring that pizza is a vegetable, for example. How dare they do that?”

▶ Early photographs show the grounds as largely being covered by the indigenous flora, so the beautiful landscaping is a triumph of gardening craft and makes up a significant part of the wellness experience – I propose to Brightwood that her contribution to the Ranch is in many ways equal to her mother’s because of this and she quietly accepts the compliment, while Szekeley is clearly extremely proud of her daughter’s work.

Szekeley’s son Alex was a driving force in the business until his untimely death from melanoma in 2002 at the age of 44.

He’s credited with working to establish the Ranch’s staff programmes. SpaFinder’s Susie Ellis, who’s close to the Szekeley, recalls: “It was Alex who instilled in the Ranch the appreciation for each member of staff. He believed taking care of those who take care of the guests is of the utmost importance.” It’s clear these precedents endure today, as the staff are long-serving, as well as natural and attentive with guests and clearly care passionately, about being part of the Rancho La Puerta family.



NEW CAREER

After running for US Congress unsuccessfully aged 60, Szekeley “flew the coop” and headed off to Washington DC anyway, where she had a second career running the Inter-American Foundation and other NGOs.

She was deeply involved with the Ranch between 1990 and 2010, when she turned

The cooking school, La Cocina Que Canta: guests can take a hike from the Ranch to eat breakfast made with food fresh from the farm

the presidency over to Brightwood who runs it with general manager Roberto Arjona. Today she still sits on the board and her weekly lectures keep her involved. ▶

THE FACILITIES

Guests have a good choice of accommodation, staying in Rancheras, Haciendas, Villas and Villa Suites – single storey houses that are scattered across the site, many with their own terraces. All are comfortably furnished in Mexican style, with terracotta tiled floors and bright decor. Many have their own wood burning fireplace for the winter months.

It took me a while to find the spa, (espe-

cially as it’s called the ‘Health Centre’) and with so much competing for time, it would be easy for guests to overlook it, but they clearly enjoy this element of their stay and swap stories at dinner about their experiences. The treatments I had were well delivered and I would have had more, but it was booked solid, indicating capacity could be an issue, although plans are afoot for capital investment in the next few years to remedy this.



Guests can take classes at the cookery school with executive chef Denise Roa (right). Crops are grown organically on the adjacent farm

INCLUDING
NEW WARM
SAND SPA
RITUAL



The New MLX Quarz - The 3 in 1 Spa Table

1. Warm sand body treatment
2. Multifunctional massage table
3. Relaxation lounge with benefit of warm sand

INTERVIEW

“There are so many challenges. Old people are over-medicated and sitting themselves to death... unhealthy food is subsidised so it's cheaper than the healthy alternatives”

▶ The arrival of Szekely's 90th birthday spurred her to find a new way to harness her lifetime of skills for the greater good: “I wanted to do something very special when I turned 90,” she says, “and I can't begin to tell you the extent of my frustration and anger when I see the terrible state of our health education and decisions about health-related policy. The US government declaring that pizza is a vegetable, for example, how dare they do that?”

“I was thinking there must be something we can do,” she says with exasperation, “because we've been doing nothing. Health care is sick care in the US. We need an effective focus on prevention and education.”

The solution, and her new passion, is Wellness Warrior (www.wellnesswarrior.org), a lobbying group she's established for “fighting unhealthy special interests that unduly influence the US Congress and advocating preventative wellness and healthy food”. The organisation has a mission statement ‘Be Heard, Be United, Be Well’.

“There are millions of people involved in wellness,” she says, “but they have no say in



Washington. My aim is to raise money for lobbying to bring about change. I want a million people connected with wellness to donate \$10/year so we can lobby on prevention.

“I want young people whom the current lobbyists are influencing to hear our viewpoint also. They don't realise how dangerous it is when government guidelines allow pizza to be counted as a ‘vegetable’ in a balanced meal plan. If the main dish was pasta, this could mean that everyone genuinely thinks they're eating a balanced meal, when they're very obviously not doing so.

“Vermont and Maine are doing school lunches on a farm-to-table basis throughout the state. It's healthier – and it's cheaper! There are so many wonderful initiatives like that which we can promote.

“I think there's a pent up demand for wellness,” she says. “I want to see if I can create a tipping point. It will either be a spectacular failure or a spectacular success and I'm prepared for either outcome.”

And Szekely's in a hurry. “For 73 years I've made my living making people healthy. Someone worked out I've had an impact on 500,000 lives,” she says. “It took 73 years to do that, but I don't have another 73 years to do another 500,000, so I need to find a faster way using technology.

“There are so many challenges. Old people are over-medicated and sitting themselves to death, drug cocktails are doing harm – diabetes drugs can cause high blood pressure and blood pressure drugs may cause diabetes, for example. The incidence of lifestyle disease is increasing and government policies

Szekely's passion and commitment moved many delegates to tears at the 2012 Global Spa and Wellness Summit in Aspen

have led to a situation where the production of unhealthy foods is subsidised so they're cheaper than the healthy alternatives.”

It sounds as though Szekely plans to make waves in Washington and such a challenge is entirely in line with her views on ageing: “These days, if we look after ourselves, we're living longer. I urge people to think of life in thirds: the first 30 years are for education and growing up, the second for starting a home and raising kids and the third are wide open for reinvention. The reason you want to be healthy is so you can have these years of glorious freedom. “It's important to start daydreaming early about what it is you'd like to do when you're 60,” she says, “that's the reason people come back to the Ranch over and over again – they want the health so they can have freedom in that heady last third of life.”

So at 90, Szekely is heading out into her fourth ‘third’ of life – nimble from regular pilates classes and workouts, with a spring in her step, a refreshingly fierce attitude and her life experiences under her belt. “I really do feel that what I'm doing is what I was supposed to do,” she says. ●



Liz Terry, editor,
Spa Business magazine
Email: lizterry@spabusiness.com
Tel: +44 1462 431385
Twitter: @elizterry



GOLDEN DOOR

In addition to developing Rancho La Puerta, Szekely founded luxury, Japanese-style spa the Golden Door in Escondido, California, US in 1958 (SB04/Q1 p86). The spa was sold in 1998 and has recently changed hands again (see news on p18). Szekely has confirmed she will continue her weekly lectures there under the new ownership. Details: www.goldendoor.com



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Asia Pacific

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E: sales@barrandwray.com

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Recovery Begins

Revenues increased by 8.3 per cent in the spa departments of US hotels in 2011, indicating the start of a strong recovery. Andrea Foster, reveals more about the latest statistics from PKF's *2012 Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry* report

ANDREA FOSTER, VICE-PRESIDENT, AND NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF SPA & WELLNESS CONSULTING, PKF CONSULTING USA

The economic downturn hit the US hotel spa industry hard, affecting demand, revenues and profitability, reminding us that spas are not operated in a vacuum and that hotel spas are impacted by the economy at large and by the performance and trends of the lodging industry in particular.

Demographics, psychographics and behaviour trends also play an important part in the performance of spas. We know health-related deaths are fuelled by poor lifestyle, and increase with age and it's well-known that the deterioration of the health of the

US population and rising rates of obesity are resulting in record healthcare costs. Added to this, the US has an ageing population that includes 76 million baby boomers.

Self-care is at the core of the spa philosophy and as more attention is given to the importance of proactively maintaining good health through better lifestyle choices, we can expect to see demand for spas increase. Synergistically, spa marketing and messaging should play to this trend toward a more wellness-based lifestyle approach. The potential result? Hotel spas sustainably 'doing well, by doing good'.

Fortunately, we began to see an uplift in hotel spas 'doing well' in 2011, according to findings from PKF Hospitality-Research (PKF-HR) in its *2012 Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry* report.

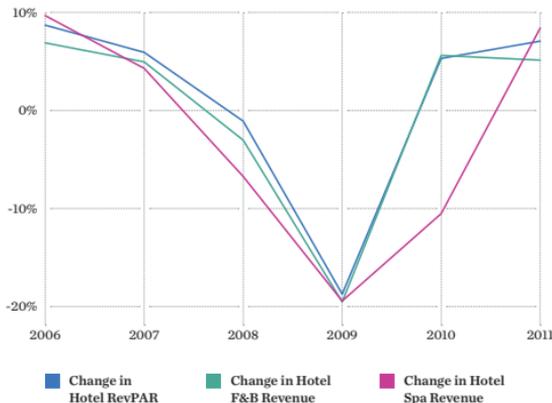
LED BY LODGING PERFORMANCE

The recovery of the US lodging industry has been driven by a surprisingly strong surge in demand – an annual average growth rate of 5 per cent since 2009. And hotel managers are now beginning to leverage improved occupancy levels by raising room rates.

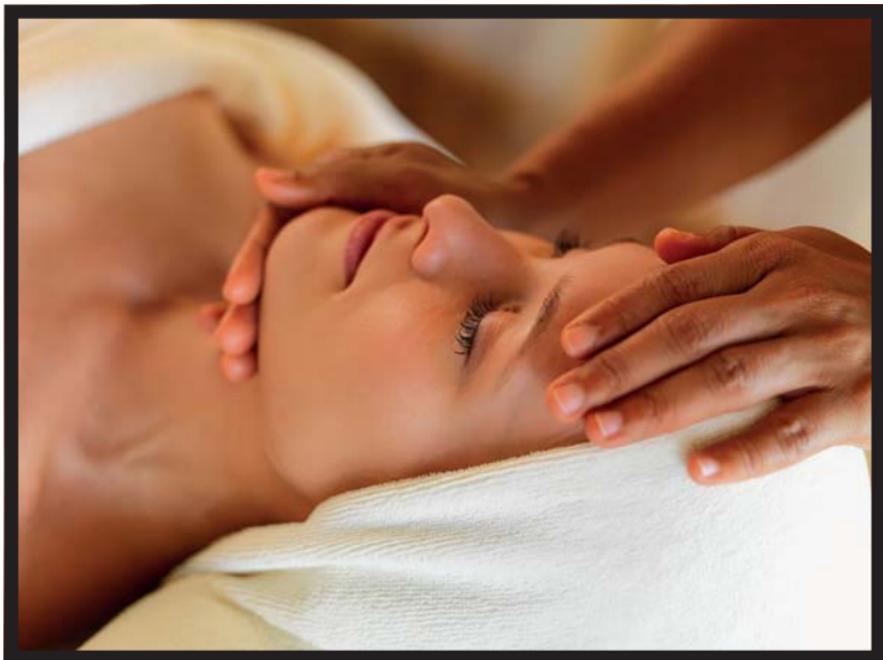
What has lagged, however, has been the ability of managers to increase the extra spend of guests while inside the hotel. In 2010, the first year of the recovery, PKF-HR noted increases in the volume of rooms revenue (5.3 per cent) and food and beverage sales (5.6 per cent), the two biggest sources of revenue for hotels. Yet the combined revenues from all other sources declined by 1.4 per cent that year (see Graph 1).

One of the other revenue sources for some hotels is a spa. Unfortunately, hotel spa department revenue declined by 10.5 per cent in 2010 (see SB12/2 p44). This is not entirely surprising. If we look to Maslow and his hierarchy of needs, we understand that basic needs include food and shelter, and do not include perceived luxuries such as spa treatments. In a recession, and the initial recovery that follows, consumers are hesitant to spend on products and services that are beyond basic necessities. The latest PKF-HR research focuses on US hotel spa performance in 2011 and the good news is that as the economy slowly improved, we observed a very strong 8.3 per cent increase in spa

Graph 1: Hotel Spa Revenue Recovery Lags Lodging Recovery (US\$PAR)



Source: PKF Hospitality Research, LLC – 2012 Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry



YIMARCUS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Massage is still the most popular service and revenue for it grew by 9.2 per cent from 2010 to 2011 (above); but retail increased the most by 13.4 per cent

department revenue in that year. While spa revenue is still below pre-recession peak levels, we do anticipate continued growth in the foreseeable future.

REVENUES RISE FOR ALL

The beginning of the recovery in 2011 was enjoyed by all types of hotel spas regardless of location, volume of revenue, or size of the facilities. In general, mid-sized hotel spas registered the greatest gains in revenue from 2010 to 2011. Based on number of hotel rooms (200-700), square feet (6,000-15,000), and number of treatment rooms (10-20), all hotel spas in the mid-categories of these measurements saw their revenue increase by double-digits (10-11 per cent) in 2011. Analysing the data by type of hotel, we observed similar revenue increases for spas located in resort (8.4 per cent) and urban (8.2 per cent) hotels.



LIV FRIS-LARSEN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Graph 2: Select Hotel Spa Revenues - Change from 2010 to 2011



Source: PKF Hospitality Research, LLC – 2012 Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry

While total spa department revenue increased 8.3 per cent, when measured on a dollar per occupied hotel guestroom basis, the revenue increase was just 3.3 per cent. This implies that spa managers benefited more from an increase in the capture of in-house guests, as opposed to a higher spend per guest. The increased customer count could also have been influenced by a rise in the number of local clients.

Massage services continue to generate the most revenue for hotels spas. Sales from massages averaged 57 per cent of total department revenue and grew by

9.2 per cent from 2010 to 2011 (see Graph 2). Other significant spa services enjoying strong growth in revenue during 2011 were Skin Care and Body Work (8.0 per cent), Salon Services such as hair and nail services (8.1 per cent) and Retail (13.4 per cent). One thought on the higher percentage increase in retail revenue might be the spa guest taking home spa products in an effort to extend the effects of the spa treatment, before committing to more frequent spa visits.

Only two service categories suffered a decline in revenue in 2011. Daily Facility

RESEARCH

- Fees dropped by 7.5 per cent, while Fitness and Personal Training revenues fell by 2.2 per cent. It should be noted that Membership Fee Revenue did increase by 6.4 per cent, therefore some of the daily facility patrons may have converted to spa members.

EXPENSES UNDER CONTROL

While revenues rose by 8.3 per cent, spa managers were also able to limit the growth in total departmental expenses to just 5.5 per cent. Please note, however, that in line with the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging industry, and similar other hotel revenue departments such as food and beverage, spa department expenses don't typically include overhead costs such as administration, sales and marketing, maintenance and utilities.

Like most operating departments in a hotel, labour costs are the single largest expense item for spas. In 2011, the combined costs of salaries, wages, bonuses and payroll-related expenses equalled 55.6 per cent of spa department revenue, or 72.9 per cent of total departmental expenses. From 2010 to 2011, spa labour costs increased by 4.9 per cent (see Graph 3).

Hotel spas that sell clothing and merchandise experienced a stout 14.7 per cent increase in the cost of the retail goods sold. Unfortunately this doesn't compare favourably to the concurrent 13.4 per cent increase in retail sales. All other departmental operating expenses (supplies, laundry, linens etc) rose by a combined 4.7 per cent.

PROFITS PREVAIL

Like revenues, all types of hotel spas enjoyed growth in profits in 2011. On average, the hotel spas in the survey sample achieved an 18.5 per cent increase in departmental profits from 2010 to 2011.

The level of profit growth was relatively consistent with the overall results when analysed by the location of the hotel, and the number of square feet within the spa. However, when segregating the sample by



US hotel spa labour costs grew by 4.9 per cent from 2010 to 2011 accounting for the majority of expenses

SUKTAKU/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Hotel spa managers will have to generate revenue growth by increasing the capture rate of in-house guests, sourcing additional local customers and/or raising the amount of spend per visit

the total volume of spa revenue, PKF-HR observed some distinctive differences in the per cent change in profits. Hotel spas with more than US\$3m in revenue saw their profits rise by 8 per cent. On the other hand, smaller spas with less than US\$1m in revenue enjoyed a very strong 61.4 per cent rise in profits. Of course, it needs to be noted that the large volume spa operations average 13 times more dollars in profits than their smaller counterparts, which has a significant impact on the size of the percentage increases.

GROWTH BY PRICE

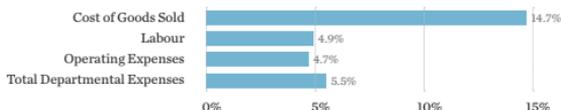
Based on its December 2012 *Hotel Horizons*® forecast report, PKF-HR estimates that RevPAR (revenue per available room) for US hotels grew by 6.8 per cent in 2012, and will continue to grow at an annual average rate of 6.4 per cent through 2016. It is important to note that going forward, the majority of RevPAR growth will be achieved through increases in room rates,

not gains in occupancy. This trend is particularly true for luxury and upper-upscale properties, the two lodging categories in which most hotel spas are located.

The implication for hotel spa managers is clear. The pace of growth in hotel guest counts is going to diminish over the next few years. Therefore, in order to perpetuate the recovery that started in 2011, hotel spa managers will have to generate revenue growth by increasing the capture rate of in-house guests, sourcing additional local customers, and/or raising the amount spa customers spend per visit.

As the spa industry moves forward, there are, as mentioned earlier, catalysts in existence and sweeping changes that will begin to radically change how we think about – and make choices related to – our health and wellbeing. Spas of all types are ideally positioned to be at the forefront of this change. To be effective, leaders in the spa industry need to be adept at monitoring and evaluating the changing economy, demographics and psychographics of our population, and proactively applying such knowledge to their programming, marketing and guest interaction. ●

Graph 3: Select Hotel Spa Department Expenses* – Change from 2010 to 2011



* Before deducting undistributed and fixed charges of hotel

Source: PKF Hospitality Research, LLC – 2012 Trends® in the Hotel Spa Industry

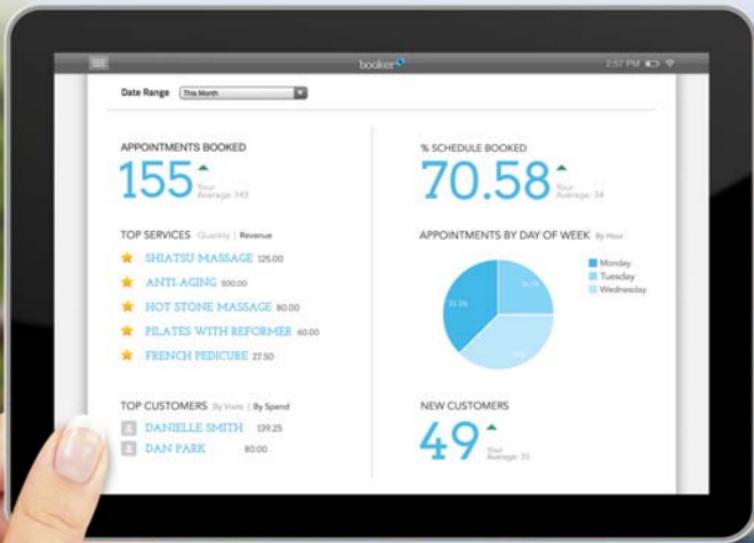


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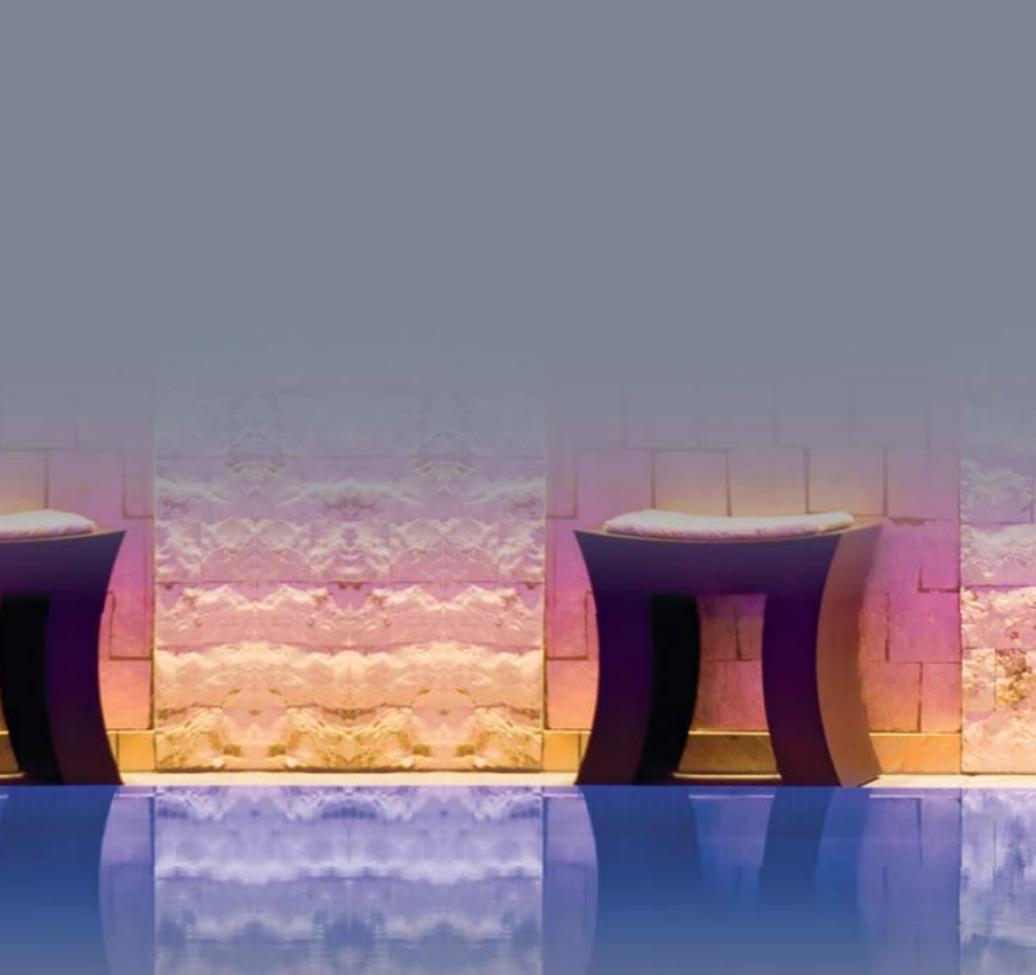


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THIS SPACE

The Health and Wellness Knowledge Venturing team at global foresights firm The Futures Company share their thoughts on the hottest trends impacting the spa industry worldwide

The need for affordable indulgence

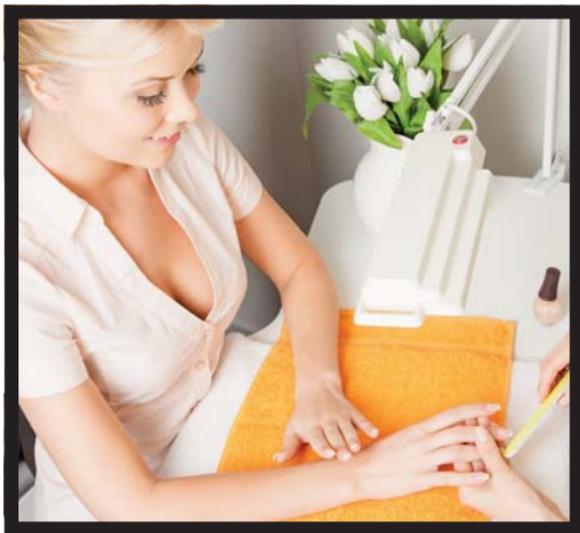
Amy Tomkins,
senior consultant (UK)

A holistic approach to wellbeing is innate to millennials and something they're reluctant to sacrifice, despite the economic uncertainty and financial constraints that surround them.



Eighteen to 33-year-olds in western Europe have grown up accustomed to a society where it's acceptable to focus on yourself as an individual and dedicate time to your own mental and emotional wellbeing. Yet times are tough for this group, particularly at the younger end of the age spectrum, as they attempt to establish themselves on the career ladder against a backdrop of austerity. They're increasingly worried about their future and are having to plan for the long-term in a way that previous generations

Whether it's a cup of their favourite coffee or a weekly music download, millennials are unwilling to sacrifice the boosts that help them to maintain an even keel



LEV DOUGLASSON/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

managed to avoid. Forty-three per cent of 18-25 year olds in the UK agreed in our 2012 *Global Monitor* study that over the next 12 months, they'll be planning for the worst financially – a stark contrast to the optimism of previous generations at this age. Emotional wellbeing is under threat as anxiety over job security, debt and future prospects takes hold.

Should the spa industry be worried by a cash-strapped younger generation? Reassuringly, in this climate, little luxuries are more important than ever for this age group. Whether it's a cup of their

▲ **Every day treats such as an express manicure are just what this group need**

favourite coffee or a weekly music download, millennials are unwilling to sacrifice the boosts that help them to maintain an even keel

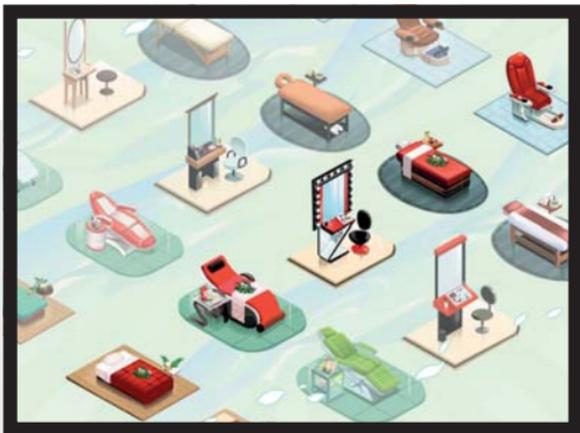
and deal with the pressures they're under. The spa industry should take note – luxury treatments will be out of budget, but affordable, everyday treats such as express manicures or day passes to use spa facilities, are just what this group need and crave. If the spa industry can offer a range of treatments that meet a £10-20 (US\$16-32, €12-24) budget, there is an opportunity to reach out to this younger audience.

Gamification and the spa industry

Eloise Keightley, consultant (UK)

Gamification is fast permeating every part of the health and wellness industry, including the spas.

In the future, we might expect to see spas using the carrot/stick approach that is currently prevalent in the gamification of the health and fitness industry, to improve loyalty schemes. An app especially designed for rewarding clients for purchases would replace physical loyalty cards, for example. Businesses could easily incentivise clients – especially those who do not make regular visits – to return for more treatments by offering points to trade for discounted or free treatments and trials, as well as sponsored online games. Tracking features, which are common among apps focused on more goal-oriented aspects of health such as diet and exercise could be used to help clients record and comment on treatments that they have enjoyed.



Social gaming offers an important means to enriching client relationships. Facebook, the world's largest gaming platform, has already been used by many brands looking to better educate and engage with clients and staff through social gaming. Spa Business has already reported on Clarins' Spa Life (see SB12/2 p80), which allows Facebook users to manage virtual spa clients in search of treatments to redeem points for Clarins products. More recently, pharmaceutical group Boehringer Ingelheim has created Syrum, a Facebook game

▲ Clarins is already using Facebook and gaming to enrich client relationships

in which players must solve global pandemics and diseases by discovering cures, creating a stable drug, and then testing it through clinical trials. It is easy to imagine how this type of immersive social gaming might be used to educate spa clients about treatments offered, especially treatments and technologies that are new to the market.

Gaming can help to deliver a much higher level of client engagement and connection which can only benefit the spa industry and its consumers.

The middle class opportunity in Brazil

Rebeca Dreicon, director (Brazil)

Brazilian poet Vinicius de Moraes made an apt reflection on the country's culture when he said "May ugly women forgive me, but beauty is fundamental". The desire to look good has deep cultural roots

and means that Brazil has long been fertile ground for the health and beauty industry. The cosmetic industry is flourishing and Brazil is the second largest plastic surgery market in the world behind the US.

Brazil has experienced rapid economic growth in the last decade, overtaking the UK in 2011 to become the sixth largest global economy in terms of GDP. This growth is amplifying this aspiration to be beautiful. Optimistic consumers are keen to stand



out from the crowd and display their success in life through their appearance. Yet the spa industry appears to be missing a trick in connecting with increasingly affluent middle-class consumers who have huge purchasing power. Brazil's middle class was expected to spend BRL11 trillion (US\$490bn, €369bn, £306bn) in 2012 with 52 per cent of the country's 1.9 million total population defined as middle class compared to 38 per cent 11 years ago.

While the industry has seen rapid growth over the last five years, with an increase from 400 to over 1,000 outlets, spa culture has not been mainstreamed. There's still a perception that spas are places for wealthy, high-profile people rather than for normal people

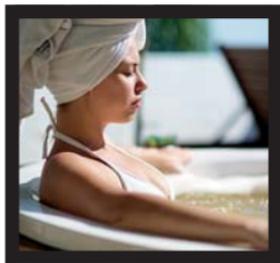
looking for moments of indulgence. Engagement with spas is hampered by a lack of clarity around the benefits and the services on offer. At a spa and natural products show, 10 per cent of consumers said the biggest barrier to them using spas was lack of aware-

▲ The number of spas in Brazil has risen from 400 to over 1,000 in five years

ness and understanding as to what spas provide.

Brazil is ripe for further growth in the spa industry, but only if spa culture

becomes more accessible. Appearance-centric consumers with increasing disposable incomes are prime targets, but without clearer communication on what they stand to gain from a spa experience, a valuable opportunity could be missed.



Body and mind

Louise Kennedy, consultant (UK)

We're living hectic modern lives and often tensely balancing work life and leisure time. More so than ever, we're seeing a rise in instances of stress.



According to the national health service in the UK, for example, work-related stress, which can negatively affect mental wellbeing by driving down self-esteem and positivity, has soared by 40 per cent since 2005.

This rise in workplace stress is driving consumers to take greater responsibility their mental wellbeing in order to manage their mind and maintain a positive mood. Where once mental health was complex and stigmatised, it's now emerging as a concern on a par with physical wellbeing.

We're seeing an increase in more 'alternative' holistic treatments that aim to promote mental wellbeing. Examples include the growth of 'mindfulness meditation' to boost mental harmony and the Zen Sound Therapy programme by Vermont's Stone Mountain Lodge in the US which aims to reduce anxiety through music therapy. In addition are bold multi-sensory experiences such as the AlphaSphere,



by Viennese artist sha, which encases the spa-goer in rich images, rhythms and vibrations to drive ultimate physical and mental relaxation.

In response, the world of the spa is now emerging as an accessible way for people to take time for themselves, invigorate the senses and improve their mental outlook on life. From massages to manicures, spa activities are proving to be a one-stop-shop to boosting self-esteem and mental wellbeing. According to the *ISPA 2012 US Spa Industry Study*, visits were up 4.1 per cent in 2011 (see SB12/4 p40).

▲ **The sensory AlphaSphere could help with the growing need for mental wellbeing**

Time pressures can mean that people often have less time to be able to devote to their mental wellbeing, despite people recognising

it as a concern. More often than not we're seeing people embracing simple and non-time intensive spa treatments in the home, from masks and facials to hot baths and scented candles that help to drive positive mental balance.

In the future we will see more people taking responsibility for their mental health by embracing the world of the spa, in their own time and at their own pace.

The rise of the bio-citizen

Casey Ferrell, senior consultant (US)

When it comes to their health and wellness, many consumers find navigating the myriad of choices available confusing, intimidating and very complicated. They continue to find their own way through this complexity, whether by relying on networks of trusted advisers and professionals, or seeking advice from peers or others who have faced similar situations and choices.



People are becoming increasingly familiar and willing to share personal health information with those outside of their circle of friends and family. For example, Facebook recently included health and wellness updates to its list of Life Events,

ranging from broken bones to illnesses overcome.

Some consumers are actually forming social affinities around health and biological identities. With the help of new media 'bio-citizens' – people who join social networks, on and offline, based on shared interest in health concerns – are generating and sharing specialised scientific and medical knowledge of their conditions. They are becoming experts in their own right and therefore increasingly influential.

Their impact is likely to be acutely felt, as user-generated content on health affinity websites and blogs will spur collective action by tapping into the collective intelligence of social networks for health. This new collective intelligence will introduce new health



▲ **Bio-citizens join social networks based on shared health concerns**

information authorities and will redefine healthcare solutions in the future.

As engaged and informed consumers share their private health information they will expect spa and wellness solutions to be more innovative and flexible, tailoring the services to meet their specific needs. ▶



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The rising need for urban sanctuaries

Amy Smyth, senior consultant (UK)

Urbanisation is an increasing threat to our activity levels. Currently, 51 per cent of the global population lives in an urban environment compared



to 30 per cent in 1950, it was reported in 2012 research by the Population Reference Bureau. In Europe more than two-thirds of people live in towns and cities making it hard for them to remain active.

Our green space and outdoor places to exercise are becoming increasingly threatened. In addition, air pollution can make it unpleasant and even a threat to our health to exercise outdoors. In some cases, people are too afraid to exercise in built-up areas for fear of crime and gangs. For these reasons the outdoor environment is a less



attractive place to exercise and people are seeking a safe and healthy space to retreat to.

We are seeing attempts from health clubs to address this by looking at innovative ways of bringing the outside indoors with some urban gyms creating the sensations of exercising outdoors by doing things like increasing natural light and projecting images of natural scenery on the walls. The Virgin Active health club in Aldersgate, London, for example has a group cycling studio with a floor to ceiling

▲ **Outdoor places to exercise are under threat, so gyms are recreating them**

projection screen and up to 150 different outdoor image videos (pictured). But this trend not just interesting for health clubs and gyms

– it could lead to a new growth opportunity for the spa industry as people start to view spas as more of an essential part of managing their health and wellbeing rather than a luxury. As urbanisation continues to rise people will increasingly seek a sanctuary to escape to and the benefits of visiting a spa will be far more widely appreciated.

Holistic ageing

Radha Patel, associate director (UK)

Today, there are 1.5 billion people aged over 50 and this is set to rise to 1.9 billion by 2020, say Euromonitor International and the UN. For the first time in history, the world's older population will be the fastest growing age group.



Older consumers are not necessarily bound by life stage stereotypes. Faced with the prospect of living for longer, they are not only looking for solutions that will help them better manage the health conditions they have, but also to slow or prevent age related decline in their bodies and minds.

From beauty creams and pills to Chinese placenta medicines and even functional drinks that prevent the early onset of Alzheimer's, the market for anti-ageing products has been rapidly expanding. At its most extreme it includes treatments such as replacing healthy joints with artificial ones to prevent joint deterioration in the first place. However, these solutions are not for everyone and many older people are

Spas should focus on promoting longevity and vitality with treatments that can prevent premature ageing and that can be easily replicated at home

looking for more holistic treatments that can be integrated into their lifestyles.

The spa industry is already responding with a growing number of anti-ageing treatments. In addition, healthy ageing spa holidays are being offered to consumers wanting to stay one step ahead of the ageing process. These holidays feature specially designed programmes that combine nutrition advice; modern optimal tests to assess functional health and metabolism; non-abrasive anti-ageing treatments, such as nourishing cranberry facials; and the ancient therapies of yoga, ayurveda and meditation to assist the cellular renewal process that naturally slows with age.

Spas in the future should focus on promoting longevity, youthfulness and vitality with treatments that not only prevent premature ageing and disease, but are simple enough to replicate at home to ensure that the benefits are ongoing.

About The Futures Company

The Futures Company is a strategic insight and innovation consultancy, with particular expertise in futures and foresight work. The company has teams in the US, Mexico, Brazil, UK and Argentina and partnerships in China, India and Poland. It was formed in 2008 by the merger of two businesses – Europe's Henley Centre HeadlightVision and US-based Yankelevich. It's a division of Kantar, the insight arm of WPP. By exploring the future needs, motivations and behaviours of consumers, and the broader dynamics shaping the marketplace, The Futures Company unlocks new sources of growth for its clients.

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THALGO

Spa Business talks to Bernard Sirop, managing director of Thalgo, about the evolution of the company and where it is set to go in the future.

KATH HUDSON, JOURNALIST, SPA BUSINESS

When and why did the Sirop family take over Thalgo?

My father was a shareholder who thought the potential of Thalgo was huge and under-exploited. In February 1999, he acquired the company, intending to develop a leading French cosmetic line in the professional beauty market, with a reputation for strong innovation and marketing.

What was the most interesting aspect of Thalgo for you?

We were attracted by the 'brand territory', because the concept of marine cosmetics is powerful and easy to understand, meaning Thalgo has clear positioning in the market. The brand also had a strong reputation for quality products and protocols and was already in 60 countries and doing 70 per cent of its turnover abroad.

Also, the portfolio included two strong flagships: Thalgo La Baule, one of the best thalassotherapy centres in France, and the Villa Thalgo Spa, which was the first marine beauty spa in Paris.

What changes have you implemented at Thalgo?

We modernised the brand image. Then we extended Thalgo through the development of nutritional supplements, cosmetics for men, new spa treatments, new ranges and medi-cosmetic equipment. We also implemented a new beauty formulation chart (free of parabens, mineral oils, propylene glycol and GMOs) and launched an organic skincare range, *terre & mer by Thalgo* in 2009. The same year, we built a new Villa Thalgo, in the heart of Paris, which reflects the quality image of the brand.

Besides the cosmetics range, Thalgo has a number of different business strands. How do they all work together?

Over the last 12 years, the company has moved from a single brand entity to a multi-brand, diversified group. Some of this change has come through external acquisitions and some through launches. Firstly, we acquired the professional skin-



care brand, Ella Baché, in 2003, followed by depilatory company, Perron Rigot, in 2004. Then the Terraké spa brand, which is targeted at the hotel and day spa market, was launched in 2006.

Last year we acquired 45 per cent of Nature Cos, an organic French make-up brand. We believed it would be complementary to our skincare brands, given we had no make-up brand within Thalgo.

We're not only a manufacturer and supplier of products, but also offer a wide range of services. Owning a beauty school - Ecole Thalgo - gives us a strong competitive advantage, and the basis to develop partnerships with other beauty schools.

In 2001, we created a consulting service - Thalgo Spa Management - which is targeted at spa operators who are looking for management advice. We also have a spa operations division, which runs our spas and beauty salons in France. It's a real competitive advantage, because it allows us to have a better understanding of our clients' expectations and needs.

What's the motivation for running many different businesses?

We thought it was necessary to expand our brand portfolio, because expansion oppor-



A treatment room at the Villa Thalgo Spa - the first marine beauty spa in Paris



tunities are limited with just one brand. We thought our clients would also benefit from a broader offering, such as wax and make-up. We aim to be the best supplier: not only a brand, but a group with many possibilities.

We have our own integrated research centre, headed by a pharmacist. To boost our marine intelligence, we work closely with renowned algae specialists, who help us to develop exclusive marine active ingredients. We also have a strong partnership with three dermatologists and one university professor, with whom we work to develop active ingredients and innovative products. We also carry out effectiveness studies to back up the efficiency of our formulae and support our claims.

What's your most successful line?

Our anti-ageing line, which launched in 2011. This has three ranges: the Collagen line is aimed at the first stages of wrinkles. It boosts collagen and is supplemented by a youth drink, as we like to work from the inside out. The second range uses hyaluronic acid to plump out deeper wrinkles. The third range – Silicium – smoothes, tones and lifts the skin when it starts to lose tone. This has been tremendously successful and we feel it offers an alternative to invasive surgery.

Thalgo's new Indocéane Spa Ritual and homecare range (top); the swimming pool at the luxurious Villa Thalgo Spa in Paris (above and right)

What trends do you predict for the industry in 2013?

We're seeing a significant shift in consumer attitudes and a focus towards wellness and preventative health treatments and services, rather than just pampering. Consumers are more demanding and they want to see tangible results.

Everybody is stressed, so spas need to provide consumers with effective and achievable ways of destressing, not just with treatments, but by offering relaxation exercises, such as yoga, t'ai chi and meditation, as well to make it more effective.

The male market continues to grow, with an increased interest from men of all ages in facials and nail services, as well as massage, which has always been popular. Spas must adapt to this growing segment to fully optimise their potential for growth.

What are Thalgo's plans going forward?

We have a three year aim to grow worldwide by 25 per cent. This is ambitious in the current climate and we are focusing a lot of our efforts on Asia, which is a growth area. To this end, we created an office in Singapore last year.

The Middle East and North America are also likely to be strong markets and we will be building up partnerships with beauty spas and day spas. We see hotel spas as a strong source of image and brand awareness, so will also be looking to grow this area.

In the longer term, innovation will be the key to growth and we will relaunch our premium line – Exceptional – at the end of 2013. In 2014, we will revamp our slimming range and launch a scientifically proven medical cosmetics range.

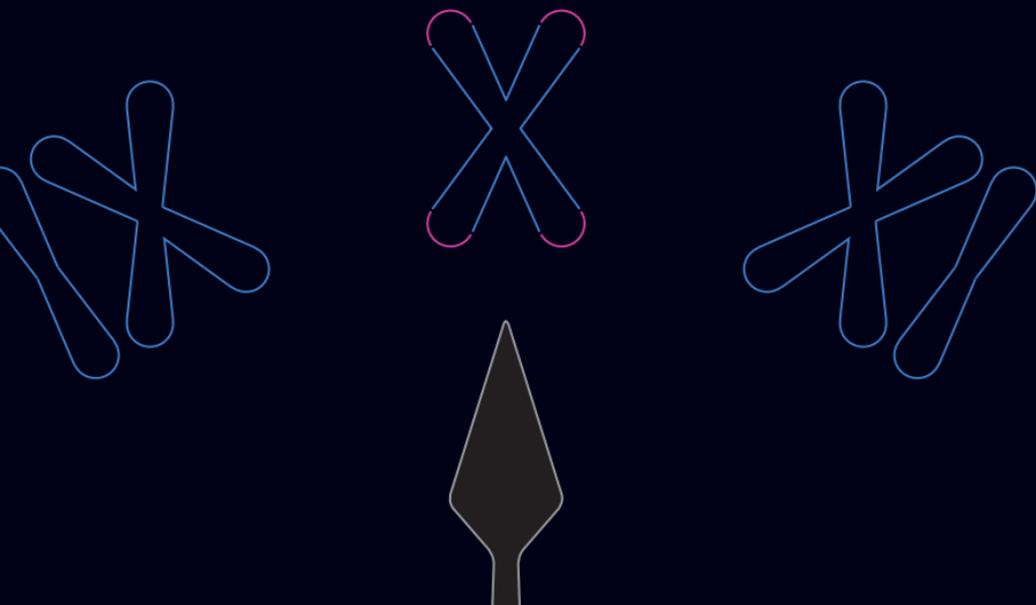
We're also planning to boost the brand visibility, with a newly launched website and a new social media strategy.

Excitingly, we have just teamed up with French free diver, Aurore Asso, as we have shared passions about preserving the marine bio-diversity. We are planning to film some TV documentaries in seven different locations which have important marine aqua systems. ●

ENTERING THE TELO-AGE

In the last three years telomeres – an indication of cellular ageing – have galvanised medical interest. Jay Williams explains the science behind telomere health and how it can be used in spas

JAY WILLIAMS, SPA CONSULTANT, TELOME HEALTH



Studies into telomeres – DNA structures linked to the ageing of cells – date back eight decades. But since telomeres were the focus of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, they've become the centre of attention in scientific communities and are already being used as health biomarkers in spa lifestyle programmes.

Telomeres are caps at the ends of our chromosomes which prevent them from fraying as our cells replicate. As a cell ages, its telomeres become shorter and when they fall below a certain length, the cell can no longer divide and dies. It's this cell loss that causes ageing in the body.

However, the ageing of our cells doesn't always match our chronological ageing because, in addition to normal ageing, telomeres can be worn down through an unhealthy and stressful lifestyle. Conversely, it's also been found that telomerase – an enzyme stimulated by healthy lifestyle changes including enhancing wellbeing – can protect telomeres from shortening and may even lengthen them, effectively reversing the age process.

A telomere test can analyse the length of your telomeres to accurately measure your biological age and provide an evaluation of health – ie the longer your telomeres are, the more healthy both you and your cells are. It can even show disease risk – cells with shortened telomeres may function poorly and have been linked to age-associated diseases such as osteoporosis and dementia.

Until now, the ability to measure telomere length has only been available through blood tests. But in the first quarter of 2013, US company Telome Health Inc plans to launch the saliva-based TeloTest™. Telome Health has been founded by leading telomere experts (see further on) and the test is exciting news for the spa industry because saliva samples can be easily col-



Sha Wellness Clinic in Spain is to introduce telomere testing to measure biological ages

This single test might soon become the gold standard for gauging overall wellbeing

lected in a test tube at the spa or at home. This single test might soon become the gold standard for gauging overall wellbeing and an opportunity for spas to provide a wellness diagnostic tool.

THE POWER OF KNOWING

Sha Wellness Clinic in Spain (see SB09/2 p38) is one of the most recent examples of a spa taking advantage of advances in the study of telomeres. In January, it launched a seven-day Anti-Ageing Program – costing €7,000 (US\$9,350, £5,850) – that includes telomere analysis, via blood samples, to diagnose a person's biological age. This information is then used in lifestyle and nutrition consultations designed to improve the guest's state of overall health.

Indeed, telomere length is one of the best biomarkers of overall health status, indicating the impact of diet, fitness, toxins and chronic stress. Telome Health, for example, will offer a TeloAge report where your personal telomere length is presented compared to a range of a healthy control population in your age and gender group, to gauge how you measure up to the healthy average. Repeating the tests over time give you the best view into how your cells are ageing, and whether your current lifestyle is working for or against you.

At ReNovo Med Spa in Delaware, in the USA, Dr Michelle Parsons uses telomere testing to optimise her recommendations to clients for lifestyle changes. She says: "When a test reveals an older physiologic ▶



For the first time ever, an aged state of an animal was reversed and the mice became young again

► age [than their chronological age] clients are relieved to discover there are ways of slowing telomere shortening through lifestyle changes. In this respect, it's not merely a static test but a useful tool to measure positive change in their health."

But how do we know all this? And what lifestyle aspects (bad or good) have been proven to have an impact on telomeres?

LANDMARK RESEARCH

Elizabeth Blackburn, an American biological researcher, first observed telomeres in the 1930s and in 1985 Blackburn, with graduate Carol Greider, discovered the telomerase enzyme. Blackburn and two colleagues received the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for "the discovery of how chromosomes are protected by telomeres and the enzyme telomerase".

In 1990, reknown biochemist Calvin Harley showed that telomeres shorten progressively in human cells. He was instrumental in demonstrating that this is a cause for cellular ageing and that telomerase can prevent this action.

In 2004, Elissa Epel, a leader in health psychology and behavioural medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, pioneered research linking stress to immune cell ageing.

She showed that the perception of stress as well as actual stressful events or thoughts are related to telomere shortness and reduced telomerase activity. In plain words she proved that stress ages you at a cellular level. And in a 2008 study, published in scientific journal *The Lancet Oncology*, Epel, Blackburn and physician



Elissa Epel presented to delegates at the GSWs 2012 in Aspen, Colorado



■ Elizabeth Blackburn was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

Dr Dean Ornish showed that "lifestyle changes can significantly increase telomerase activity" with positive changes taking place in just 90 days.

In November 2010, a group of Harvard University researchers published results from a study in *Nature*. The experiment involved mice that were genetically engineered to lack telomerase so they aged prematurely and died. In a second group of

mice, they turned on the telomerase gene with shocking results. For the first time ever, an aged state of an animal was reversed and the mice became young again.

In the same year, Blackburn, Harley, Epel and molecular biologist Jue Lin co-founded Telome Health in an attempt to widen the reach of telomere testing.

Fast-forward to today's breaking news. In a large clinical study, the average telomere length was measured in 100,000 patients from Kaiser Permanente, one of America's biggest care organisations. Using the saliva-based TeloTest, it was found that individuals who had short telomeres had increased risk of death in a three-year follow up period, and that smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, lower educations and poor environments were associated with short telomeres, while moderate exercise was associated with longer telomeres.

The size of the Kaiser study goes a long way towards validating previous findings. Currently, there are more than 10,000 peer-reviewed scientific publications already in existence which show that exercise, more and better sleep, healthy food choices, meditation and more are linked to preventing telomere shortening. So what does all of this mean for the spa industry? ►



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▶ TURN BACK THE CLOCK?

Scientific research has revealed that stress is high on the list of factors that can prematurely shorten one's telomere length. In this aspect, the relaxing nature of spas and the therapeutic value of many of their treatments make the 'spa intervention' an important option to improve one's ageing status, and even to reverse the negative effects of premature ageing. Clearly we can point to telomere molecular measurement as a potential validation for the restorative and stress reducing treatments offered in spa experiences.

Although there are no large, controlled clinical trials published yet, given the multitude of existing studies, it's possible that the following may help with maintaining or even lengthening telomeres:

- **Increasing exercise:** adding four to five training sessions in your week
- **Improving nutrition:** implementing a low-fat diet, with less red and processed meat and talking with a nutritionist about dietary supplements that activate the telomerase enzyme
- **Improving metabolism:** starting a weight loss programme
- **Enhancing wellbeing:** reducing psychological stress and depression and increasing feelings of personal control and purpose in life
- **Decreasing stress:** adding yoga and meditation to lifestyle programmes

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPERATORS

In June 2012, Epel outlined the potential of telomere health to a host of spa leaders at the annual Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS). She said: "telomere science is just the tip of the iceberg," and that as the connection between healthy behaviour and



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The relaxing nature of spas and the therapeutic value of many of their treatments make the 'spa intervention' an important option to improve one's ageing status

the measurable forestalling of disease and cellular ageing grows stronger, "the implications for the spa and wellness industry is profound" (see SB12/3 p54).

There are two clear opportunities for spas to use telomere diagnostics. Firstly, in helping to prove the effectiveness of corporate wellness programmes (see SB12/4 p24). Stress-reduction in staff is one of the key goals for corporate employers worldwide making spas and spa services a number one choice in the workplace wellness industry which, according to the World Economic Forum, is worth US\$30bn-plus (€22.5bn, £18.9bn). One of the many ways spas can participate in wellness packages for such companies is to provide TeloAge diagnostic information about a person's health that can then point back to the value of the stress reducing spa services

Secondly, spas can get in on the personalised wellness movement that's gaining momentum. *The World's Youngest Populations* study by EuroMontior showed that at the beginning of 2012, half of the world's population was aged over 30 – and a growing number of this demographic have an interest in actively managing their health. Knowledge about your health status is empowering, and can lead to a shift towards healthy lifestyle behaviours. In the *Boomers Value Realignment Study*, conducted

in 2011 by real estate advisory firm Civano Living, it was reported that 84 per cent of baby boomers in the US are "somewhat to very interested" in "health and fitness programs designed for them." Measuring telomere length as an overall health barometer will be an integral component in this personalised wellness revolution.

John Kao, chairman of the US Institute for Large Scale Innovation, who also spoke at the GSWS highlighted the industry's need to "move from the 'event-driven' model and create much more sustainable connections and experiences".

The ability to benchmark one's health through telomere testing, followed by a take home programme, and a six-month retest is an opportune way to stay connected to the spa clientele. With a simple saliva telomere test, the tracking of the impact of various spa wellness therapies on telomere health is a reality.

As the evidence mounts that core spa wellness approaches modify telomeres – one of the few changeable parts of the human genome – a natural, major industry opportunity arises. ●



Jay Williams, spa consultant,
Telome Health
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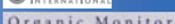
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Botanique Hotel & Spa

We talk to the top team at Botanique Hotel & Spa – Brazil's hottest new opening that proudly showcases the best the country has to offer and has been developed by a group of internationally renown pioneers

KATIE BARNES, MANAGING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

When Botanique Hotel & Spa opened in Brazil in November 2012, it first caught the industry's attention with its powerhouse investors and partners – namely AOL co-founder David Cole; Body Shop co-founder Gordon Roddick; and the South American entrepreneur Ricardo Semler, CEO of the systems engineering and management conglomerate Semco. But there's much more to its story than that.

The vision of Semler and his wife, Fernanda, Botanique has been developed over five years with the intention of setting a new benchmark in luxury hospitality that's entirely home-grown and unique in a location that's dominated by Swiss chalet-style hotels. The boutique resort is situated on a hillside amid 700 acres (283 hectares) of lush forest in the fashionable Campos do Jordão area – half-way between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro – that's often called the Hamptons of Brazil. It's been built by regional architects and designers using local chocolate slate, stone and 120-year-old wooden timbers, serves farm-to-fork contemporary cuisine and wines and



Not wanting anything remotely similar to what's already available, the Semlers avoided working with spa consultants or industry professionals... and insisted on learning the ropes themselves

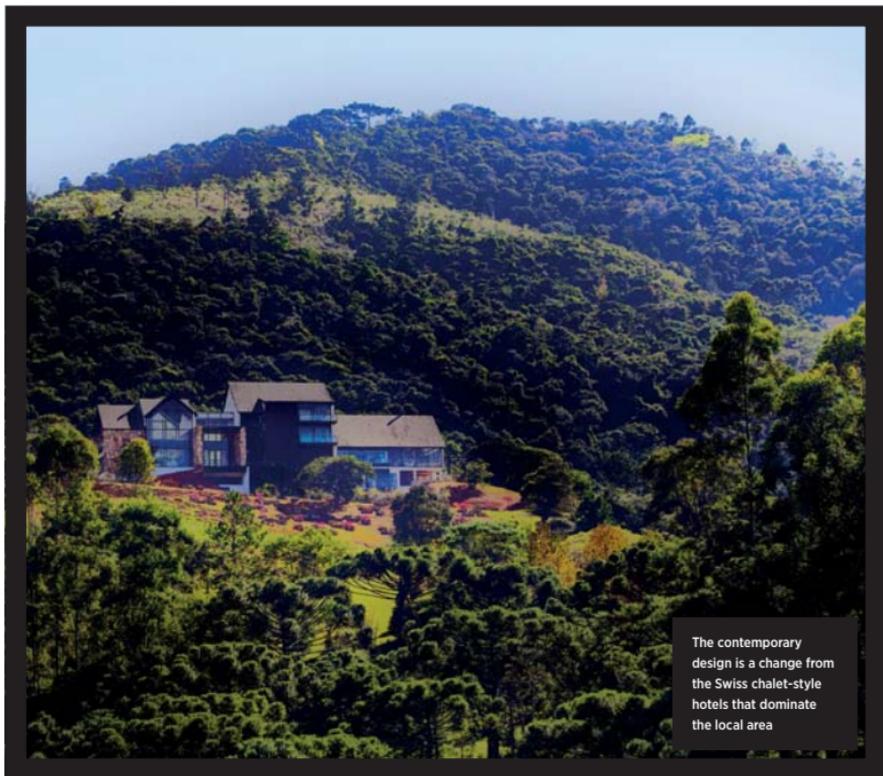
even has a library of 400 titles by Brazilian authors.

Nowhere is the local influence more evident than in the 10,000sq ft (930sq m) spa, which is referred to as the "first 100 per cent Brazilian spa" thanks to its fully

home-made offering of everything from the floatation pool and CO2 bath to the essential oils and indigenous-inspired treatment menu. Not wanting anything remotely similar to what's already available, the Semlers avoided working

Backers of the project include AOL co-founder David Cole and The Body Shop's Gordon Roddick

with spa consultants or industry professionals. Instead, they insisted on learning the ropes themselves with the back up of up and coming local architects, university professors specialising in aromatherapy, geology and physics and practitioners/shamans – all of whom had little to no spa experience. Here, some of the top team members share their views on this unusual project.



The contemporary design is a change from the Swiss chalet-style hotels that dominate the local area

BOTANIQUE HOTEL & SPA

Designed by São Paulo architectural firm Candida Tabet Arquitetura, Botanique Hotel & Spa is made up of six suites connected to a main building and 11 villas dotted about the property. The main building has a lounge, a 40-seat cinema, library, a fine dining restaurant and the Botanique Spa. The interiors, a homage to contemporary Brazilian design, have been created by some of the country's top interior experts, including curator and writer Adélia Borges, furniture designer Aristeu Pires and eco-craftsman Pedro Petry.

Rooms start at BRL2,500 (US\$1,224, €921, £766) and include meals, drinks and service but not treatments.

To create the spa, the Semlers turned to the young, fresh-thinking Coletivo de Arquitetos practice from São Paulo

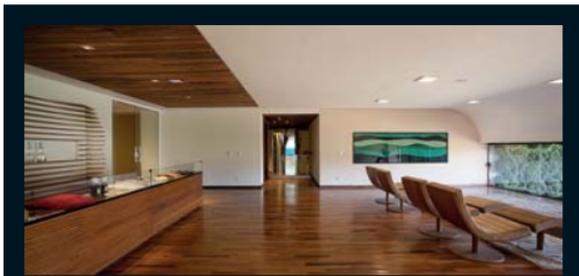
which focused on subtle and refined Brazilian flavours while bringing the outside in with expansive windows.

The two-storey spa features eight treatment rooms – four of which are for wet treatments and include a floatation pool, CO2 bath, a Rain Forest Sauna. The spa also features a bath filled with fresh milk and ground Brazil nuts, as well as three relaxation areas, an indoor isotonic pool with water jets and minerals and a dry sauna. When it comes to treatments, all massages are 90 minutes long and prices start at BRL305, (US\$150, €113, £94).



The spa was designed by Coletivo de Arquitetos

Perched on the edge of the site, overlooking a forested valley, there's a heated pool and a swimmable lake, plus a building with a sports doctor's office and a fully-equipped gym with an outdoor pavilion for Brazilian martial arts such as capoeira. Elsewhere is a stable of Olympic-standard horses enabling guests to explore the beautiful surroundings.



Cole says the spa is important as it heightens the whole sensory experience of the resort

Entrepreneurs behind the projects

Each of the four entrepreneurs investing in Botanique Hotel & Spa have brought their own expertise to the development to create a modern, luxurious, yet socially responsible retreat that embraces Brazil's indigenous nature.

Ricardo Semler is one of Brazil's best known businessmen and a pioneer in "industrial democracy", which involves workers making decisions and sharing authority in the workplace. He is the CEO of Semco - a multi-billion dollar company that offers a broad range of products from air-conditioning components to inventory management and environmental planning - the latter of which he's put to work at Botanique. Meanwhile his wife **Fernanda Semler** has also been the driving force in bringing the Botanique concept to market and brings a touch of class and luxury to the development from her years in the marketing and fashion sectors.

David Cole is most well known as the co-founder of internet company AOL (America Online), but he's also recognised for investment management, philanthropy, organic farming, renewable energy and sustainability initiatives. He has expert knowledge of the environment/great outdoors and luxury hospitality, as the owner of Twin Farms, a five-star resort in Vermont, USA.

Gordon Roddick, with his late wife Dame Anita Roddick, co-founded The Body Shop, a cosmetics company producing and retailing ethical beauty products and most famous for supporting disadvantaged groups worldwide with its fair trade programme. Roddick remains a passionate social activist.

DAVID COLE

Partner and co-owner,
Botanique Hotel & Spa

How did your partnership with the Semlers come about? In 2006, Ricardo [Semler] and I worked on a large renewable fuels project in Brazil that ran head on into the 2008 recession, putting thousands of employees and a huge investment at risk. Through it all, we focused on the tasks at hand and worked as best we could through the challenges. I found a good friend and business partner in the wreckage. A most welcome bonus!

Why was Brazil, and this location, chosen? First, Brazil is where Ricardo and Fernanda live. Second, as the economic and cultural flywheel for Latin America, Brazil is defining the premium end of the hospitality market for the continent.

Third, in Brazil, Campos do Jordão is a mere two hours from São Paulo, a city where a growing number of residents have the means and inclination to discover and savour new experiences. From my first visit, I was intrigued by the inherent beauty of the place and kindness of the people. Like

Our project was mid-stream when the recession hit and we had too many partners...

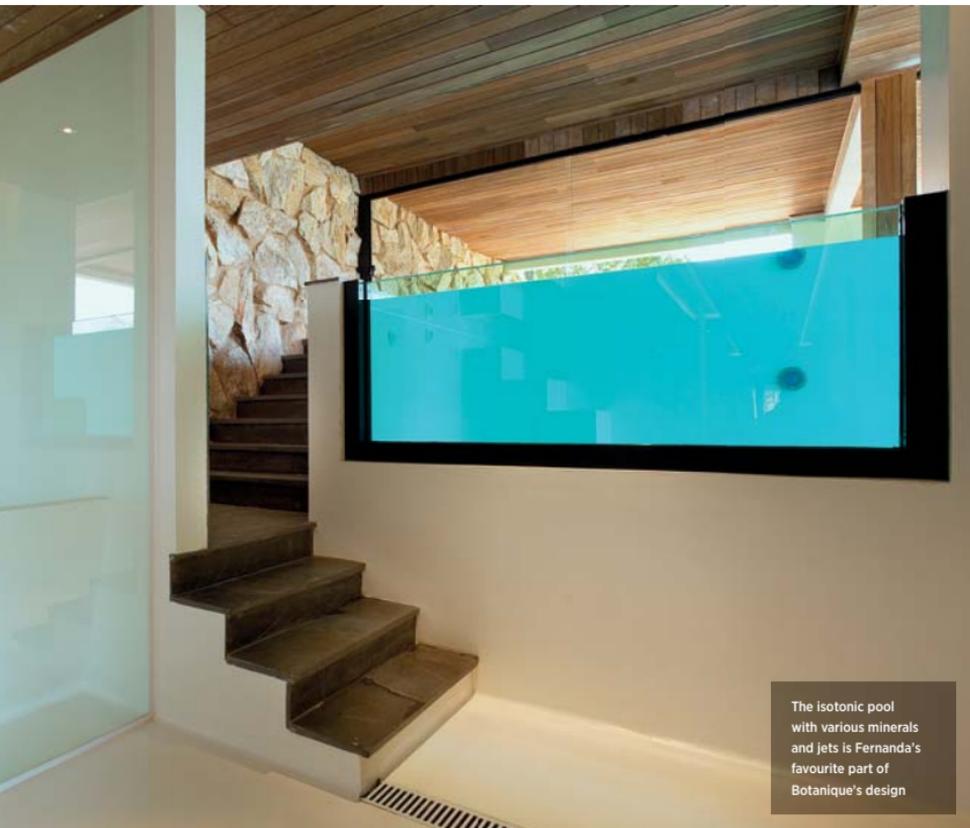
I suggested we buy out most shareholders to streamline decision making



many, I'd been to the beaches near São Paulo, but I had no idea that a mountain oasis existed so close by too. I immediately joined the Botanique team.

How involved have you been in Botanique's development? My role is as a friend, partner and critic. My resort work has been exclusively at the high-end, from a 20-bed boutique resort in Vermont to landscape-scale projects in Hawaii. This has enabled me to highlight key spa performance indicators such as the importance of repeat bookings (preferably before guests leave) and to suggest we pre-plan for obstacles in recruiting, teaching, motivating and retaining staff by fostering an environment of trust, sharing and continuous learning.

Another key insight was to incorporate the spa [previously located separately onsite] into the main building, providing the opportunity for multi-treatments,



The isotonic pool with various minerals and jets is Fernanda's favourite part of Botanique's design

intensive water therapies and smarter energy and water use.

How important is the spa to the business? Our guests spend much of their lives subjected to the rigours of urban living. Our purpose is to reinvigorate – and, for a select few, help them to imagine Botanique as an ongoing (and necessary) part of their lives. A well-executed spa experience awakens your senses to the other dimensions of the resort: the flora, fauna, food, people and culture to enhance the total journey.

What's been the biggest challenge? Our project was mid-stream when the recession hit and we had too many [16] partners to effectively navigate our future course. I suggested we buy out most shareholders so we could streamline decision making. Ricardo, Fernanda and I made the offer, most sold, and we re-booted.

FERNANDA SEMLER

Partner and co-owner,
Botanique Hotel & Spa

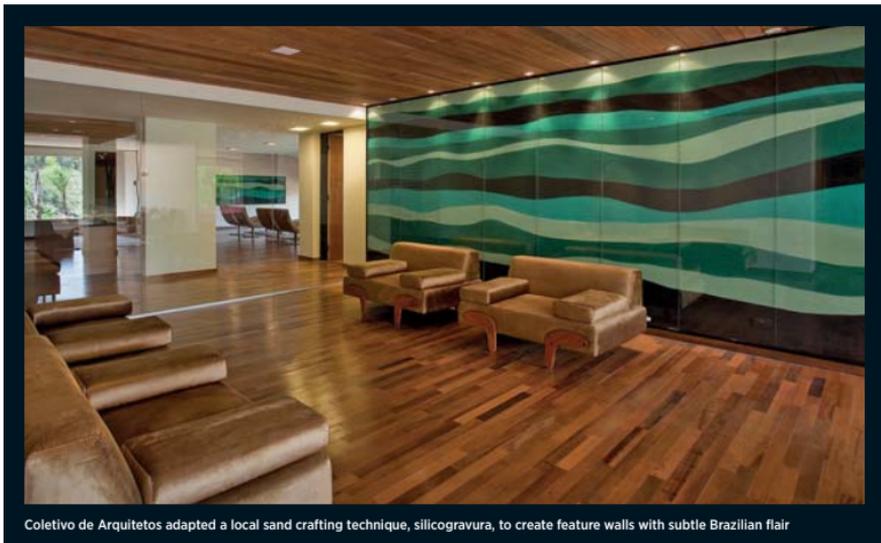
What is the Botanique concept? It's something my husband and I have nurtured for five years and one that puts a post-luxury spin on hospitality, where brand names are left behind and replaced with real luxury values that enrich the guest experience. Whatever is expensive is that way because the product was deeply researched, is rare and costs a lot at origin. Our bathrobes, for example, were redone eight times and the material cost alone was US\$700

(compared to US\$200 ones from China), so the US\$1,100 price still means we make a relatively small profit.

What's your role? I'm the guardian of the vision and there were very few aspects of development I wasn't involved with. I also assist the general manager and staff in creating a rarified atmosphere for guests.

Why did you move the spa into the main building? Initially, we planned for the spa to perch on the highest part of the property 200m away, but it was only a small building. So, we moved it to the main building as there was 700sq m (7,535sq ft) more space. It now features my favourite part of Botanique's design – an isotonic pool with incredible views ▶





Coletivo de Arquitetos adapted a local sand crafting technique, *silicogravura*, to create feature walls with subtle Brazilian flair

of the valley. The pool has minerals which replicate those found in the human body and is the same temperature as the body. The effect is a complete balance with the body and water around it to enhance relaxation. We also built a compressed air system which generates bubbles to stimulate the speed and movement of the heartbeat.

The original spa building now houses the gym and a physiologist/sports doctor's office where we can prescribe exercise based on DNA. Next to it is an outdoor heated pool and a swimmable lake.

Who did you work with to develop and build the spa? I'm an avid spa-goer, having been to Christina Ong's COMO Shambhala in the Maldives and dozens of La Prairie spas, so I knew early on that I didn't want to work with spa consultants for fear of repeating what's already out there. We had conversations with many of the leading ones, but concluded that we needed to strike out on our own and tread new ground – especially as there are no Brazilian-themed spas anyway.

Instead, we turned to local experts. A geologist from a nearby university advised on a water menu consisting of 15 sparkling and still waters from around the country while another professor specialising in aromatherapy helped to create the 28 essential spa oils from ingredients in the surround-

In total, we worked with 19 professors and scientists who have collated 2,200 pages of research to prove the effects produced in our treatments

ing mountains. In total, we worked with 19 professors and scientists who have collated 2,200 pages of research to prove the effects produced in our treatments.

In addition, Coletivo de Arquitetos, the spa architects, didn't specialise in wellness so brought a fresh look. We have fixtures that no cost-concerned designer would include. But the winner is the guest.

What makes your spa stand out? As we did everything from scratch, we have sensorially stimulating experiences no one else offers. For example, our wet Rain Forest Sauna, has a perforated plate in the ceiling through which warm mineral 'rain water' is released every two minutes to eliminate the sense of claustrophobia or extreme heat typical to saunas. To add more depth, the scent of the surrounding woods comes from one of our essential oils.

Elsewhere, a large room has a floatation tank filled with Epsom salts. It features a cinema projection system showing nature films on the ceiling, as well as underwater music, so that people who are floating have visual and aural cues for further relaxation. This is a standalone treatment, but we sometimes use it in longer programmes as a pre-massage tool to unlock muscle tension.

What's been the biggest challenge? To make an experience that was totally local and avoiding the comfort zone of Asian, Indian or European treatments and techniques. We consulted with native Brazilian practitioners, local shamans of sort, and carried out extensive work with universities to develop authentic treatments.

Afro-Brazilian massage techniques are strong and vibrant, so some of our massages include more pressure to bring oxygen to the muscle tissue. Meanwhile, native Indian movements are inspired by animals, so our treatments include gripping techniques that emulate puma paws or bird claws – this is much smoother than it sounds and helps to dissipate muscle tension in specific spots.

What drives you? The feedback from guests having a unique experience; and the feeling that we've created something completely new that's good for Brazilian self-esteem. ▶



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CLARINS

GUILE AMADEU

Co-founder and co-owner,
Coletivo de Arquitetos

How did you become involved in Botanique? I set up our studio with Rodrigo Lacerda, who I went to university with, in 2009. Ricardo [Semler] was looking for a relatively new architecture company and became interested in us after we won the 10^o Young Architect Award by the Brazilian Institute of Architects in 2011.

I had previously worked on preliminary studies for the San Pelegrino spa project in Italy while at EMBT architects in Barcelona, but the learning curve for Botanique was steep. We extensively researched the technical aspects of spas and visited spas in Brazil and abroad and set up meetings with their spa managers to get a deeper understanding of operational dynamics.

What Brazilian references are included in the design? From the start, it was made clear that the spa had to have Brazilian influences, but we wanted to avoid the obvious and go for something more refined. After thoroughly investigating Bra-



From the start, it was made clear that the spa had to have Brazilian influences, but we wanted to avoid the obvious and go for something more refined

zilian social, culture and artistic elements we chose to focus on 'silicogravura' – hand-crafted glass bottles produced along the north-east coast which contain coloured sand designs replicating the landscape. We emulated this by blasting sand into the walls of the spa and protecting the coloured strips with glass panels.

What challenges did you face? When the spa moved into the main building, it took the space originally intended for a restaurant, so the existing footprint dictated the design. We had to carefully plan the internal layout, paying particular attention to guest and operational flow. Spread over two storeys, with a mezzanine level, we kept the reception, changing rooms and dry treatment rooms on one floor separate from water-based facilities.

As only one side of the spa had views over the landscape, we created more intimate, discrete areas – two massage rooms and

the changing rooms – on the side that had no natural light. However, we made sure we exploited the outside views in every other area possible.

What considerations did you give to functionality? Understanding the operational needs was a priority. In our design we included a laundry/goods service elevator, for example, that connects to the hotel's main back of house area, so used towels and robes can be quickly cleaned away without guests seeing them. We also closely analysed building materials for practicality. We chose a non-slip, easy-clean polyurethane resin floor that has an elastic quality to allow for a seamless application. This eliminated the need for joints and rounded footers that accumulate dust and dirt, making the spa easier to clean.

What part of the design are you most proud of? Botanique is situated in an untouched area of natural beauty and being able to exploit the spectacular views in every area we possibly could has given the spa a majestic feel. Special double glass, capable of withstanding the huge amount of pressure from the pool and the varying indoor/outdoor temperatures of the sauna, was installed for this purpose. And we intentionally used neutral, timeless colours to emphasise bringing the outdoors indoors. Wherever you go in the spa, the landscape is always there, helping people to chill out, relax and enjoy themselves. ●

The architects used neutral, timeless colours to emphasise bringing the outdoors indoors



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The mineral waters in the spa town of Druskininkai were first noted for their health benefits in the late 18th century

LITHUANIAN LARGESSE

Anni Hood tours spas in Lithuania, where up to a quarter of tourists visit wellness resorts or traditional sanatoriums to experience the country's historical curative health services

Lithuania is the largest of the three Baltic states, covering 65,200sq km (25,150sq mile) and with a population of 3 million people.

Tourists are attracted by its beautiful unspoilt landscape of coniferous forests, lakes and the sand dunes of the Curonian Spit, its medical heritage and the affordability of its integrative health services which are intrinsic to the national culture and a core part of its healthcare system. A 70-minute massage, for example, costs only €38 (US\$51, £32).

In 2011, 26 per cent of tourists stayed in a dedicated spa resort or old sanatorium according to figures from the Lithuanian Association of Hotels and Resorts (LAHR). They came to drink and bathe in the country's famous mineral waters and sample its therapeutic mud baths and treatments that are frequently prescribed to improve health

and wellbeing. Lukas Mackevičius, president of the National Spa Association of Lithuania, explains the appeal: "Lithuania had been, and remains, rich in its wellness culture. In the late 18th century, mineral waters in the southern town of Druskininkai were found to have health benefits and so its usage in the medical treatment of asthma and other ailments began. The practice became increasingly more popular as the word about them spread.

"Then in the early 19th century, Ignatius Fonberg, a professor at Vilnius University [in Lithuania's capital], analysed the chemical composition of the water to find it contained large amounts of calcium, sodium, potassium, iodine, bromine, iron and magnesium. He recommended that the government declare the town an official health resort and today it's widely known as the spa capital of Lithuania."

TOURISM GROWTH

In March 1990, a year before the break-up of the Soviet Union, Lithuania stunned the world as the first country to stand up to the powerhouse and declare its independence. In the years that followed, Lithuania struggled greatly in the transition from a planned communist economy to a free market one, yet prior to the global financial crisis of 2007 it reportedly had one of the fastest growing economies in the European Union. And in 2011, it was categorised in the highest category in the United Nations Human Development Index, a composite measure of health, education and income levels, alongside countries like the USA, Japan and UK.

In 2011, LAHR statistics show that tourism generated €1.3bn (US\$1.7bn, £1.1bn) or a 4.6 per cent slice of GDP. A significantly larger proportion of revenue was generated by foreign visitors compared to domestic

CASE STUDY 1

SPA VILNIUS SANA

Spa Vilnius Sana in the spa town of Druskininkai, was once a famous Soviet sanatorium dating back to 1961. It struggled following the Soviet dissolution until Valdas Trinkūnas – a medical graduate – embarked on a €4.8m (US\$6.4m, £4m) joint venture with the government to relaunch it as a 177-bed hotel in February 2004. Its centrepiece? A 4,100sq m (44,150sq ft) spa with 50 treatment rooms offering the traditional mud and mineral water therapies (of course) with a mix of pampering treatments from Elemis, Phytomer and Japanese brand Kobido. Trinkūnas says this was the first time Lithuania had heard the word 'spa'.

While this is a country that clearly understands the value of natural medicine, Spa Vilnius Sana is in a league of its own. It 'gets' wellness, but has an edge



An Amber Room has been built because of the stone's anti-inflammatory properties

that would see it easily compete on the worldwide spa stage. Unique touches, for example, include the Amber Therapy Room, a concept created by their

It 'gets' wellness, but has an edge that would see it easily compete on the world spa stage



There are traditional mud baths as well as pampering treatments

own medical doctor based on the anti-inflammatory properties of the amber gemstone for the body and mind. Guests lie on an amber mattress and wear a large piece of amber around their neck while specially selected music is played and calming essential oils are burned. Another bespoke option, also developed by its team of 11 on-site doctors, is a dedicated music room where musicians play particular pieces that vibrate at the correct level to enhance emotional state and increase vibrational energies.

An overnight stay costs €90 (US\$120, £75) and includes meals, a consultation and up to four treatments. There's an even split between national and international guests, averaging 3.8 nights and one week-plus, respectively. What's more, business is growing, occupancy for 2012 was 70.5 per cent – a 2.5 per cent increase on 2011; while treatment room utilisation is estimated at 50-60 per cent,⁹ based on a guest flow of 300-350 a day (there are 56 full-time therapists) between 8am-10pm.

As an indication of how well things are going, the business expanded with the opening of Spa Vilnius Dia, a day spa in the capital, in 2008.



Association president
Lukas Mackevičius

National Spa Association of Lithuania

The National Spa Association of Lithuania was formed in 2007 to regulate marketing, set standards for therapists and treatments and educate on the benefits of spa.

The president is Lukas Mackevičius, a management consultant who was previously a director at Spa Vilnius Sana. The six other board members all hold management positions and above in

leading spas around the country. Altogether, there are 21 spa operator members.

From the outset, the association initiated steps for official documentation, developed by the Ministry of Health, to clarify the method by which mud and mineral treatments are applied. The passing of the Law of Certification of Treatment in November 2012 was a milestone achievement.

In collaboration with the Lithuanian Resort Association, it continues to build awareness of spas in Lithuania locally, by attending beauty and health trade shows, events and various initiatives with colleges; and internationally by participating in tourism exhibitions in countries such as Russia, Latvia, Finland, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Norway.

▶ visitors – €960m (US\$1,281m, £804m) versus €356m (US\$475m, £298m).

Despite the austerity backdrop, the number of visitors to Lithuania is growing significantly. The most recent figures available from Statistics Lithuania, a government department, show visitors rose by 27 per cent from 2010 to 2011 and by 12.2 per cent in the first six months of 2012 compared to the same period in 2011 (see Table 1). From January to June 2012, the trend of slightly higher foreign visitor numbers also continued with 484,000 tourists (56.9 per cent) from abroad compared to 370,000 (43.1 per cent) from Lithuania. The foreign tourism comes mainly from the European countries of Russia, Poland, Germany, Belorussia and Latvia (see Table 2).

SPA TOUR

During my short trip to Lithuania, I covered almost 1,000 miles visiting seven spas from traditional wellness sanatoriums, to those focused on pampering and even one, Etno Spa, which offered beer baths! In the spa town of Druskininkai there were spa and wellness venues eve-



Visitors come to Lithuania to drink and bathe in its mineral waters

rywhere you looked from small outlets to those of bewildering vastness – the Grand Spa Lietuva which I was shown around had 500 bedrooms and offered more than 160 treatments. It was created in 2009 from a huge €53m (US\$70m, £44m) investment partly funded by the European Union.

Most of the spas concentrate their offerings around the mineral water and mud treatments administered by medical

staff. Mackevičius says: “Our spa culture is medically-orientated and results-driven, generally with no frills. We’re not so biased towards pampering, as 95 per cent of spa visitors have therapeutic experiences and come to prevent or treat illnesses.”

Unfortunately, high standards of delivery, comfort and service were a little harder to find. Years of suppression following the split from the Soviet Union has meant the readiness of a smile or a naturally relaxed demeanour is not yet common. Another generation or two and I think things may look a lot different.

In addition, very few facilities are profit orientated. “Most spa venues are busy, however, the commercial success is not as prevalent in all of them,” says Mackevičius pointing out two extremes. Energetikas, like most old-style sanatoriums, has a large number of guests (70 per cent) who are government-funded patients he says, with only 30 per cent of its customers actually paying for services direct (see Case Study 1). And ▶

Table 1: Number of total beds sold in Lithuania (in thousands)

Country	1 Jan to 31 Jun 2011	1 Jan to 31 Jun 2012	Percentage change	1 Jan to 31 Jun 2011	1 Jan to 31 Jun 2012
Total	760.8	853.9	12.2%	100.0%	100.0%
Lithuanian citizen	327.8	370.0	12.9%	43.1%	43.3%
Foreigners	433.0	484.0	11.8%	56.9%	56.7%
EU countries	266.8	283.9	6.4%	61.6%	58.7%
Non EU countries	166.1	200.1	20.5%	38.4%	41.3%

Source: Statistics Lithuania



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**Andrew Gibson, Group Spa Director -
Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group**

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David Zarb-Jenkins

Email: dzarbjenkins@questex.com

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► from my visit to Grand Spa Lietuva, I can confirm that no value is usually given to even simple commercial additions such as retail. In comparison nearly all guests at Spa Vilnius Sana – a high-end hotel spa that opened in 2004 – are private customers (see Case Study 2).

This was my first visit to Lithuania and I know it won't be my last. It surprised and thrilled me in equal measure. Not least, the preventative and pro-active health traditions that are so ingrained in everyday living, but also the immense potential to further develop the wellness offering. ●



Anni Hood, owner,
K.I.S Lifestyle Group
Email: anni@kislifestyle.co.uk
Twitter: @kis_lifestyle

You can book a massage for one leg or arm at a time – it's believed to be pointless to massage a part of the body that's not in pain

Table 2: Number of beds sold in Lithuania to international visitors

Country	1 Jan to 31 Jun 2011	1 Jan to 31 Jun 2012	Percentage change
Russia	63,000	90,400	43.4%
Poland	68,400	59,900	-12.4%
Germany	50,400	59,300	17.6 %
Belorussia	45,700	47,000	2.7%
Latvia	27,300	33,400	22.1%

Source: Statistics Lithuania



Energetikas has 650 beds and 70 per cent of customers are government-funded patients

CASE STUDY 2

ENERGETIKAS

Palanga, on the north-west coast of Lithuania, is the location of Energetikas – a health and wellness centre specialising in rehabilitation. It has two buildings on-site: one epitomising the traditional sanatorium, which has 650 bedrooms and is undergoing a badly needed refurbishment; the other, a new spa hotel with 100-bedrooms due to open by mid 2013.

Largely serving a government-funded patient clientele accounting for 70 per cent of custom, there are 16 full-time doctors to prescribe and administer the health-focused treatments. Alongside the mineral water and mud baths, the venue offers everything from oxygen therapy to ECGs and psychological assessments. Massage is widely available, with the possibility of booking one leg or arm at a time – it's believed to be pointless to massage parts of the body that don't have pain. What an opportunity for education!

Average room stay for private guests is 14 days and for funded patients a staggering 40 days. The costs are sensibly packaged into a nights' accommodation including meals, a doctor consultation and up to four treatments a day. Someone staying in a double room in the spa hotel will pay only €48 (US\$64, £40). While it's far from five-stars – very much a no frills venue – it functions well, gets results and people can afford it.



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MY SAUNA AND SPA

STANDARD ISSUE

In the final part of our series on spa management training, we investigate the potential for developing globally recognised standards for spa management education

RHIANON HOWELLS, CONSULTING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

The first worldwide study into spa management education, *Spa Management Workforce & Education: Addressing Market Gap* (see SB12/4 p56), which was conducted by SRI International on behalf of the Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS), not only provides greater insight into the gaps in provision; it's also a call to arms.

Running through its recommendations is an emphasis on greater collaboration between training providers and the industry, with a view to increasing awareness and utilisation of existing programmes and improving the depth of those offerings. These moves will be a critical step forward, both in making the maze of spa management courses and qualifications easier to navigate and in closing the gaps identified.

One area highlighted for further discussion is the potential for "an industry-level accreditation for spa management training programmes/curricula that meet industry standards for quality and content". Something similar has already been successfully undertaken in the fitness industry with the creation of the European Register for Exercise Professionals (EREPs) which we've outlined on p78. But as Katherine Johnston, the study's lead author admits, it's a contentious issue. "Those in favour believe that global standards would raise the bar for spa management training programmes and ensure that key topics and skills are addressed in the curricula, as the industry would have more leverage of what is being taught," she says. "Those against believe it

would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to come up with global standards that all training providers could adhere to."

In the last of this series on spa management education, we ask if the implementation of globally recognised standards for spa management training is, in fact, a realistic goal for the industry – and, if so, how it might be achieved.

GLOBAL DIVISION

When considering the practicality of developing training standards for spa managers, it makes sense to look at what's been achieved in other professions. While spa management education is still relatively new, there are well-established standards for massage and beauty therapy, at

Those in favour believe global standards would raise the bar for spa management training programmes and ensure key topics and skills are addressed

individual country level (often backed by government) and to some extent internationally, via the worldwide reach of private awarding bodies such as CIDESCO, ITEC and CIBTAC, which accredit member schools to deliver their certifications. There is, however, still a great deal of fragmentation, with certain standards having more currency in some regions than in others.

"The problem with the idea of developing one certification [that everybody will accept] is that there's always going to be an element of self-interest," says Susie Ellis,

president of media company SpaFinder Wellness and founding board member of the GSWS. "Because who's creating it? Who's funding it? And who's saying it's the best one? The idea of everybody putting confidence in one organisation globally is just not the way the free world works. That doesn't mean that a few certifications may not end up dominating, and that can be a positive because it simplifies things for consumers."

Among concerns highlighted by stakeholders interviewed for the SRI study, says Johnston, was not only that educational approaches and market needs vary widely across geographical regions, but also that the spa industry as a whole is still evolving – meaning training requirements are changing all the time. Vanessa Main, director of spa operations and development for Hilton in the Asia-Pacific (see SB11/3 p28) says: "Problems could arise if you were to create standards for sophisticated markets such as the US and Europe and then ask somewhere like Asia to adopt them. In time there may be an opportunity to get some global standardisation, but it's a little premature at the moment."

Indeed, in such a young sector, even developing standards at a grass roots level presents challenges – despite the shortage of well-trained spa managers, the demand to drive initiatives forward is often lacking in individual markets. According to Suki Kalirai, chairman of HABIA, the standards-



LIGHTPOET/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

setting body for the British spa, hair and beauty industry, this is the case in the UK. "Although we have a few national occupational standards for spa management, they probably only cover 20 per cent of the skills needed to be a competent manager," he says. "There isn't a comprehensive range because employers haven't been asking for them."

UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

The question of global accreditation becomes even more challenging when higher education establishments are brought in. Take the closely related hotel industry as an example. There are numerous reputable accreditation schemes for academic institutions, such as quality controls by the Association of Swiss Hotel Schools and the World Tourism Organization's TedQual. Yet many universities find it difficult to seek industry accreditation.

"Universities in many countries already have to be accredited by a number of

regional and national groups," explains Professor Mary Tabacchi, who teaches spa management modules at Cornell University, in the US (see SB10/1 p52). "Without them, we cannot remain universities. The problem is that the requirements of vocational accreditation schemes can conflict with the academic requirements imposed by these groups – because ultimately we only have so many hours in a day. And even if it were possible to meet the requirements of both academic and industry accreditations, many universities have strict internal statutes or protocols that forbid or discourage vocational training. So while a faculty might be responsive to suggestions, it would be extremely difficult for them to develop a programme to industry specifications."

Nor is this challenge necessarily limited to universities. Johnston says: "Many of the stakeholders we interviewed, particularly those working in education, resist the idea that the industry should dictate

▲ Standards in sophisticated markets like the US and Europe may be hard to adapt in less developed regions like Asia

what schools and training providers do, especially since most programmes already have to follow a lot of standards set by their own institutions and governments."

INDIVIDUAL CREDENTIALS

A global accreditation scheme targeting training providers is not necessarily the only way to raise spa management standards across the industry, however. The SRI study points to credentialing programmes in other industries, which test and certify working individuals rather than schools, as another model the spa industry could look at. One organisation with such a scheme is the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI), the training arm of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, which offers management-level ▶



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► certifications and has licence agreements in 45 countries. To achieve certification, candidates must meet certain prerequisites – which may include recognised qualifications from other institutions, successful completion of one of AHLEI’s home-study or online courses and/or on-the-job experience – before sitting an exam.

Over the last five to 10 years, AHLEI has collaborated with the US-based International Spa Association (ISPA) to develop two credentials around spa management: the Certified Spa Supervisor and the Spa Management Area of Specialization. At present, only around 325 people, primarily in the US, have achieved either of these certifications, but Johnston is positive that with more promotion, they could really take off. “AHLEI is highly regarded globally, so the AHLEI/ISPA partnership is a great start in terms of developing some good certification programmes,” she says. “That’s why we recommend greater industry adoption of these programmes. Of course, other spa management certifications could be developed, either regionally or globally, but we think it’s better to expand or improve what’s already out there rather than to start something else from scratch.”

Despite this strong endorsement, not everyone in the industry is convinced that this or indeed any credentialing programme for spa managers can work across borders. The SRI study admits: “When stakeholders were asked whether an international management credentialing programme would be valuable for the spa industry, most felt it would be, but that creating such a programme – with truly international buy-in and participation – would be a highly difficult and complex task.”

However, Johnston adds: “AHLEI’s hospitality industry certifications were launched back in the 1970s and it took several decades for them to take off, but most major hospitality chains around the world have now embraced them. The same thing could happen in the spa industry.”

RAISING THE BAR

Following the SRI study, the GSWS has already set up two task forces aimed at raising the bar in spa management education. The first of these, headed up by GSWS board member Anna Bjurstam, managing director of spa consultancy Raison d’Etre, is in the process of creating a list of core competencies for training providers rang-

▲ Two GSWS task forces have been set up to investigate how we can close the gap in global spa training standards

ing from universities to those delivering short courses. To support this endeavour, the task force has also set up an advisory committee aimed at bridging the communication gap between the industry and universities in particular. Meanwhile, a second task force, headed up by ISPA president Lynne McNeese, is exploring the possibility of setting up a workable global accreditation/certification scheme.

“Definitions and standards in spa management education currently differ so much between countries and regions that it’s difficult to say whether or not this will be achievable,” says Bjurstam. “But we are going to give it a try.”

There is, however, a lot of detail to finalise. “We still have to work out who or what will deliver the scheme, but the first step is coming up with the content. For that, we’re looking at precedents set by other industries, and we’re hopeful that answers will present themselves along the way. There are a lot of challenges, but if we succeed, the benefits to the industry could be enormous.” ►



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CASE STUDY

EREPS



Since 2008, the European Register for Exercise Professionals (EREPS), with Cliff Collins as registrar, has harmonised and registered health and fitness training standards and people. What, if anything, can the spa industry learn from its experience?

The drive to formalise training standards in the European fitness industry began, in part, over 25 years ago, when architect Cliff Collins bought a health club in Brighton, UK. Unable to find the calibre of staff he wanted, Collins started working with government and trade bodies to develop national occupational standards for the British fitness sector, and in 2001 he became the first director of the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs). The idea was simple: training providers paid a one-off fee to verify that their qualifications were in line with national standards, while fitness professionals who trained with them, or were otherwise assessed as meeting the standards, paid a small annual fee to register.

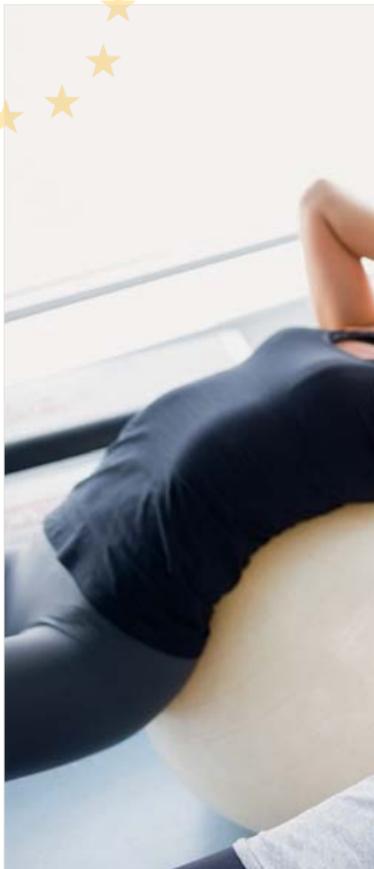
In 2003, Collins and other fitness industry leaders – from the UK, Ireland, France, Italy, Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands – were granted funding by the European Commission (EC) to develop some European training standards, with a view to promoting greater workforce mobility across the continent. In 2007, administration of the standards, including a third-party verification process for training providers, was brought under the auspices of the newly launched European Health and Fitness

Association (EHFA); and in 2008, Collins was brought on board to set up a pan-European register (EREPS).

Today, EREPS has 3,500 members across 32 countries – not including the 28,000 on the UK register. It covers eight levels which are developed by EHFA's Standards Council and are referenced to the EC's official European Qualifications Framework to make national qualifications more comparable across the continent. Levels 2-5 of EREPs are based on occupational standards and include Fitness Assistant at level 2, Fitness and Group Fitness Instructor at level 3, Personal Trainer or Pilates Instructor at level 4

If you don't get the standards right, and you don't get the process right, the whole thing quickly becomes discredited

and Exercise for Health Specialist at level 5. Level 1 is reserved for work experience candidates while levels 6-8 cover professionals with degrees, master degrees and doctorates respectively. Unlike the UK register, EREPs does not currently offer a classification for fitness centre managers, as EHFA hasn't considered this a priority – although



according to Collins, "they'll probably get around to that eventually." Registration costs €30 (US\$40, £25) a year.

Significantly, while professionals trained by EHFA-approved providers – which pay €500 (US\$663, £414) for the accreditation process – automatically qualify for EREPs membership, this is not the only route to registration. "There are a quarter of a million fitness professionals in Europe and we recognise that most won't have come through one of the 50 EHFA-approved companies," says Collins. "So in those cases, we have technical experts across Europe who look in detail at candidates' qualifications and work experience before making a decision about what level to rank them at."

Although Collins stresses that EREPs has no aspirations to be a global organisation,



WAVEBRAIN/MEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

tion, he recognises the importance of wider cooperation in an increasingly international industry. To this end, he spearheaded the launch of the International Confederation of Registers of Exercise Professionals (ICREPs), a partnership between registration bodies around the world, including the national registers of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as the UK REPs and EREPs. In addition, EREPs has signed memorandums of understanding with five top certification bodies in the US fitness industry: ACSM, ACE, NASM, NCSA and NCSF. "They get involved in the consultation process for our standards development work and we hold an annual international standards meeting where we compare and share," says Collins. "The level of cooperation is stunning."

▲ **EREPs has technical experts to judge a candidate's qualification if they're not affiliated with approved companies**

Collins is the first to admit that promoting acceptance of a single set of standards across multiple countries requires immense care. "If you don't get the standards right, and you don't get the process right, then the whole thing could quickly become discredited," he says. "On one hand, you have to maintain it in an extremely rigid way, but on the other, you have to recognise that principles of subsidiarity [decentralised authority] exist across Europe and not all countries are able to participate in the same way... so when we founded the register, we knew that for it to work, we would need to have people on the ground in every

country who understood that market and could promote and deliver it locally."

To this end, a new phase of the project's development is now underway with the recent or forthcoming launch of EREPs-affiliated national registers in several EU member states, including Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Denmark – the aim being to grow the European register from the grass roots up. At the same time, the movement continues to forge links beyond Europe's borders, most recently with industry leaders in Peru, who wish to model their own national register on EREPs. "We said, 'Why not?'" says Collins. "We're very happy to support any initiative that helps with the professionalising of our industry and improves business opportunities for everyone." ●

Club Med Cherating Beach

Can a spa resort full of families with young children really offer tranquility and relaxation? We went to Club Med to find out

JENNIFER HARBOTTLE, JOURNALIST, SPA BUSINESS

Background

French-based Club Méditerranée, which operates 80 resorts under the Club Med brand in 40 countries, opened Club Med Cherating Beach in 1979. Located a four-hour drive from Kuala Lumpur on the east coast of Malaysia, the 80-hectare

(193-acre) resort has 297 traditionally-designed wooden bungalows built on stilts and is Club Med's first and only resort in Malaysia. In 2004, it underwent a major refurbishment, which included the upgrading of its rooms and the building of its spa. With its all-inclusive holiday package,

including a children's club plus sports and activities, the resort attracts mainly couples, families and large corporate groups.

The 3,750sq m (40,365sq ft) Club Med Spa Village, is set at the entrance of a jungle, amid lush green trees and the lulling sound of cicadas. The spa comprises two double spa suites with outdoor showers and baths, one double and three single treatment villas, and two beach cabanas for massages. At the Tranquility Centre, a spa boutique, reception and manicure/pedicure area complete the facilities. Treatments are not part of the resort's all-inclusive package.

The offer

The spa at Club Med Cherating Beach is managed by Mandara and offers around 20 treatments, including massages and facials by Elemis – Mandara's sister brand – as well as its signature Mandara treatments such as Balinese and hot stone massage. Prices range from MYR140 (US\$46, €35, £29) for a one-hour manicure, to MYR815 (US\$270, €202, £169) for a two-hour, 20-minute body indulgence package.

Booking

Club Med runs a central website, but once you're on the specific page for your resort it's not easy to know whether the information refers to Club Med in general or the



At the entrance of a jungle, Club Med Spa Village is in a beautiful setting

VITAL STATISTICS

Address: Club Med Cherating Beach, 29 Mile Stone, Kemaman – Kuantan, 26080, Kuantan, Pahang Darul Makmur, Malaysia
Times: 10am to 8pm every day
Details: +60 9 581 9133
www.clubmed.com



The spa is well placed to offer kids' treatments in quieter periods – and the manager is looking into this

resort you want. There wasn't a downloadable spa menu for Cherating Beach nor prices for individual treatments. Nor were there any pictures of the spa online.

Location and access

The spa is located right next to the resort's swimming pool, central to the entire resort, which makes it impossible to miss.

Design

Club Med Cherating Beach is set next to the South China Sea with 4km (2.5 miles) of white sandy beaches in the middle of tropical rainforest. The Spa Village is reached via a wooden footbridge flanked by water features, that leads to a traditional Malay Kampong-style teak building that houses the spa reception, shop and mani/

pedi rooms. Because it's surrounded by glass with large open double doors, this area is airy and offset beautifully by the sounds of the jungle – it's not unusual to see monkeys on the roof.

From the reception, guests are taken through the jungle to the individual spa villas which are also built from teak. Basic and earthy inside, they match the friendly and tranquil tone of the rest of the resort.

Cleanliness

The spa, like the resort, is maintained very well and is exceptionally clean.

The staff

A quick glance at TripAdvisor will tell you that staff at Club Med are second to none and are one of the reasons people

love to go there. While the spa is run as a separate operation, its employees were all equally professional and friendly and spoke excellent English.

The experience

Our family chose a Club Med holiday because we wanted to escape the mayhem of living in a polluted city and to enjoy the benefits of an all-inclusive package. The fact that it was family friendly was also a key factor for us and I was delighted the resort offered to look after my three young kids during my treatment. While I was relaxing in the spa, they were treated to a jungle walk, mask making and an ice cream, under the watchful eye of a qualified childminder. For a mum, it doesn't get any better than that! ▶



FUTURE PLANS

Club Méditerranée has just announced plans to open a further five resorts in Asia Pacific under the Club Med brand, as part of its ongoing expansion.

Scheduled to open by 2015, the new resorts will be in China, which already has one Club Med ski resort in Yabuli and a second resort for the Maldives. Sales and marketing manager for Club Med Malaysia, Steven Tan, says the group is also considering other opportunities to open further resorts in south-east Asia.

▲ The resort has high ratings for service and, despite being managed by another firm, so does the spa

- ▶ Although the spa isn't a child-free zone, it doesn't include any kids' treatments and given the number of families staying at the resort it's in an ideal position to do this – and on a particularly quiet afternoon my friend was offered a special mother/daughter manicure. While it wouldn't work in the main spa – most mums I spoke to wanted 'me time' – if offered at a set time or in a restricted area, I imagine children or family-focused spa packages could be a big boost to what I thought was a relatively quiet spa for a resort at 75 per cent occupancy.

I suspect one reason why the spa isn't particularly busy is the lack of marketing. The spa menu on the website is difficult to navigate and there's no option to pre-book. No emails before our stay included spa collateral and neither was it mentioned in our welcome talk nor cross-sold by members of staff – although I did find a tatty looking menu in our bedroom. That said, booking over the phone or directly at the spa when we arrived was very simple.

The spa menu was quite limited and I was disappointed there were no signature Malaysian treatments. Surely Mandara can come up with a massage using indigenous Malaysian ingredients! In the end, I opted



▲ Design was perfect for the jungle setting, yet more could be done to promote the spa to guests onsite

for a two-hour Frangipani Body Glow, which included a salt rub, Balinese massage, wrap and mini facial, for MYR695 (US\$231, €173, £144).

At the time of booking, I was with a female friend and we both chose the same treatment. Next morning, we were taken

to a couples room, which although wasn't a problem for either of us, did come as a surprise. In the changing room-cum-bathroom, the pair of us were barely able to squeeze in together and the gap between the wardrobe and the wall was so small it made hanging clothes quite tricky. We were both given a gorgeous sarong to wear (much nicer than a dressing gown) and some ugly disposable underwear (not so nice).

The ambience in the room was perfect for a jungle-inspired spa setting. Not too dark,



Customers are asked to point out any problem areas, but this isn't always acted on in treatments

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Ease of booking:	8
Facilities:	7
Cleanliness/maintenance:	10
Staff:	9
Experience/treatment:	8
Value for money:	8
Overall experience:	8

RIGHT TO REPLY

HARISH KUMAR, SPA DIRECTOR

We do try to attract family members, including children, to our spa and have up to two promotions a week. Most recently, we held a family spa night where adults enjoyed a footbath and massage and kids had a bubble bath and shoulder, hand and foot massage. We limit this to advance bookings after 8pm and restrict it to our suites and villas (rather than the whole spa), but it's difficult in the rainy season when we cannot use outside areas. Once a week we also have a free fun activity - from a massage lesson to free mini treatment - to raise guest awareness of the spa.

the windows at the front overlooked the sea and the sounds of the birds and the monkeys were lovely. I always prefer a natural setting for spa treatments than a darkened room with candlelight.

Before my treatment commenced, I filled out a questionnaire and noted that my cellulite was a particular concern. Despite this, when my therapist scrubbed me with the ginger and lime salt and body brush, her strokes were very timid and didn't go towards my heart, which would have

had little effect on my circulation (or my thighs!) and even though she did increase her pressure during my massage when I asked her to, it soon dropped off again.

When it came to shower time, I was given the outdoor shower - fantastic - but I felt my friend got the short straw as she had to use the cramped indoor facilities instead. After the treatment was over, we walked back to the reception and at that point, I would have welcomed a cup of tea but nothing was forthcoming.

Summary

The spa was really well designed and exclusive without being intimidating. The staff were helpful and happy to make last minute time changes to subsequent bookings.

Although I have no complaints, my only comment is that as an operation, there is so much more Club Med and Mandara could do to attract more guests.

Yet, overall, our aims of leaving stress-free were accomplished, thanks in no small part to the spa and its impressive team. ●

SPA SOFTWARE CEO BRIEFINGS

We figured the CEOs of spa software businesses would have a view on where technology's heading, so thought we'd ask them on your behalf. This is what they said

KATE CORNEY AND LIZ TERRY . PRODUCTS EDITOR AND EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

Josh McCarter,
SpaBooker

“We noticed our clients were attempting to do yield management manually by adjusting prices at select times to fill empty reservations

And because many thousands of spas use SpaBooker as their master calendar, client management system, and POS, we realised we could leverage their historical sales details to create an effective yield management tool.

We launched Deal Maker in November. It's an automated system that fills off-peak appointments by identifying slow times on a client's calendar, creating special offers and promoting them across the web.

How are you responding to tech trends?

Internet Retailer predicts mobile internet usage will surpass desktop by 2014, so spa consumers will increasingly be using their phones to handle more tasks like booking services and purchasing products.

SpaBooker offers mobile booking directly from a spa's website or Facebook page and our clients experienced a 230 per cent increase in mobile bookings between October 2011 and July 2012.

The mobile impact doesn't stop on the consumer side. We believe mobile spa management will grow and we expect innovation will take mobile use into many more aspects of a spa's operation.

What's your vision?

To become the most widely used and loved management and marketing platform serving health, wellness and service businesses.

Our clients will be the best run in the market, because they'll benefit from efficiencies and marketing capabilities made possible by our software. SpaBooker will help clients grow, drive profit and, importantly, do what they do best – serve their customers.

We've continued our tradition of pioneering new technology, with the most robust set of mobile features on the market. These



McCarter: SpaBooker has a new yield management option

are available on both iOS and Android smart phones and tablets. Managers are using SpaBooker Mobile to monitor their businesses, schedule appointments and even process credit cards right on a smartphone or tablet.

What types and size of spas are your products targeted at?

Spas of all sizes and types. SpaBooker is flexible enough to serve the entire industry and designed to scale with businesses as they grow. Our clients run 4,000 spas in 70 countries and our software is available in eight languages.

What makes it different or better?

Our quarterly software releases allow clients to stay current with technology and marketing innovations. As a unified, web-based system, our online features, like eCommerce and online booking, integrate seamlessly with spa operations.

SpaBooker also provides front desk staff with both customer and business management tools, as well as fully integrated POS.

Unlike installed software, SpaBooker is accessible from anywhere, anytime, including via smartphone and tablet. This reduces IT maintenance costs, since all information is stored securely in the cloud.

What's the price range?

SpaBooker is available for all spa types, so prices depend on size and need. For small to medium sized spas, monthly fees range from US\$65-US\$250 (£48-£185, £41-£160), plus a one-time set-up fee. We also have enterprise pricing for multi-location businesses that require API access for custom solution development and system integrations.

What else would you like to share with our readers?

Last November we changed our company name from GramercyOne to Booker to align with our focus on helping service businesses such as spas to run and grow successfully. We're also proud to have

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Tech CEOs agree mobile is the way forward for all aspects of spa software, from booking to incentivising staff



ANDRI ZARUBAKA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

John Harms, Millennium

We've completely rewritten Millennium and the result is Evo. It's more visually appealing and intuitive for the user, more simple to use and touch-friendly

It incorporates patented technology and we expect it to be out in June. It will be in the cloud as an option, so clients won't have to buy servers. We've also added some new features, including marketing functionality that helps streamline the front desk.

How are you responding to tech trends?

The PC – that big clunky thing on the desk – is disappearing. Now it's all about mobility: wireless, tablets, cloud, online and touch. We're moving away from a spa needing servers with a load of IT people to support it, and onto cloud-based software.

It's about having options. Some people still want installed software, which we're great at, but others want low upfront costs and to be wireless.

What's your vision?

To create a tool operators can rely on that will help grow their business. My focus is on how we can simplify and beautify our software and continue to build business intelligence into it. I believe employee motivation's vital

Harms: Millennium will relaunch its software in June

too. This is part of Evo, as it enables them to set and track goals without having to wait for their manager to give them a report.

Which spas are your products suited to?

Our software works at all scales, from the smallest spas and yoga studios to the biggest spas in the world. Whatever the size, we want to help them with utilisation of resources. Spas we currently supply include Depasquale Spa and 1,000 Massage Envy spas.

How's your software different or better?

The answer to this is how we've built it. Over 25 years we've learned a lot about the business intelligence which spas need to grow, so we've built our software around growth indicators like client retention, frequency of visit, new clients per month and average spend. We also provide 400 reports through the system, allowing users to fully evaluate every aspect of their salon or spa operation.

What's the price range?

Monthly fees range from US\$69-US\$189 (€51-€140, £44-£121) in the US. This includes updates, support and use of the software.

What else is happening at Millennium?

We're trebling in size over the next four years, going from 75 people to 200 and we've just purchased a 45,000sq ft building in New Jersey to accommodate this. Evo is multi-lingual and multi-currency, so international expansion will be quite large also. Our annual Experience conference will be held in Arizona in June, offering classes on Millennium, business building, accounting, tax and other topics.



W www.harms-software.com
T +1 973 402 9500
E sales@harms-software.com
spa-kit keyword: harms

Anne Battersby,
IntelliSpa from Intelligenz Solutions

“We’re enabling spa operators to build a comprehensive understanding of guest activity

Our customers are often spas within resorts and we eliminate the silos of information stored in a plethora of systems relating to guest spend in the spa, restaurant, shops and other activities guests may have participated in during their stay. Instead, we provide a single, integrated view of guest spend, experience and preferences.

How are you responding to tech trends?

Key transformers are social networking, customer interaction solutions and yield measurement. These are about capturing and sharing information easily and so everyone gets value.

Solutions that anticipate these requirements and deliver meaningful analysis will be the winners, regardless of which hardware devices are currently in vogue. We’re regarded as a strategic asset by our clients. In our history we’ve lost only one customer.



Battersby: we’re brought in when other suppliers fail

What are your strengths?

We excel at dealing with customers who want to build long-term relationships with their guests and ourselves. They might be based in Singapore, but need the comfort of knowing we can support them in other locations and across multiple sites and time zones with full tax, language and cultural compliance and that we understand the nuances of these markets.

What makes your software better?

The ability to integrate with other systems and functionality – whether it’s corporate finance, going cashless or having a spa activity stay wrapped up into a single bill at check-out.

What’s the price range?

We’re often a replacement solution where another system has failed and are often selected by the operator because of our depth. Upwards £10,000 (US\$6,430 €7,400) is where we’re most relevant.



W www.intelligenzsolutions.com **spa-kit keyword: intelligenz**
T + 44 203 455 616 **E** support@intelligenzsolutions.com

Frank Pitsikalis,
ResortSuite

“Our investment in innovation is enabling exciting new user experiences and allowing our customers to take advantage of rapidly emerging technologies such as mobile to manage in very powerful and cost-efficient ways

How are you responding to tech trends?

We’re big believers in mobile and tablet and we’ve released check-in apps and a portal for staff to check schedules from mobile devices. These are part of our new ResortSuite OPS/operations framework.

We also see spa membership-based business models and social media as exciting opportunities for spas to engage with consumers and create deeper, more sustainable customer relationships.

What’s your vision?

Historically, the hospitality industry hasn’t invested in integrated solutions and has ‘dealt with it’ through many manual processes on the back end to ensure guests don’t experience inefficiencies.

With guests’ desire to self-direct their experience, this approach no longer works. ResortSuite is one of the companies helping to redefine the guest experience by empowering guests.



Pitsikalis: spa guests want to self-direct their experiences

What makes you different?

For spas that are part of another business like a hotel, integration creates a smooth guest experience across all touch points – front desk, phone, web and mobile. Our investments in mobile have amplified the value of our guest-centric design and our system speed and reliability are valued by clients.

Which spas should use ResortSuite?

There are four markets where our products have strength and fit: destination spas, where we help operators achieve a seamless guest experience; hotel/resort spas where we integrate better with hotel systems than other spa software-only providers; large or high-volume spas where our Oracle-based technology provides the scalability,

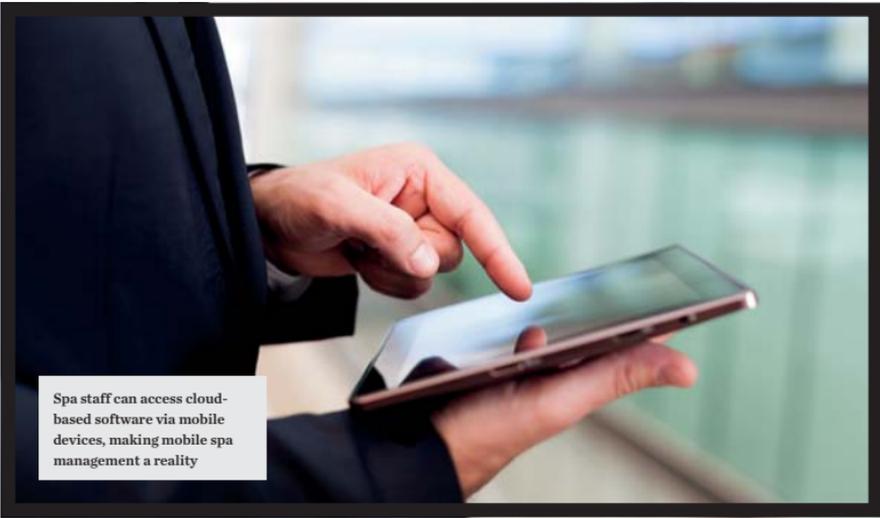
reliability and speed to manage high volumes of customers and; multi-location day spas, where centralised, real-time information such as guest and staff profiles are managed. Our enterprise dashboard with 75 KPIs provides a real-time pulse across all locations.

What’s the price range?

We’re not the cheapest, nor the most expensive. Our technology drives profit with its mobile reservations and integrated marketing (often a third party add-on). Multi-site operations will find the cost lower, but we may be beyond the budget of small spas.



W www.resortsuite.com **T** +1 416 259 0715
E sales@resortsuite.com **spa-kit keyword: resortsuite**



Spa staff can access cloud-based software via mobile devices, making mobile spa management a reality

Malcolm Rennie, Concept Software Systems

Our software's well established and functionality-rich so we tend to add new apps, rather than feature functionality

For example, we're going green, with the aim of enabling customers to go paperless. We're doing this via mobile applications that enable guests to check-in, complete health questionnaires, sign digitally and pay online.

This improves the guest experience, while saving on printing. In addition, capturing this data digitally also means full reporting is available.

We've also been enhancing our third-party interfaces, so we now have additional hook-ups to loyalty and CRM systems, as well as more PMS solutions and gift card options.

Version 2 of our Concept Business Intelligence product has been launched, with a new user interface and branding. It's available to download from the Appstore. We've added income simulation tools to this product, as well as a number of forecasting features.

How are you responding to tech trends?

We have a few mobile apps out already, but we'll be introducing more through 2013 that will make spas more efficient and improve the user experience. For example, we're increasingly used for booking and paying online, so on the web side, emphasis will be placed on customer loyalty and social-media integration.

Our customers have always wanted to be different from the competition, as a result, our new solutions will be 100 per cent tailored to their needs and will be white-labelled just for them.



Rennie: new solutions will be white labelled for customers

Tell us about your vision?

We're focusing on expansion. We've been in the industry 20 years and will continue investing in new products and markets: we love the challenge of doing business globally and we're aiming to reach the point where we have clients in 70 countries in the next 12 months.

We're also excited by the upcoming new release of our Concept software. It's under wraps but we can't wait for our clients to try it.

How's your software better?

Our software offers high-end resorts a full solution. Besides the standard feature functionality, we aim to be global, multi-language and multi-currency. We also have fiscal compliance and a local presence in 60 plus countries.

Our system is scalable and robust. It's based on an Oracle database and interfaces with a number of other systems, including Opera and

a range of accounting packages. Besides spa, it can control leisure, activities, golf and membership transactions, as well as having CRM, web booking and mobile functionality. And if clients want another feature we don't currently have, we'll build it for them.

What's the price range?

It's scalable - anywhere from US\$3,000-US\$50,000 (€2,230-€37,000, £1,900-£32,000). We offer finance packages, so the cost of the system can be wrapped up in the operational budget rather than having to be carried as a capital expense.

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spa-kit keywords: concept software

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CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT



Gary Henkin



Doug Chambers

Special experiences are created when spa concepts are expressed through great design. Kate Corney talks to WTS president Gary Henkin and business partner Doug Chambers, principal of Blu Spas, about concept and branding

What does the concept stage of a development encompass?

Doug: We consider a broad range of variables during the process of bringing a concept into focus – culture, location, demographics and what the competition's offering. Our task is to create something compelling which distinguishes the project and ensures it's financially viable from both development and operational standpoints.

We encourage collaboration with the project architects, interior designers, project managers and the client to bring the concept together. It's a reference point for project planning and operational decisions.

Gary: Clients define the word concept in different ways. To some, it means shaping the design of a facility, to others creating a theme or a story, a signature element or treatment.

We define the word as part of the vision

statement for the spa but we're flexible and shape our involvement based on what the client needs, whether that's in the concept, design or pre-opening phase.

Do spas need a concept?

Gary: There are lots of spas that are very similar and don't make a statement in the way an innovative concept spa can. The world is becoming more competitive and brand conscious and hotels and resorts are looking to define themselves through design features and operational and guest experience. They're asking us to create spas that offer consumers something special.

Doug: Concepts matter – if not, why do consumers select one spa over another? While there may not be a single answer, a great concept can be a helpful component in creating a successful spa.

What does it cost to create one?

Gary: Costs range from a few thousand US dollars to significantly more if a concept book and vision are needed. It takes work and time to create a concept book to include a theme, story and the signature elements of a spa vision.

Doug: Cost is related to scope. Frequently we're approached about projects that – in addition to a traditional spa – include aspects of wellness, perhaps a medical spa, fitness facilities and often a salon. Many are mixed-use and include hospitality, residential, membership and local guest components. To deliver a concept which fully addresses these elements and which is different from what everyone else is doing costs money.

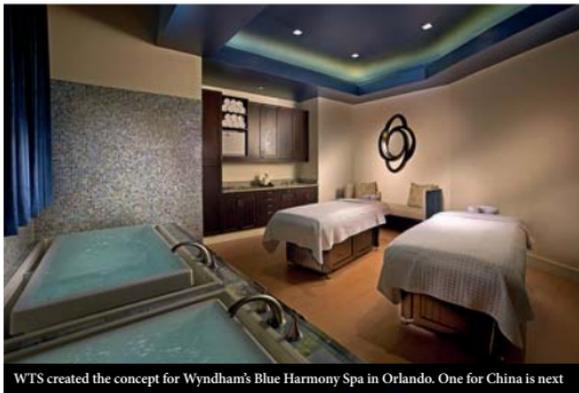
Are concepts scalable?

Doug: Yes. We've worked with operators of single boutique sites who want something tailored to one location. We also work with developers envisioning multiple sites or hotel brands who want a concept that translates from a tropical beach resort to an urban location and everything in between.

How do concepts translate across cultures?

Gary: We build a malleable concept. Around 70 per cent is transferable to anywhere in the world and 30 per cent is customised to the individual region it's going to.

We've recently opened a Blue Harmony Spa for Wyndham Worldwide in Orlando, Florida and we're working on one for China. The spas won't be identical – the menus and service elements will be customised, but they'll contain the thread of the concept. The quality, guest experience and some of the design will be recognisable.



WTS created the concept for Wyndham's Blue Harmony Spa in Orlando. One for China is next



▲ The Sè Spa concept at Hotel Palomar, San Diego, is based on a Zen-like design with a mix of textures, clean lines and no clutter

At what stage do you create the brand?

Doug: Ideally, you want to be aware of brand design early on, so when you're devising the programme and layout, brand design requirements can be taken into account.

It can be awkward if branding decisions are made after the concrete's poured and you realise the brand calls for some special design element – signature water features or thermal experiences, for example. It can be expensive to do a u-turn at this point.

However, for projects we know will build the brand decision, we create a flexible design that can be nimbly adapted.

Will it make more money than a non-branded spa?

Gary: There are branded spas that do well and others that underperform. They can carry the same brand, concept and product line in two different locations and one will do well while the other won't. Why is this? The answer comes down to how they're managed, marketed, promoted, and integrated into the hotel or resort.

Doug: There are advantages to having a branded spa, particularly in an independent property which doesn't have a corporate structure from which to draw support in areas such as training and marketing.

But branding isn't a magical elixir that makes your spa successful – who's operating it is just as important. However, when you bring together a great brand, strong operator, solid training and well-implemented marketing – that's when it works.



What marketing and exposure might a brand give my spa?

Gary: Brands will provide exposure. There are good reasons to consider them:

1. Cachet. Brands can provide unique features for your spa
2. Consumer recognition. If the brand is recognised, this is a good reason to consider it.

3. Press/media exposure. Most brands can bring added momentum from media buzz.

Your expectation should be that the brand will influence in these areas and if it can't, then don't consider it. The brand has a vested interest in marketing, promoting and exposing the spa to potential guests and pushing to make it happen. It can influence the exposure of the entire property.

Will the brand contribute to build costs?

Doug: Brands are more reluctant to contribute than before the downturn. In most instances, they won't contribute cash, but may make other types of contributions.

Gary: You should ask if there's a licensing fee for bringing in a brand. This depends on the brand and the business model.

▲ Sè Spa is based on an all-suite concept

Which brands would you recommend?

Gary: There are two options. Through a consultancy like ours, spa owners can create a brand, make it their own and roll it out throughout the world. Or they can ask us to identify brands for partnership working and we'll present them for consideration.

An early question we ask is do they want to develop, own and control their own brand, or do they want to work with a partner?

Doug: We try to find brand candidates most compatible for the specific project. One of the key considerations is whether the brand serves the end objective of distinguishing a spa from its competitors. We apply this same screening process on behalf of our client whether we're recommending our own proprietary brands or third-party brands.

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www.wtsinternational.com

AMENITIES

Amenities can generate up to 20 per cent of revenue for a spa product business. We find out more about these valuable extras

KATE CORNEY, PRODUCTS EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS



SOTHYS

Why amenities? Sothys was originally asked to supply amenities by clients 10 years ago. The range provides hotel guests with the opportunity to experience and discover what Sothys has to offer, especially those who are unfamiliar with the brand.

The range: Sothys provides amenities for facial skincare – anti-ageing cleansing milks, toning lotions, hydrating creams and serums; and the body – soaps, lotions, shower creams, scrubs and hair shampoo and conditioner. The packaging and formulations are consistent with its spa products and operators are offered a bespoke package depending on their requirements.

Clients: Currently Sothys supplies amenities to hotels and cruise ships, including French cruise company Compagnie du Ponant's L'Austral and Boreal ships, and the Helianthal thalassotherapy centre on France's Basque coast.

Requirements: Sothys requires a minimum order of 1,000 units of each agreed product due to the nature of the manufacturing process.

Plans for expansion? Sothys is in discussion with a major airline regarding amenity development.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: SOTHYS



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AROMATHERAPY ASSOCIATES

The range: Aromatherapy Associates launched its amenities range in 2004 due to popular demand. The range is offered in hotel bedrooms and full size washroom amenities are used in communal areas in spas, hotels, clubs and pools. It consists of two shower gels, a soap, body lotion, shampoo and conditioner and the products were chosen based on popularity. In a simple, but effective touch, Aromatherapy Associates has included two essential oil shower gels so guests can decide on either a pick-me-up Revive scent for the morning or a Relax fragrance for the evening. The presentation reflects the Aromatherapy Associates brand and identity and the oils are blended in-house to ensure the same consistency and standard as its professional spa line.

Traditional necessities, such as a shower cap; sewing kit; vanity pack; and a dental kit are also provided for hotel guests.

Requirements: Aromatherapy Associates mainly supplies five-star and boutique hotels. It partners with hotels that reflect its vision, standard and philosophy and doesn't require a set number of bedrooms.

Why amenities? It creates brand awareness and introduces potential customers to the range, which they otherwise may never have tried. Using a professional spa amenity range also provides gravitas to the hotel as professional therapists are happy to use and endorse the products.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS:
AROMATHERAPY ASSOCIATES





CASE STUDY: SODASHI

Effectivity: The prestigious Four Seasons George V Hotel, Paris uses Sodashi amenities in its bedrooms (pictured) to help raise the awareness of the products in its spa and to highlight the chemical-free benefits that makes Sodashi stand out.

The range: Sodashi's single-use bedroom amenities line, which launched in 2011, includes shampoo, conditioner, body wash

and body lotion. The packaging complements Sodashi's spa retail range. There's also a bulk-use amenities range, introduced in 2010, that is used in the spa and gym bathrooms and changing rooms. These comprise shampoo, conditioner, body wash, body lotion, cleansers and face moisturisers for both men and women.

In addition, Sodashi provides Travel Skin Care Kits and a Jet Lag Recovery Kit for retail in the spa shop.

Why amenities? The range allows Four Seasons George V to offer its guests a chemical-free package – an approach that hotels are increasingly interested in says Sodashi. **Clients:** Sodashi also supplies amenities to Four Seasons Kuda Huraa in the Maldives; the Injidup Spa & Retreat, Australia; The Siam Hotel, Bangkok; and Cabarita Ocean Retreat, Australia.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: SODASHI

AW LAKE

Effectivity: Custom-formulated amenities generate about 20 per cent of overall product business revenues for AW Lake. It's been found that bedroom and locker room spa amenities often encourage guests to enquire about the products and visit spas to buy them and once back home it's not unusual for guests to email and ask about buying even more items.

The range: The custom-formulated amenities by AW Lake are offered in hotel spas, locker rooms, villas and suites. On top of this, AW Lake has recently developed its own range of amenities called Pure Skin and



Body (pictured) to combine nature and science for performance. The range includes Tea and Aloe Clarifying Shampoo; Hemp and Wheat Root Lift Conditioner; Sage and Kelp Invigorating Body Wash; Soy and Ivy Hydration Boost Body Lotion and Deep Quench Hydrating Gel.

Vanity trays, containers, kits and accessories are also offered.

Locker room amenities include a botanical based hairspray, deodorant, shaving gel, shaving balm, hair gel, mouthwash, and body powder. While a new Travel Amenity Kit is for hotels to supply to their guests

The amenities are made with the same formulations as AW Lake's spa products. Airless, PET grade bottles are used for all Pure Skin products to minimise contamination and oxidation.

Clients: Over the past 12 years, AW Lake has been custom-blending amenities for high-end hotels and spas – for groups such as Four Seasons; Amanresorts; Starwood Ritz-Carlton; One&Only; and Capella – across 30 countries. **Requirements:** AW Lake looks for hotel partners committed to quality, safety and efficacy.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS: AW LAKE



BIOSENTIALS

The range: As with Biossentials spa products, its aromatherapy amenities Lavender Collection has been created to contain natural plant ingredients and 100 per cent natural essential oils. Featuring lavender with bergamot and cedarwood, the collection – that's offered in hotel bedrooms and in dispensers across facilities – consists of a shower and bath gel, a shampoo, a conditioner, a moisturising lotion, a soap, a body oil and bath salts.

Why amenities? Biossentials got into amenities in 2007 when it created a custom-blended aromatherapy range with specialised packaging for a hotel in Malaysia that stocked its spa products. It has since gone on to produce ranges for small organisations requiring low batch numbers.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD:
BIOSENTIALS

PINKS BOUTIQUE

The range: Launched in 2010, Pinks Boutique amenities line features two body washes (lemongrass and mandarin) for detox and – more recently revealed – a rose geranium body wash for relaxing, a lemongrass body lotion and an organic hand wash and hand lotion. Amenity trays, tissue boxes, cotton wool and bud boxes (pictured) and mitts are also available. The amenities use the same packaging and for-

mulation as Pinks Boutique's professional range and are available in communal bathrooms and changing rooms.

Clients: Aman Spa at the Connaught Hotel, London; Imagine

Spas at Blofield Heath, Norfolk; Heathrow Airport Terminal 5; and Orton Hall, Peterborough; and Quy Mill, Cambridge.

Requirements: Pinks Boutique looks for partners that



COMFORT ZONE

Effectivity: Comfort Zone says its amenities attracts about 20 per cent more customers to a spa.

The range: The line can be personalised with a hotel's name and features soap, shower gel, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion and accessories including vanity set and bath salts. The products come in mini or bulk sizes for distribution anywhere.

Clients: Westin hotels in, Italy; Les Barmes De L'ours Hotel, France; Ceres Hotel Betriebsgesellschaft, Germany. As well as hotels, Comfort Zone supplies amenities to gyms, cruise lines and airlines.



Why amenities? The range was launched a few years ago to help with brand awareness and to answer demands from hotels with a Comfort Zone spa.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: COMFORT ZONE

ESPA

The range: ESPA amenities include Awakening Shampoo, Nourishing Conditioner, Revitalising Body Wash and Body Lotion and a Refreshing Cleansing Bar. Other spa products can be adapted for gifts. The formula used in ESPA amenities is 99 per cent natural and free from parabens, silicones, synthetic fragrances and skin-irritating ingredients such as SLS and SLES. The packaging is compact but stylish in design.

Clients: Corinthia Hotel, London, where the ESPA amenities range was launched in July 2011; and the world class Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore.

Requirements: Amenities are currently only supplied to spas and salons which offer ESPA treatments and retail within the spa.

Why amenities? The amenities, which



can also be bought as retail items in a spa or hotel, enhance the client's awareness of ESPA's treatment and product offering. **Plans for expansion?** To rollout out amenities to five-star hotels globally, particularly for those with spas.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: ESPA

value having an amenity that's been certified as organic by the Soil Association.

Plans for expansion? This March, Pinks is launching four new looks for its amenities including ranges in black, white and grey veneer, as well as bamboo effect. All have trays, amenity boxes, tissue boxes and a waste bin. A luxury box of turndown gifts is also currently in development.

SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS:
PINKS BOUTIQUE

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Body Performance Duo by QMS

QMS Medicosmetics has introduced the Body Performance Duo to its portfolio of body products. Created by surgeon and skincare expert Dr Erich Schulte, the Duo is designed for smoothing and sculpting the body and is suitable for all ages and pregnant women. It includes the new Pro-Body Exfoliator, an exfoliating gel, along with a new version of an existing product the Revitalising Lift-o-Firm Body Cream.

spa-kit.net keyword **qms**



AB Concept interior design book

Design and architecture studio AB Concept has released *The Language of Luxe*, a 300-page hardcover collection book with lushly illustrated spreads of its interiors. AB Concept's co-founders Ed Ng and Terence Ngan reveal their inspirations, detail their creative process and explain their artistic vision. Their clients include Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts and W hotels.

spa-kit.net keywords **ab concept**



Dermalogica's Power Serum

Dermalogica's new MultiVitamin Power Serum is designed to deliver a potent, skin-friendly form of vitamin A, plus vitamins C, E and F, and has been created with a new formulation process, which aims to produce a high level of stable active ingredients. The serum also uses a retinoid ester – hydroxypinacolone retinoate (HPR) – intended to halt early signs of ageing, including photodamage.

spa-kit.net keyword **dermalogica**



Float Spa international

The Float Spa Premium Floating Tank System is launching in the USA, Belgian and Russian hotel and spa markets as part of its 2013 growth plans, following its introduction in 2012. The tanks are custom-made and contain 700 litres of hygienic salt water, with a complex water cleaning system. A 50-minute session will include LED lights, scents and underwater sound therapy at the start and end.

spa-kit.net keywords **float spa**



Clarins two-in-one serum

Clarins has released its Age Control Double Serum, a two-in-one product made with organic ingredients. It is being launched in an eco-design pump bottle designed to preserve the liposoluble and hydrosoluble ingredients and also to give a precise dosage of the product for application. The Double Serum contains ginseng extract obtained from a plant well known in traditional Chinese medicine.

spa-kit.net keyword **clarins**



Blu Swim for spas and hotels

Leisure industry clothing manufacturer Aspley Leisure has revealed a range of swim and fitness wear for spa retail. Branded Blu Swim and Blu Fit, the range has been designed for hotels, spas and health clubs. It includes items frequently forgotten, such as swimming costumes, goggles, socks and training clothes. Blu Swim costumes are fully lined and made from chlorine-resistant fabric.

spa-kit.net keyword **aspley**



Ladypillo Vichy table topper

Ladypillo has created the Bodipillo Aqua, designed to provide extra comfort during a Vichy treatment. The new table topper is made from 100 per cent memory foam enclosed in a welded waterproof cover. The anti-bacterial, breathable, waterproof topper can be wiped down in between treatments. A machine washable separate cover is available. The product can be tailored to fit treatment tables.

[spa-kit.net](#) keyword **ladypillo**



Porcelanosa sets the Mood

Porcelanosa's new Mood range is designed by international architects Richard Rogers and Luis Vidal. The range has been created to combine traditional ceramic with krion - a new natural mineral-based surface material by the Porcelanosa Group, which is warm to the touch and similar to natural stone. Mood is modular and scalable for small or large bathrooms and is available in modern, distinctive colours.

[spa-kit.net](#) keyword **porcelanosa**



Inner Strength aromatherapy oil

Aromatherapy Associates has developed a bath and shower oil called Inner Strength - its first new blend for 20 years. The blend is a combination of essential oils designed by Geraldine Howard, president of Aromatherapy Associates, during a period of illness. It combines clary sage, frankincense, cardamom and rosemary, rose, vetivert and geranium. Inner Strength goes on sale in March 2013.

[spa-kit.net](#) keywords **aromatherapy associates**



Spa Ritual Meditate nail colours

Spa Ritual's spring 2013 nail lacquer collection Meditate is infused with bamboo aimed at increasing nail strength. The Meditate collection provides a blend of subtle, simple and pure pastels and includes light shades of blue, green, pink, peach, beige and white. The nail lacquers are vegan and are free from synthetic dyes and parabens, DBP, toluene, formaldehyde, formaldehyde resin and camphor.

[spa-kit.net](#) keywords **spa ritual**

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FIGHTING FAT

Scientists have discovered a new type of 'beige fat' cell that burns energy rather than storing excess calories

With many new year resolutions including weight loss, a recent study concerning body fat has grabbed people's attention. We all know too much fat is a bad thing. Yet studies into different types of fat – which burn energy rather than store it – suggest that there might be new ways to tackle obesity.

White 'bad' fat, is the type of fat that stores calories, and excess amounts of it cause people to put on weight. It's found in abundance in obese people.

Brown fat generates heat and burns calories and has been linked to helping control weight. Brown fat dwindles with age – it was believed to only be present in children until researchers in 2009 found that it's also active in up to 7.5 per cent of adults.

But now a newer study* in the journal *Cell* has reported the discovery of beige fat – another type of fat present in "most or all human beings" which has the ability to both store and burn calories.

BEIGE – THE NEW BROWN

The existence of beige fat cells was first suggested in 2008 by Dr Bruce Spiegelman, a cell biologist at Harvard Medical School. But it wasn't until this recent study, conducted by Dr Spiegelman and scientists at Harvard's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, that it's been possible to isolate the cells and determine their genetic profile.

Beige fat cells, the scientists say, can be found in humans in small deposits around the collarbone and spine. In this study, they cloned beige fat cells in mice to look at them more closely.

The scientists discovered that beige fat is similar to brown fat in some ways. Both contain iron, which gives them their distinct colour, and both have an abundance of mitochondria – a part of the cell which can produce heat and burn calories.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A hormone produced by exercising muscles may stimulate cells to burn calories

But there were also some significant differences. Brown fats cells give off high levels of UCP1 a protein that mitochondria need to produce heat and burn calories. In comparison, beige fat cells usually express low levels of UCP1. However, beige fat can be stimulated to produce a lot of UCP1 when exposed irisin, a hormone released by muscles during exercise or when muscles shiver due to exposure to cold temperatures.

It was also found that the cells differ from each other genetically. Brown fat cells originate from muscle stem cells. In contrast, beige fat cells emerge from white fat cells – making it possible for them to store fat when levels of UCP1 are low, but burn it when muscles release irisin through exercise.

FIGHTING OBESITY

The study reports: "The therapeutic potential of both kinds of brown [brown and beige] fat cells is clear, as genetic manipu-

lations in mice that create more brown or beige fat have strong anti-obesity and anti-diabetic actions."

It is hoped that these discoveries may lead to new treatments in obesity. Indeed, Spiegelman has already set up a biotech company, Ember Therapeutics, in an attempt to develop irisin in a drug form to stimulate brown and beige fat cells to increase weight loss.

However, this is still a very new field. While more brown and beige fat cells are found in fit compared to sedentary people, for example, more research is needed to prove the two are directly linked. It's believed that the effects of irisin may only be temporary but scientists don't know this for sure yet.

*Spiegelman, Bruce M et al. *Beige Adipocytes Are a Distinct Type of Thermogenic Fat Cell in Mouse and Human. Cell, Volume 150, Issue 2, p366-376. July 2012*



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