

HOTEL Yearbook 2014

FORESIGHT AND INNOVATION IN THE GLOBAL HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Spa and wellness: A decade of opportunity ahead

by *Susan Harmsworth* 

How could the global hotel spa industry evolve over the next decade? Susan Harmsworth MBE, Founder & CEO of ESPA International, believes that the emerging “self help” approach to health, combined with an ageing population, will bring about big changes in the spa and wellness industry as people assume more ownership for their on-going health.

As traditional medical and healthcare systems across the world continue to fail, combined with the ageing population, health needs of the consumer are rapidly changing. Health systems can vary substantially from country to country, and in the next few years as health systems break down, this will result in individuals wishing to take more ownership for their on-going health, prevention and recovery. Consumers are beginning to look at health, complementary medicine, beauty, spa, wellness and lifestyle in a totally different way, and hotels will need to consider their service offering to adapt to this new thinking.

The major change for the hotel industry will relate to health, lifestyle and more specifically prevention. Not to be confused with medical tourism, which may have an impact on the global spa and wellness industry as we know it today, with patients moving from highly developed nations to other areas of the world for medical care, usually to find specific medical procedures at lower cost. This will only affect hotels as guests seek rest and recuperation following medical treatment, particularly cosmetic and orthopedic surgery, to speed up and assist their recovery.

More importantly for hotels, the spa and wellness industry will segregate, and hotels will have to make choices if they want to deliver the evolving luxury spa and wellness experience that guests will increasingly demand. The first route will be based on complementary medicine, nutrition and exercise combined with natural, organic products. Our research shows this natural route is the way forward,

as consumer demand swings back to natural, efficacious, results-driven products and treatments with consumers wanting to look the best they can for the age they are naturally, without resorting to fillers, botox and surgery. As consumers continue to turn to naturally active products, ESPA is leading the industry with its belief that, when it comes to skincare, natural ingredients are far superior to chemical compounds artificially synthesized in a laboratory, as they provide not only visible results but long term care for the skin, too.

The second route, which is rarely relevant to hotels, is the clinical route, usually under a doctor's supervision, utilizing invasive, scientific procedures, lasers, cosmetic surgery, etc. The trend shows that clinical and medical facilities are proving popular for clients looking for non-surgical and cosmetic surgeries; however, the sophisticated traveller will not wish to do such procedures in a hotel/resort environment, but more under the auspices of renowned medical doctors.

Our research, and the latest spa trends, show that results-driven treatments, grooming, optimizing long-term well-being, as well as reducing stress are the primary areas of interest for spa guests. Prevention and complementary medicine are of particular relevance to hotels, but must be done properly and have integrity and highly skilled staff. Resort spas will be used increasingly for wellness programs and long-term lifestyle altering solutions. This will be the most challenging option for hotel spas, as it requires heavy



*Universally recognized as one of the world's leading spa experts, **Susan Harmsworth's** innovative, inspirational and forward thinking approach has shaped the luxury spa industry into what it is today. Since the age of 21, Susan has devoted her professional life to spa and wellness. The culmination of this knowledge, and a clear vision for what the spa industry should be offering, led Susan to create ESPA in 1993. In 2010, Susan was honored with an MBE from the Queen in recognition of her services to the spa and beauty industry.*

long-term investment in facilities, licensing and specialized staff – with qualifications that differ in each country. Also wellness programs, although able to generate high revenues and increase room occupancies for longer stays, can take years to establish.

Longer term, standardizing the wellness offering in different global regions will prove to be challenging, but will become increasingly important in order to establish wellness programs and their “prevention rather than cure” approach to health. In particular, resorts will need to offer luxury, longer spa treatments alongside complementary and alternative medicine, including naturopathy, osteopathy, physiotherapy, acupuncture as well as personal training expertise and nutritional advice, helping guests to achieve their desired health and lifestyle goals. This is the concept behind the ESPA Life approach that is now available in the UK at ESPA Life at Corinthia, London and ESPA Life at Gleneagles, Scotland – where the spa and medical worlds have grown together by using the most innovative diagnostic functional medicine testing and in-depth therapist assessments to provide tailored and individually mapped spa experiences, alongside luxurious and indulgent treatment journeys. In brief, the ESPA Life approach revolutionizes the way we address the most common, chronic and extreme lifestyle stresses and the impact these have on general health and well-being.

Grooming and results-driven treatments will continue to be popular, and there will be growth in city center Hotel Amenity

Spas, which offer predominantly massage and gym facilities, fast turnaround, results-orientated treatments, which work immediately for time-poor internal hotel guests and local clients.

Another element that resort hotels considering wellness programs must consider when looking at their existing and future spa services is the effects of the sun. Sun exposure isn't recommended after many treatments and procedures, particularly the more aggressive ones. If the hotel is located in an area where sun exposure is a draw, they must be extremely careful that hotel guests are aware of this before they book a spa break, in order to manage guest expectations.

In summary, the emerging “self help” approach to health and the ageing population will affect the global spa and wellness industry hugely within the next decade, with consumers living longer and demanding continued good health as they age – a luxury that wasn't available or expected by previous generations. The hotel spa industry will need to adapt if they are to survive and thrive in the new world.



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