

**“GREEN SPA” - MARKETING STRATEGY OR
AUTHENTIC AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS
CONCEPT?
EXEMPLIFIED BY DEER LAKE LODGE & SPA**

Master Thesis

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Statutory Declaration

“I declare in lieu of an oath that I have written this Master thesis myself and that I have not used any sources or resources other than stated for its preparation. I further declare that I have clearly indicated all direct and indirect quotations. This Master thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for examination purposes.”

Date: 26.04. 2013

Signature

Abstract (English)

This thesis examines the niche segment of green spas emphasizing on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. The aim of this research is to find out if Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is an authentic green spa and if being green is a decisive factor for guests to visit the resort. Furthermore, the study investigates if spas pretend to be green in order to attract more guests as well as if green washing is a problem the spa industry is facing.

Initially, a profound literature review is undertaken to gather theoretical knowledge about green spas and green washing. Additionally, a case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, including expert interviews within the setting of the resort, and the spa industry in general is conducted. Finally, guests are asked for their reason of visiting the resort.

The main findings of the thesis are that Deer Lake Lodge & Spa can be categorized as an authentic green spa. However, guests do not decide to visit the resort because of its green activities. Furthermore, green washing was identified as a challenge within the spa industry, as many spas claim to be green, solely to attract more guests.

Abstract (German)

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit befasst sich mit dem Nischensegment „Grünes Spa“. Ziel dieser Forschung ist es, herauszufinden ob Deer Lake Lodge & Spa ein authentisches grünes Spa ist und ob Gäste sich aus diesem Grund für einen Besuch dieses Resorts entscheiden. Außerdem untersucht diese Arbeit, ob Spas vorgeben „grün“ zu sein, um mehr Gäste anzuziehen und ob „Green Washing“ ein Problem in der Spa Industrie darstellt.

Um die Forschungsfragen adäquat beantworten zu können, wird eine ausführliche Literaturrecherche bezüglich „Grüner Spas“ und „Green Washing“ durchgeführt. Anschließend werden anhand eines Fallbeispiels über Deer Lake Lodge & Spa Experten des Resorts sowie Experten in der Spa Industrie interviewt. Schließlich werden Gäste im Hinblick auf ihre Gründe für den Besuch des Resorts befragt.

Die Hauptergebnisse der Arbeit sind, dass Deer Lake Lodge & Spa als ein authentisches grünes Spa bezeichnet werden kann. Jedoch entscheiden sich Gäste nicht deshalb das Resort zu besuchen. Überdies wurde „Green Washing“ als Problem in der Spa Industrie identifiziert, da viele Spas vortäuschen grün zu sein, um Gäste anzuziehen.

Table of Contents

Statutory Declaration.....	I
Abstract (English).....	I
Abstract (German).....	II
Table of Contents.....	III
Table of Tables	VII
Table of Figures	VIII
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Purpose of the Study.....	1
1.2 Desired Outcome	2
1.3 Research Questions.....	2
1.4 Methodology	3
1.5 Chapter Outline.....	3
2. Sustainability and the Spa Industry.....	5
2.1 Definition of Spa.....	5
2.1.1 Types of Spas.....	5
2.1.2 History of Spas	7
2.1.2.1 The Development of the Spa Industry in Europe	8
2.1.2.2 The Development of the Spa Industry in the United States of America 9	
2.1.2.3 The Development of the Spa Industry in Asia	10
2.1.3 Current Situation within the Spa Industry	11
2.1.4 Clients of the Spa Industry	14
2.1.5 Trends in the Spa Industry	15
2.2 Definition of Green Spa.....	17
2.3 Definition of Green Washing	18

2.4	Definition of Sustainability	20
3.	Emerging Green Spas.....	21
3.1	Introduction to Green Spas	21
3.2	Principles of Green Spas	23
3.3	Success Factors of Green Spas	26
3.4	Reasons for Being Green.....	27
3.5	Benefits of Green Spas	28
3.6	Pitfalls and Challenges of Green Spas.....	30
3.7	Benchmarking in the Green Spa Industry	32
3.8	Standards and Criteria of Green Spas	34
3.8.1	Green Globe Standard	34
3.8.2	Green Spa Code.....	36
3.8.3	Green Spa Certificate	38
3.8.4	GreenGain Sustainability Assessment Tool	38
3.8.5	LEED	39
3.8.6	Summary of Standards and Criteria of Green Spas	40
3.9	Clients of the Green Spa Industry	42
3.10	The Problem of Green Washing	43
4.	Case Study	47
4.1	Research and Methodology	47
4.1.1	Definition of Case Study	47
4.1.2	Research Methodology.....	48
4.1.2.1	Pre Interview Phase.....	49
4.1.2.2	Interview Phase	50
4.1.2.3	Post Interview Phase	50
4.2	Expert Interviews	51
4.2.1	The Interviewees	51
4.3	Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.....	54

4.3.1	Company Overview	54
4.3.2	Products and Services.....	56
4.3.3	Philosophy and Aims	59
4.3.4	Green Activities	60
4.3.4.1	Construction & Building.....	60
4.3.4.2	Guest Rooms.....	61
4.3.4.3	Spa Area.....	61
4.3.4.4	Fasting Program	62
4.3.4.5	Waste Management, Water Use, Lighting & Energy Use	63
4.3.4.6	Leadership/ Employee Engagement	63
4.3.4.7	Community Commitment.....	63
4.4	Expert Interviews – The Results	64
4.4.1	Expert Interview Results Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.....	64
4.4.1.1	Characteristics & Unique Selling Proposition (USP)	65
4.4.1.2	Working Atmosphere	66
4.4.1.3	Guest Perception	67
4.4.1.4	Reasons for Guests to Stay	67
4.4.1.5	Awareness of Being Green & Decisive Factor	67
4.4.1.6	Advertising	69
4.4.1.7	Green and Sustainable Policies & Activities.....	70
4.4.1.8	Advantages & Disadvantages of Being Green.....	75
4.4.2	Expert Interview Results Spa Industry.....	75
4.4.2.1	Trends & Changes within the Spa Industry	75
4.4.2.2	Green Spa Experience.....	76
4.4.2.3	Characteristics & Principles of a Green Spa	77
4.4.2.4	Importance of Standards & Criteria.....	78

4.4.2.5	Implementation of Being Green	79
4.4.2.6	Problems of the Green Spa Industry	79
4.4.2.7	Green Spas – Marketing Tool or Authentic Business Principle ...	80
4.4.2.8	Competitive Advantage of Being Green	82
4.4.2.9	Green Washing	83
4.4.2.10	Future of Green Spa Industry	84
4.5	Guest Question – The Results	85
5.	Conclusion	87
6.	Recommendations	92
6.1	Future Research	92
6.2	Deer Lake Lodge & Spa	92
6.3	Spa Industry in General	93
7.	Limitations	95
	Bibliography	97

Table of Tables

Table 1: EarthCheck Sector Benchmarking Indicators.....	33
Table 2: Overview of Green Spa Standards.....	40
Table 3: Interview Partners Deer Lake Lodge & Spa	52
Table 4: Interview Partners Spa Industry	53
Table 5: Green Spa Experience	76
Table 6: Being Green as Authentic Business Principle	80
Table 7: Spas that are Honestly Concerned about our Planet	81
Table 8: Being Green as a Competitive Advantage	82

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Map of United States including Deer Lake Lodge & Spa	55
Figure 2: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa – The Resort	56
Figure 3: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa - Lobby	56
Figure 4: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa - Suite	57
Figure 5: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa – Fasting Lounge	59
Figure 6: Assumed Percentage of Guest Awareness by Interviewees	68
Figure 7: Assumed Percentage of Guests Deciding to Stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa Because of its Green Concept	68
Figure 8: Final Green Score of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa	74
Figure 9: Decisive Factors for Guests to Stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa	85

1. Introduction

The following chapter describes the purpose of the Master thesis, the desired outcome, the research questions, the applied methodology as well as a chapter outline.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

While energy consumption, water pollution, climate change and environmental pollution in general continue to increase, people start realizing that there is a need for change. As a result, sustainability has become today's catchphrase.

Sustainability has an impact on all human activity as it comprises ecological, social, cultural and economic dimensions. Despite the fact that there is a surge in awareness that we should stop to exploit and start to save our planet, an increasing desire of material wealth, quality of life and wellbeing can be identified (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p. 345).

According to experts, the global spa industry is still in its infancy, but already large and growing. Furthermore, it can be seen as phenomenon which is composed to unite human kind in the common aim of working out how to be "well". Therefore, the spa industry is also poised to offer adequate solutions and lead the way on how we can achieve sustainable wellbeing within protecting the world (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p. 4-5).

This academic research is dedicated to critically analyze the green spa industry – exemplified by Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, an exclusive, green and sustainable destination health spa and wellness resort, which promotes enhanced living through holistic cleansing and other therapeutic approaches in a relaxing, secluded environment in Texas, USA.

1.2 Desired Outcome

It is crucial to do research on an emerging field within the spa industry. Nowadays, more and more spas classify themselves as being a green spa and little research has been done on this phenomenon so far.

Consequently, this research is aimed to be a critical survey about the niche of green spas including a case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. Furthermore, it is essential to find out if Deer Lake Lodge & Spa can be classified as a best practice example for the spa industry. In addition, the case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa should serve as a benchmark for spas in order to develop and run an authentic green spa.

Furthermore, this thesis should support green spas and give recommendations for the spa industry to handle the problem of “green washing”.

In the end, recommendations will be identified in order to create more transparency on the spa market.

1.3 Research Questions

This academic research aims to answer the following research questions:

- Q1: Does Deer Lake Lodge & Spa follow an authentic and sustainable business strategy and can therefore be classified as a best practice example of a green spa?
- Q2: Is “being green” a decisive factor for Deer Lake Lodge & Spa’s guests to come and stay at the resort?
- Q3: Do spas pretend being green in order to attract more guests?
- Q4: Is “green washing” a problem in the spa industry? And if yes, what can be done about it?

1.4 Methodology

The research questions stated in chapter 1.3 will be answered through this academic paper which is divided into two parts – a theoretical as well as an empirical part.

As a first step, secondary research in the form of a profound literature review on the topic of green spas will be conducted. This will be done in order to get suitable and relevant sources and data concerning green spas and the spa industry in general. The literature research will comprise the internet and the library of the IMC FH Krems. Appropriate keywords will be used in order to generate relevant results. Various sources like books, articles, journals and reports will be analyzed and integrated into the study.

The empirical part of the Master thesis will be the case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. The purpose of this method as well as its content and structure will be described at the beginning, followed by the actual case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. It will comprise a critical analysis of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as well as expert interviews in order to answer the regarding research questions. Furthermore, as part of the booking process at the resort, guests will be asked why they decided to stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. This will be done in order to find out if being green is a decisive factor to come and stay at the resort.

In total, 20 expert interviews will be conducted in order to answer the research questions. The experts will be introduced in subchapter 4.2.1.

1.5 Chapter Outline

The study is divided into seven chapters, most of them complemented by subchapters which serve to answer the research questions.

The first chapter introduces the purpose of the Master thesis, describes the desired outcome, the research questions as well as the applied methodology.

In the following chapter essential terms to this thesis will be explained and clarified. Moreover, this chapter deals with the spa industry in general, types of spas and their evolution over time around the globe.

In the third chapter green spas will be analyzed and described into detail. This chapter will include principles, success factors, benefits, pitfalls as well as standards and criteria of green spas. Furthermore, the problem of green washing will be discussed.

Chapter four consists out of the case study based on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. As a first step, the methodology of the case study as well as Deer Lake Lodge & Spa will be described into detail. This will be followed by an introduction of the interview partners. In the end, the interview results as well as the results of the guest question will be revealed in order to comment the findings and make specific recommendations for improvements.

The fifth chapter's purpose is to draw conclusions for the spa industry based on the results of the theoretical as well as empirical part of the research.

The next chapter will comprise recommendations out of the entire academic paper.

Finally, chapter seven will reveal certain limitations of the study.

2. Sustainability and the Spa Industry

The following chapter is aimed to give an overview of the spa industry as well as to define essential terms, including spa, green spa, green washing and sustainability.

2.1 Definition of Spa

Many different definitions of “spa” do exist. However, one of the most prevalent descriptions of this term is the Latin phrase “sanus per aquam” which means health through water (German Wellness Association, 2009).

The word spa is mostly used in English speaking countries, where spas often do not feature a water area. Meanwhile, European countries have a variety of names for water related health resorts. In German speaking countries, for instance, the words “Kurort” or “Bad” are often used to describe places for healing and curing (Scott, & Harrison, 2006, p.4).

According to the International Spa Association (n.d. a) spas are defined as places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of body, spirit and mind.

Illing (2009, p.28) defines a spa as a location where guests get specific devotion towards their needs to balance health including body, mind and spirit focusing on relaxation and body styling. These treatments are performed by educated employees and follow a holistic approach often supported by (healing) water.

The definitions given by the International Spa Association as well as by Illing are considered to be applicable within the scope of this study.

2.1.1 Types of Spas

According to Henry, & Taylor (2005, p.13-15) the following seven types of spas can be differentiated:

1. Resort Spa

A resort spa is an amenity, typically located within a resort complex, which is often including a hotel, a golf course, dining and other similar attractions.

Different services like spa treatments are offered and can be purchased along the stay.

2. Day Spa

These spas are day resorts which provide a quick escape from daily stress and are offering a wide range of treatments.

3. Destination Spa

This type of spa often features spa packages where the spa and its treatments are the main attraction and not simply an amenity. The whole environment is geared toward lifestyle improvement and sanctuaries for relaxation.

4. Hotel Spa

Hotels which want to distinguish themselves from their competition include a spa in their business. They are offering packages as well as day services and treatments. Some hotels offer in-room treatments as well.

5. Medical & Wellness Spa

Medical and Wellness spas are facilities, featuring a medical program or having a focus on healing and supporting the health of their guests. Usually doctors as well as spa therapists are working in such spas and provide both medical procedures as well as conventional spa treatments. On the one hand, some medical and wellness spas offer cosmetic surgery but on the other hand others focus on holistic health, where body, mind and spirit are cared for as one.

6. Thermal Spa

Thermal spas offer, historically perceived, the most authentic spa experience as they are based on the fundamental definition of spa: Sanus per aquam. These baths or thermal spas are public spaces where guests can experience healing powers of water.

7. Thalasso Spa

These spas are more classical in that they offer hydrotherapy treatments. Ocean water, seaweed and algae are used in their preparations. Furthermore, Thalasso spas feature treatments using the relationship between the chemistry of the ocean and of the human body.

2.1.2 History of Spas

Nowadays more and more people visit spas for health, wellness, anti-aging and relaxation. Therefore, going to a spa has been described as a new cultural trend. However, spa-going, like bathing in healing waters, has been practiced for many thousand years - from the Egyptians to the Romans and Greeks and later, the Japanese and Western Europeans.

Classical writers like Homer report that the Greeks indulged in a variety of social baths as early as 500 BC. These premises included hot air baths known as laconica. Emperor Agrippa created and designed the first Roman large scale spa named "thermae" in 25 BC. Every subsequent emperor outdid his forerunner in creating an even more extravagant thermae. As time passed, they were built across the Roman Empire, from England to Africa, evolving into entertainment facilities offering restaurants, sports, as well as different types of baths. A typical visit at the thermae may have involved a workout, followed by a visit to warm rooms, where the body was bathed, covered with oils, massaged and exfoliated. The ritual would end with some light food and relaxation in the library.

Even though the Roman combination of hot and cold baths, exercise, massage, skin treatments and relaxation was influential to the modern spa experience, diverse spa traditions developed of different cultures worldwide (Spa Finder, n.d. a).

Japan's first hot spring named "onsen" opened in 737 A.D. and centuries later the first inns called "ryoken" were built. These inns offered accommodations, fine food, Zen gardens, indoor soaking tubs and outdoor baths.

In 1000 A.D. saunas started appearing along the Baltic in Finland, implementing a rich Finnish spa-going tradition. This tradition includes sauna-induced sweating, icy lake plunges, as well as plenty of beer or vodka.

The Ottomans were famous for their mosaic "hammam" with its private washing quarters, towering steam rooms and massage platforms (Brue, 2001).

Due to medical discoveries in the early 20th century, public hospitals and scientific clinics replaced the spa. Already existing spas responded by offering luxury accommodations and some turned into vacation locations for wealthy people concentrating, for instance, on weight loss. However, in the past years the value of healthy lifestyles, prevention as well as relaxation has been rediscovered. Therefore, spas are again important to our society as a place qualified to address the needs stated above. Additionally, the wealthy no longer have exclusive use of spas as they are nowadays accessible to a much broader population (Register, n.d.)

2.1.2.1 The Development of the Spa Industry in Europe

As already stated in this chapter Roman baths created from the natural springs were the origin of Europe's spa culture. As a consequence, spa going surged around these natural hot springs.

In Western Europe, Bonaventura's Poretta and Charlemagne's Aachen developed as popular bathing and healing places around thermal springs during the Middle Ages.

During the Renaissance era, Paracelsus' mountain mineral springs at Paeffers in Switzerland and towns like Baden-Baden in Germany, Spa in Belgium and Bath in

England grew around natural thermal waters being considered to have healing effects.

The first scientific book which was about the “Czech Karlovy Vary treatment” for disease was published in 1522. Treatments including hot spring baths and tonics were recommended.

Father Sebastian Kneipp developed holistic water and herbal therapy in the German spa village of Bad Worishofen in the 1890s.

However, the connection to spas also had a downside. Public baths were closed in 1350 across Europe in order to prevent the spread of the bubonic plague. Later, in 1538, France destroyed its bathhouses with the intention of keeping a syphilis epidemic at bay (Spa Finder, n.d. a).

In the 1990s the typical European spa consisted of hydrotherapy and bathing, as spas already have had for centuries.

European spas could be divided into two types:

- a) Mineral spring spas called Thermals, Terme, Balneaire – depending upon the language – with natural hot springs, as well as cold water springs for drinking which were thought to have healing power.
- b) Thalassotherapy spas which are based on hydrotherapy using sea water, seaweed and mineral bath sea salts.

Spa “cures”, medical treatments as well as relaxation were combined with sport events, gambling and music concerts. Furthermore, people with injuries, asthma, rheumatism, allergies and other conditions were treated within the spa (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.27).

2.1.2.2 The Development of the Spa Industry in the United States of America

When European colonists came to America they followed Europe’s spa tradition of enjoying mineral springs and therefore, sought out similar springs. Saragota

Springs, Desert Hot Springs and Arkansas Hot Springs are some of these typical locations. As customers returned year after year, the proprietors of these locations started to offer additional activities beyond bathing and health treatments (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.27-28).

At the beginning of the 20th century the first day spa named Red Door Salon was established by Elizabeth Arden. This spa offered manicures and facials instead of massages and baths (Brue, 2001).

Rancho la Puerta, the first new-style destination spa was founded in 1940 by Deborah and Edmond Szekely over the border in Tecate, Mexico. It was emphasizing on fitness of body and mind but without the hydrotherapy aspect of the traditional European spas. Due to the fact, that this spa concept was very successful, Deborah Szekely established The Golden Door spa in California in 1959. Focusing on preventative principles of nutrition, fitness, meditation and spa treatments these two spas pioneered the local organic and whole foods concept (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.28-29).

Furthermore, different approaches to spa treatments were explored in the 1970's at Canyon Ranch in Arizona with a focus on weight loss and fitness (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.29).

2.1.2.3 The Development of the Spa Industry in Asia

Spas in Asia draw on the traditions of healing cultures of the East combined with the philosophies and teachings of major religious traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism. Ayurveda, Shiatsu, Yoga and Acupuncture, for example, originated in the Chinese and Indian culture.

Moreover, the principle of Asian spas has always been a balanced body, mind, and environment as the basis for health. Therefore, they focus on holistic treatments in order to deliver personal care and wellness (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.42).

The Asian spa industry, which had its debut in the 1990's, is relatively young but globally seen the fastest growing region (Foster, 2010, p.1).

Chiva-Som, a health spa located in Thailand, started in the mid-1990's as an exclusive club for the wealthy business elite of Bangkok and was the first wellness spa to open in the region. For a short period of time it was the only spa in the region. However, in the last years the number of competitors has exploded. Solely in Thailand the number of spas increased by 154% between 2002 and 2007 – from 230 to 585 (Prasso, 2009).

Finally, the number of 1,463 registered spas, health shops and beauty outlets holding certificates from the Public Health Ministry in Thailand in 2011 shows the ongoing increase in spas in this country (Ferguest, 2011).

Asian countries are actively discovering and promoting their own health and heritage due to the fact of an increasing global awareness and interest in Asian therapies. The Japanese, for example, have always maintained their tradition of going to hot springs called “onsens” in order to relax. However, in the remaining Asian regions, the healing techniques and therapies which are often performed by village women were in jeopardy of being forgotten before the trends toward spas emerged.

Nowadays, Asia has the largest number of spas under development of any region within the world. Building wellness retreats, not only adding some spa facilities to their properties, are key success factors of Asian luxury hoteliers like Aman Resorts, Mandarin Oriental or Banyan Tree (Prasso, 2009).

2.1.3 Current Situation within the Spa Industry

Today's spa is a place for nourishing and healing body, mind and spirit. Reasons for people to go to spas are fitness, peace of mind, stress management, pleasure and pampering as well as health and wellness (Register, n.d.).

According to Cohen, & Bodeker (2008, p.4) the global spa industry can be seen as a melting pot for a wide range of products and services enhancing well-being and

health. In order to meet the diverse needs of their clients, it combines features from regions around the world including Asian service ethics, spiritual practices and holistic therapies, American commercialism with its emphasis on beauty and pampering and European clinical expertise and medical traditions.

Moreover, spas are now emerging all over the world and have become a standard feature of luxury resorts and hotels. This is due to the fact that spas have become interconnected with the hospitality industry.

In order to organize and understand this great variety of spa offerings, Zill (2002) describes the following "ten domains of the spa experience" or segments of the industry:

1. The Waters
2. Touch, Massage and Bodywork
3. Food, Nourishment, Diet and Nutrition
4. Mind/Body/Spirit
5. Movement, Exercise and Fitness
6. Aesthetics, Skin Care, Natural Beauty Agents
7. Environment, Climatology, Global Ecology
8. Time, Rhythm, and Cycles
9. Social/Cultural Arts and Values, Spa Culture
10. Social Contribution

However, not each spa includes every domain stated above. Spas in many sizes, shapes and focuses do exist. They can range from destination spas, where you can stay for some days or more, to day spas, where you can get single treatments, to medical spas which treat chronic health problems and perform cosmetic surgeries (Register, n.d.).

For a better understanding of the importance of the spa industry, figures and statistics released by the International Spa Association as well as the Global Spa Summit will be explained below:

In 2007 the global spa industry was worth \$255 billion and all global spa facilities together generated \$46.8 billion in revenue during this year (Global Spa Summit, 2008 a, p.18 -19).

According to Global Spa Summit (2008 b, p.16) an estimated total of 71,762 spas were operating around the world in 2007. These included:

- a) 45,113 day/club/salon spas
- b) 11,489 hotel/resort spas
- c) 4,274 medical spas
- d) 1,485 destination spas and health resorts and
- e) 9,310 "other" spas

Furthermore, it was estimated that 1.2 million people worldwide were employed within the 71, 762 spas stated above in 2007 (Global Spa Summit, 2008 a, p.21).

Moreover, in all regions of the world, the spa industry has a strong and growing presence. However, it is greatly concentrated in a few countries and regions. Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific all together account for more than 90% of industry revenues (Global Spa Summit, 2008 b, p.18).

According to Peter Ellis, Chairman of Global Spa Summit, Europe is the largest regional spa market in the world. In 2007 there were approximately 22,607 spas, employing 441,727 people and earning \$18.4 billion in revenue (Global Spa Summit, 2008 a, p.18).

These numbers are followed by the spa market of the United States of America with around 17,845 spas which generated \$12.06 in revenue and employed approximately 275,788 people in 2007 (Global Spa Summit, 2008 b, p.18).

The International Spa Association is regularly reporting on the development of the United States spa market. Statistics show that there is an increase in spa revenue which was around \$13.4 billion (+ 11.1%) in 2011. This revenue was generated in

19,850 (+ 11.2%) spas by 339,400 (+ 12.3%) employees (International Spa Association, 2012, p.11).

A comparison of the numbers of 2007 and 2011 show that alone in the United States spa market the revenue increased by 11.1%. Moreover, the number of spas which were operated in this country rose about 11.2% and 12.3% more people were employed within the industry by the end of the year 2011.

2.1.4 Clients of the Spa Industry

According to the International Spa Association (2012, p.78) the spa industry has traditionally served a primarily female clientele. In 2011, there has been a 77:23 split between female and male spa clients.

Therefore, the majority of spa clients can be categorized as white, female, between 40 and 50 years old and a college graduate. People at age 34 to 52 can also be seen as a large part of the spa market (Tourism Queensland, 2002, p.1).

Also baby boomers and their Generation-X children are a considerable group enjoying spas (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.29). The baby boomers are the population born between 1946 and 1964 and comprise the largest single generation. Due to the great size of this generation they had and still have a great influence on the economy (Benckendorff, Moscardo, & Pendergast, 2010, p.28).

Furthermore, there is an increased trend towards adult children introducing their parents to the advantages of spas. Nowadays, children give their parents spa vouchers as gifts for birthdays, anniversaries and Father's and Mother's Day. Furthermore, the Generation-X is teaching its parents the value of taking care of themselves with a visit at a spa (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.29).

Results of the Coyle study (2011, p.6) show that the main reasons for people going to a spa are relaxation, stress management, hair, nail and waxing maintenance as well as the improvement of the personal appearance.

2.1.5 Trends in the Spa Industry

The German Wellness Association (2012, p.1-3) highlights the following nine trends for the spa industry in 2012:

- 3 Star Spa

Until now, mostly 4 and 5 star hotels provided spa facilities. Due to the fact that health for body, mind and spirit should be available not only for wealthy people at high prices, spas are also integrated into the 3 star hotel segment.

- Extreme Bargain Hunting

Spa services can now be bought online on coupon and discount websites like Groupon or DailyDeal. Even spa consumers who were never concerned about the price of a treatment become bargain hunters.

- Instant Spa

Due to a lack of time, many spa clients get more treatments at the same time. Furthermore, there is a high demand of short but very effective spa treatments. This trend is accompanied by a need of spontaneous treatment bookings.

- Green Spa

Nowadays, the topic of green spas has evolved to a megatrend. More and more spa owners and managers want to follow the principles of a healthy, ecological, social and economical sustainability within their establishments.

- Authentic Spa

Spas want to highlight the unique selling proposition of their region and often create treatments and products with local ingredients like wine, herbs or milk.

- Energetic Spa

Stress and rush can lead to an imbalance of the life energy of humans. Spas try to balance this energy with a tailored atmosphere accompanied by suitable treatments as well as interpersonal relationships between the therapist and the guest.

- Spa at Home

In the past, people enjoyed spa treatments mostly during their holidays. Today they start integrating spas at their homes including saunas, Jacuzzis as well as pools.

- Spa as Social Hotspot

There is a surge in different spa parties like baby parties, hen parties as well as birthday parties which are celebrated all together in a spa.

- Focus on Spa Management

Spa owners now focus more on adequate spa management in order to be successful. This includes, but is not limited to, guiding by figures and employee motivation.

Furthermore, Cohen, & Bodeker (2008, p.77-80) discuss current macro trends which have an influence on the global spa industry using the STEEP (social, technological, economic, environmental and political) approach:

- Social Trends

In most parts of the developed world the population is aging and at the same time the birth rate is decreasing. Moreover, there is a shift in ethnic makeup and an increase in population and urbanization in general. As a consequence, there will be a continued and increased interest in spa-going with shifts in customers' makeup as beauty and health treatments will remain appealing to the aging, urban population.

- Technological Trends

There is a continuing technological advancement which causes connectivity, information access as well as interaction and communication with each other. Furthermore, technology enables the spa industry to provide spa services such as genetic screening, DNA analysis, toxicology assessments as well as laser procedures.

- Economic Trends

The baby boomers, which were already mentioned in chapter 2.1.4, have a lot of money they can spend on their disposal. Moreover, large populations like India, Russia and China are now becoming global consumers as their spending powers will increase tremendously. This will result in a further increase in consumer demand within the spa industry.

- Environmental Issues

Emerging economies utilizing resources as well as growth in population will place further damage on our environment. As a consequence, there will be an increased demand for healthy and eco-friendly spa experiences and facilities. Due to the fact that natural resources are threatened there will be an emphasis on detoxifying at spas.

- Political Trends

Global conflicts and natural disasters are very common nowadays and make people feel powerless and anxious. Surges in interest in spa-going as well as spiritual renewal are common responses to these events.

Hereinafter the three key terms green spa, sustainability as well as green washing will be defined as they are crucial for this thesis. Furthermore, the following chapters will give an overview of these three topics.

2.2 Definition of Green Spa

According to the Green Spa Company (n.d.) green spas can be defined as following:

- Green spas aim to conserve natural resources and operate in environments which promote well-being and health. The property should create a healthier and more productive environment to work and provide treatments in.

- Green spas are dedicated to reduce exposure to harmful substances and harmful practices. Moreover, they are open to learning, adopting and implementing new environmentally friendly techniques and strategies.
- Green spas are committed to follow recycling practices, use recyclable materials and actively promote waste reduction.
- Green spas conserve energy which leads to a reduction in carbon emissions and a smaller carbon footprint.
- Green spas maximize their use of available water resources through grey water recycling or rain catchment.
- Green spas integrate organic or natural skin care products in their treatments.
- Green spas participate in local community projects in order to promote wellbeing of their communities. Moreover, green spas work together with local communities, for example, as suppliers for products and services wherever possible.
- Green spas share their concern for our planet with their guests and set examples of green thinking and green living.
- Green spas should have their green policies and principles available for guests to study.

As already stated in chapter 2.1.5, greening philosophies and activities within spas are becoming more and more popular nowadays. However, this emerging trend also brings downsides with it. One issue the spa industry is facing when it comes to greening spas is green washing, which will be defined below.

2.3 Definition of Green Washing

Greenpeace (n.d.) defines green washing as “the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service”.

In other words, green washing happens when a company or other group promotes environmental green-based images or initiatives but actually operates in a way that is harmful to the environment or in an opposite attitude to the aim of the announced initiatives. This can include misleading consumers about the environmental benefits of a product through ambiguous advertising and unproven claims.

Creating a benefit, which could be more customers or partnerships with green organizations, by appearing to be a green company is the general idea behind green washing (Investopedia, n.d.).

As today's buzzwords, not only within the spa industry but also generally speaking, are "green" and "sustainable" this study contains both definitions and approaches. However, significant differences exist between what is "sustainable" and what is "green" (Snyder, 2012).

The scope and scale of the policies and practices is a prevalent difference between the two approaches. On the one hand, green operates solely on one dimension of sustainability, which is environmental improvement, and on the other hand, it lays its focus on individual products like energy efficient windows or organic skin care products.

On the contrary, the advantage of sustainability is its focus on the combination of green products, sustainable processes to manufacture them as well as recyclable components that were used during their construction (Yanarella, Levine, & Lancaster, 2008, p.4).

According to Wagner (2008), a product is mutually sustainable and green when it:

- Is manufactured in a sustainable way
- Performs as a green product
- Has low or no toxicity

2.4 Definition of Sustainability

Blackburn (2007, p.20) describes sustainability as adopting business strategies and activities which meet the needs of the company as well as of its stakeholders while protecting, enhancing and sustaining natural and human resources that will be needed in the future.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (n.d.) states that sustainability is based on a principle which comprises that everything we need for our well-being and survival depends on our natural environment.

Furthermore, sustainability creates and maintains humans and nature's living conditions which permit fulfilling economic, social or other requirements of present as well as future generations.

Additionally, sustainability is crucial to ensure that we have and will continue to have the water, resources and materials to protect human health and our planet (United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.).

Nowadays, the spa industry also includes the sustainability concept in operating its businesses because it is larger than the concept of being green. It is characterized by a long term and enduring evolution of personal, economical, cultural and global well-being.

There has been a surge in individuals and companies that are living and operating in a sustainable culture and this phenomenon is well aligned with the spa revolution of the last years. Even if you replace the word sustainability with spa you will see synergies and similarities.

In the end, spas have the opportunity and maybe even the responsibility to effectively concentrate on personal and global sustainability. Lifestyle choices lead to results that either have a positive or negative impact on people and the planet (Singer, 2008, p.1).

3. Emerging Green Spas

This chapter is an introduction to the green spa industry. It includes but is not limited to an introduction to green spas as well as descriptions of principles, success factors, benefits, pitfalls and clients of the green spa industry. Furthermore, the problem of green washing will be addressed.

3.1 Introduction to Green Spas

According to Wellness World Business (2011), an Austrian wellness magazine, the term green spa arose some years ago in the United States of America. The reason for its development was to gain competitive advantage and as a consequence to create a unique selling proposition.

However, Weissman (n.d.), the CEO of Green Seal Inc., a company that develops sustainability standards, states that the interest in and need for sustainability and health is extremely inherent and central to the spa industry which is devoted to improve general health and well-being.

Even though the German Wellness Association as well as Cohen, & Bodeker state that being green is a megatrend, Singer (2008, p.1), an American spa consultant, thinks that green spas have a life on their own which will continue to grow and gain momentum.

As a result, the concept of sustainability becomes prevalent in the spa industry as it describes an ongoing and long-term evolution of environmental, personal, economic, cultural and global well-being.

Furthermore, findings of a survey of spa industry professionals completed by TREC International Inc. for the International Spa Association demonstrate that 46% of respondents indicated that they want to decrease or eliminate the use of toxic products. Moreover, 52% of the participants stated that they are currently selecting green services and products or are planning to become green businesses (Weissman, n.d.).

Around 70 spas categorized themselves as green spas in the United States in 2011. Whereas the amount of green spas in Europe was much smaller in 2011 – experts estimate a number between ten and twenty (Wellness World Business, 2011).

One of these companies which has aimed to focus on sustainability as its central business strategy is Six Senses Resorts & Spas (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.353). Six Senses created its own “Six Senses Social and Environment Sustainability Policy” and pledges to a sustainable development. This is stated in their corporate mission, which is to reduce the impact of the business on the environment (Six Senses, n.d. a).

Soneva Kiri, for instance, is a Six Senses property in Thailand, which is rated on place four of Asia’s Top Ten Sustainable Spas in the *Luxury Insider* magazine. It is a self-sustaining luxury eco villa built from stone, timber and mud sourced from Soneva Kiri's property on Koh Kood, a remote Thai Island. It is capturing sunlight to fuel the solar power lighting and harvesting rainwater in tanks. Furthermore, the resident’s plants in the swimming pool help self-clean the water (Frangenheim, 2010).

Another eco-friendly and sustainable spa is Rancho La Puerta in the United States as well as in Mexico. It has been operated focusing on a green business concept for 70 years. The resort follows sustainability practices aiming at protecting the health of our planet, its employees and guests. In order to reach this goal, Rancho La Puerta performs water management with an own gray water system, uses energy efficiently, recycles paper, glass, equipment and building materials and produces organic food on its own farm. Furthermore, the resort supports local organizations like hospitals and educational programs (Rancho La Puerta, n.d.).

3.2 Principles of Green Spas

Even though the green spa industry can be categorized as a very young one, many organizations and experts try to create principles for operating a sustainable and green spa. Many of these principles contain similar approaches. However it is important not to focus on the guidelines of one source or expert but combine them in order to create an environmentally friendly business strategy.

The principles of green spas included and described in this subchapter are a thoughtfully chosen selection which is essential for this survey.

Cohen, & Bodeker (2008, p.353) state that sustainability can be categorized as the core purpose of a green spa. This means that sustainability has to be integrated into all the different ways the business interacts with its various stakeholders. Consequently sustainability and corporate social responsibility need to be inherent into the “corporate psyche” in order to follow a corporate business strategy.

According to the International Spa Association (n.d. b) green spas need to place policies and procedures to protect the environment, consequently protecting the earth for the future.

In order to reach this goal, the association created three pillars of sustainability, namely planet, people and prosperity which will be described below:

- Planet

Working in a gentle manner with natural resources of the world is the purpose and responsibility of a green spa. Following this principle ensures healing services while conducting business in a sustainable way.

- People

In order to provide adequate spa services, staff members need to be healthy. This requirement can be reached by operating the spa in a green and sustainable way, which helps to maintain the overall health and well-being of its staff.

- Prosperity

Green spas promote sustainability through educating how to use resources and energy more efficient and as a consequence lowering the cost of operations.

Pytell (n.d. a & b), a former board member of the Green Spa Network, focuses on a 360° approach of sustainable spas which is not solely limited to protecting the environment. Her approach includes the following categories which should be operated in a sustainable manner:

- Leadership/ employee experience

Job satisfaction as well as fair wages and benefits are crucial factors which should be provided in a green spa. Furthermore, employees should continually have the opportunity to learn new skills in their field. Moreover, staff should get trained in energy and resource conservation.

- Guest experience; treatment protocols, retail products

A green spa should choose a natural product line which is certified for purity and quality. If applicable, the business should consider fair trade products as well.

- Community Connection

Participation in the local community is crucial for operating a green spa. Within this approach, knowledge as well as education should be promoted.

- Food and Beverage

Green spas should serve organic and locally produced food and beverages whenever possible.

- Linen and Textiles, Sanitation/Laundry

The usage of environmentally friendly cleaning and laundry products is a must for green spas. Furthermore, sustainable and/or organic linen, towels and textiles should be chosen.

- Equipment

Low maintenance as well as sustainable and eco-friendly spa equipment is important when being a green spa. Additionally, recycling of IT equipment is recommended.

- Waste Management

Single use items like plastic bottles, paper cups and paper towels should be eliminated and replaced with reusable and durable products. Recycling of plastic, paper, glass, textiles and IT equipment is crucial for green spas.

- Water Use, Lighting, Energy Use

LED (light emitting diode) lighting and sensors should be installed at the property. Water should be heated on demand and a system should be integrated in order to monitor the progress in using energy more efficiently.

- Environment

By implementing the principles mentioned above a protection of our environment will be ensured.

Weissman (n.d.) discusses principles concerning cleaning in order to maintain sanitary conditions, water and waste management as well as the use of natural products in his article called “Greening Your Spa”. These principles and guidelines have already been explained above in this subchapter. However, he also states the importance of air quality in a green spa which is a fundamental health issue.

Statistics from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency show that indoor environments can be two to five times more polluted than their outdoors counterpart. This can be traced back to all emissions occurring indoors from products and materials like off-gassing from carpets or ventilation in buildings.

According to Weissman, spas can address this issue in numerous ways. Green spas can, for example, ensure that their ventilation system uses the most possible amount of fresh air exchange. The control of moisture and humidity in areas such as saunas, pools and baths is essential for avoiding the buildup of mildew and mold. Furthermore, a regular maintenance of systems for heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) as well as checking air filters help to ensure a good air quality. Finally, non-paraffin based candles with paper or linen wicks guarantee high qualitative air within the spa.

As reported by Moore (2008, p.3), a spa consultant, green spas should use local products, recycle and re-use, maximize energy efficiency and rely on renewable energy. The latter can be achieved through the following recommendations:

- Investing in solar and/or wind energy on the property can help subsidizing the use of electricity.
- If spas and resorts need transportation for staff or guests, they should provide electric golf carts with rechargeable batteries or solar powered vehicles.
- The use of solar panels for heating and cooling pools and Jacuzzis and/or wind turbines for generating electricity can help decreasing energy costs.

3.3 Success Factors of Green Spas

Conducting market research and establishing a niche within ones market segment, being authentic and consistent with ones theme, creating a budget and monitoring finances as well as hiring experienced staff are, amongst others, some key success factors which are applicable for all types of spas (Redman, n.d.). However, while operating a green spa the following success factors need to be considered as well:

- Environmental Policy Statement

Creating an environmental policy statement including the interests of the spa as well as of the people working within the spa is a crucial factor for a green spa's success (Barrett, n.d.).

- Treatment and Retail Products

Not only are retail products a revenue increasing success factor - they also provide a message about the spa's authentic commitment to sustainability and give emphasis to the spa's credibility and identity as a green spa. The choice of treatment and retail products is therefore essential for branding and economic success in the green spa industry (Green Spa Network, n.d. a).

- Green Committees

Green committees are on-staff groups which focus on planning, strategizing and carrying out a spa's sustainability actions. Creating such a green committee is a good method to design and subsequently implement changes necessary in a spa toward earth-friendly practices.

- Realistic Objectives

Another important factor which needs to be considered is setting realistic objectives for implementing specific measures (Barrett, n.d.).

3.4 Reasons for Being Green

Nowadays, many spas are being led by the hospitality industry – in other words, they are integrated in a hotel or resort. Due to the fact that consumers in this industry are more aware of environmental issues, it is facing a growing interest in “eco-tourism”. Consequently, many tourists and guests expect resorts, hotels and spas to have green policies and practices. These should include sustainable waste and energy management, sustainable purchasing, the use of local products and suppliers as well as supporting local community projects (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.349).

Berlin (n.d., p.4), the executive director of the Green Spa Network, has identified the following reasons for being a green spa:

- According to the 2011 US LOHAS Consumers Trends Database, 83% which is a vast majority of customers, identified with green at some level.
- Green spas create a competitive advantage because the typical spa visitor can be categorized as environmentally aware and is therefore searching for green services.
- Being green is good for the business in general as it helps to establish a positive image.
- Usually green spas receive community recognition.

- Working in a green spa improves employees' moral, wellness and productivity.
- Being a green spa supports the conservation of natural resources.
- Being green helps to save money in the long run because it lowers operating and utility costs for the spa and enables to reuse materials.

3.5 Benefits of Green Spas

There are no clear boundaries between the reasons for being green discussed in subchapter 3.4 and the benefits associated with green spas, which will be stated in this subchapter. All of these advantages should be taken into consideration when opening and/or operating a green spa.

The HRH Prince of Wales's Business & the Environment Program (n.d., p.4), which is developed and run by the University of Cambridge, lists the following business benefits which come along with sustainable development:

- Eco Efficiency

Through the implementation of sustainable business practices, efficiency in operations will increase. Consequently, costs will decrease because of a better use and conservation of resources. Moreover, operating a business in a sustainable way helps minimizing carbon risk and improves energy efficiency.

- Market Advantage

Most sustainable spas offer new and innovative products and services and create a strong brand through these actions. Furthermore, consumer research findings prove that knowing a business is aware of its impact on the nature and society makes consumers 58% more likely to buy their services or products.

- Quality Management

Employees desire to work with companies that follow a sustainable and environmentally friendly business strategy. As a consequence, being green is an important factor for employee commitment and motivation.

The Green Spa Network (n.d. b) assigns the following benefits to green spas:

- “Green spas are good business”

Although investment costs for some greening initiatives are high, they typically pay off and provide savings within one or two years. One good example would be investing in low-flow toilets and shower heads which will be costly at the beginning. However, this investment will provide savings in water use in the future.

- “Green spas are naturally healthy”

Due to the fact that green spas eliminate toxins in their spa environment as well as in skin care products, they provide a much healthier experience than ordinary spas.

- “Green spas are more relaxing”

Green spas offer a more relaxing and balanced experience by eliminating stressors of our modern life like toxins, noise and pollution.

- “Green spas put the body in harmony with nature”

Green spas are aligned with nature as well as with the human body. Consequently, body and nature are in harmony and therefore, guests feel stronger and healthier.

- “Green spa treatments are more effective”

Artificial and chemical products might cause damage to the skin, whereas treatments with natural products are gentler. In addition, they help to ensure long-lasting beauty and health.

Niederer (2011, p.1), an Austrian spa consultant, agrees with the statement of the Green Spa Network about benefits of green spas and highlights the most attractive values and advantages of sustainable businesses. She states that green spas:

- Strengthen the innovation competence of a business
- Create a good image and are a good marketing strategy
- Motivate employees

- Consolidate quality management and
- Support reducing operative costs

In the end, it is evident that green spas bring along numerous benefits not only for the environment but also for the guests, employees and the business itself.

3.6 Pitfalls and Challenges of Green Spas

Probably the most negative effect that scares off many developers of building a sustainable spa is the high costs of implementing environmental friendly measures. It has been found that overall development costs for a green spa increase by eight to twenty percent in comparison to an ordinary spa.

Furthermore, large chains or operators may have more possibilities for immediately implementing a sustainability program. Meanwhile, smaller companies are often lacking adequate resources to create and implement environmental friendly measures at a short notice.

Moreover, green spas may be facing the problem of turning customers away through too much, too expensive or too little sustainable programs (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.299-301).

Another challenging fact for the green spa industry is that environmentally friendly technologies may not deliver the endless choices involving speed, change, fashion, variety and luxury the affluent and globalized middle class is expecting nowadays (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.345).

In addition, the green spa industry is also facing the problem that some spas categorize themselves as sustainable, solely for marketing purposes in order to attract guests. Wrong statements in the media can have a negative effect on the whole industry and cause trust issues and doubt of credibility on the consumer side. This phenomenon is called “green washing” and will be discussed in subchapter 3.10 (Niederer, 2011, p.3).

Moreover, different metrics that claim to measure sustainability exist. However, sustainable and eco-friendly initiatives may be particularly difficult to measure because they often affect society and people at a macro level, and their organizational implications are vague. Many standards and measurement systems such as Green Globe, Essential Spa Standards, Green Spa Code and EC3 Global presently exist to support managers in measuring their sustainability. However, this wide range of options must not consequently be a good solution. There is a need for one measurement and certification system that combines the existing ones in order to signal commitment to sustainability and identify areas that need improvement (Laughland, & Bansal, 2011).

Another challenge green spas are facing is that spas generally are defined as places devoted to overall well-being and the renewal of body, spirit and mind (International Spa Association n.d. a).

In other words, going to a spa comes along with a lot of health benefits like stress relief, mental balancing, improvement of blood circulation and stimulation of the immune system (The Times of India, 2011).

Consequently, people do not necessarily have to visit a green spa in order to get healthier because they can also benefit from going to an ordinary spa.

Another pitfall can be identified concerning green spa treatments being more effective and healthier to the skin. Stiftung Warentest (2009), a German organization that investigates products, states that the effect of natural skin care products can be the same as of ordinary products. However, they also found natural skin care products that did not bring a sufficient effect to consumers' skin. Moreover, the organization found out that natural skin care products are more likely to germiness and consequently often cause skin irritations. In addition to that, ingredients of natural skin care products like essential oils, chamomile and tea tree oil are known to cause allergic reactions.

3.7 Benchmarking in the Green Spa Industry

Before describing existing benchmarks for the green spa industry, it is necessary to understand the term benchmark as well as its purpose. Therefore, a short introduction to benchmarks in general and in the spa industry will be given, followed by benchmarks for green spas.

“...a benchmark is a sighting point to enable a measurement or a standard which something may be measured against” (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.54).

Benchmarking is important for spas to monitor their performance as well as industry trends. Its purpose is to increase competitiveness and profitability. Moreover, this activity includes measuring a businesses' performance by using predefined measurements like revenue, products sales, cost of sales and employee costs.

Different ways of benchmarking exist and can be performed. However, the most important for this study are the following two:

- Internal benchmarking monitors the performance of the spa itself in order to identify improvements or declines in specific areas over the course of time.
- External benchmarking is the comparison of the spa's internal benchmarks against industry benchmarks (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.54).

As far as green spas are concerned, benchmarking helps to assess and improve their economic, social and environmental performance. Furthermore, environmental benchmarking should embrace practical, everyday measures like the amount of water used in a year, which is stated on the water bills or the quantity of electricity used, which is shown on the electricity bills and should be documented on a regular and consistent basis (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.305).

Green Globe, an international certification body, established environmentally responsible benchmarking for the spa industry. The organization developed Sector Benchmarking Indicators (SBI) for spas in collaboration with Six Senses Resorts &

Spas. These Sector Benchmarking Indicators are based on the EarthCheck benchmarking system and can be seen as the first eco-label for the spa industry.

Six Senses Resorts & Spas, which were already positively mentioned in subchapter 3.1, are categorized as a driving force concerning environmental friendly spa development. Consequently, Green Globe collected data of this company in order to analyze spa performance and to create baseline- and best practice standards which are part of the benchmarking system (Six Senses, n.d. b).

The EarthCheck benchmarking system comprises the following Sector Benchmarking Indicators (SBI) which are applicable for the spa industry and illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: EarthCheck Sector Benchmarking Indicators

	Indicator Measure (Benchmark)
Sustainability Policy	The spa must create and submit a sustainability policy with respect to its assessment and improvement of environmental and social impacts.
Greenhouse Gas	Amount of CO ₂ (carbon dioxide) emissions
Energy	Energy Consumption Renewable Energy Used Total CO ₂ -e (carbon dioxide equivalent) Produced
Water	Potable Water Consumption Recycled / Captured Water Water Savings Rating
Waste	Waste Sent to Landfill Recycled / Reused / Composted Waste Waste Recycling Rating
Community	Community Commitment Community Contributions Rating
Paper	Paper Products Rating
Cleaning	Cleaning Products Rating
Pesticides	Pesticide Products Rating

Source: EarthCheck, 2011, p.1

After the establishment of the baseline- and best practice levels, spa operators can submit their data in order to create a comprehensive report on the operations performance. These reports include graphical presentations of the spas performance per indicator and recommendations on how to improve certain performances (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.315-316).

3.8 Standards and Criteria of Green Spas

As already mentioned in subchapter 3.6, different standards and criteria for the green spa industry are existing. Within this subchapter, the most important and recognized will be explained.

3.8.1 Green Globe Standard

The Green Globe Standard, which is represented in 87 countries, can be categorized as the most prevalent assessment of the sustainability performance of businesses in the tourism and travel industry (Green Globe, n.d. a).

Together with the British International Spa Association (BISA), Green Globe developed the “Essential Spa Standards” (ESS) which are now part of the worldwide Green Globe set of criteria (Rührig, 2012).

With the help of this standard, spas can monitor their improvements as well as document their achievements, which are consequently leading to a certification of their sustainable and green management and operation.

Furthermore, the Green Globe Standard contains a collection of 337 adherence indicators which are applied to 41 individual sustainability criteria (Green Globe, n.d. a).

According to Green Globe (n.d. b), the standard criteria can be divided in the following areas:

a) Sustainable Management

- Implement a Sustainability Management System
- Legal Compliance
- Employee Training
- Customer Satisfaction
- Accuracy of Promotional Materials
- Local Zoning, Design and Construction (Design and Construction – Compliance with Legal Requirements, Sustainable Design and Construction of Buildings and Infrastructure – New and Existing Buildings)
- Interpretation (Information about the natural surroundings, local culture as well as cultural heritage is provided to guests. Appropriate behavior for visiting these areas and cultures is explained.)
- Communications Strategy
- Health and Safety

b) Social Economic

- Community Development
- Local Employment
- Fair Trade
- Support Local Entrepreneurs
- Respect Local Communities
- Exploitation
- Equitable Hiring
- Employee Protection
- Basic Services (Business activities do not endanger the provision of basic services including water, energy or sanitation to neighboring communities.)

c) Cultural Heritage

- Code of Behavior
- Historical Artifacts
- Protection of Sites

- Incorporation of Culture

d) Environmental

- Conserving Resources (Purchasing Policy, Energy Consumption, Water Consumption)
- Reducing Pollution (Greenhouse Gas, Waste Management, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)
- Conserving Biodiversity, Ecosystems, and Landscapes

However, the indicators differ by geographical area and local factors which need to be considered.

Also important to know is the origin of the Green Globe Standard on the international standards and agreements listed below:

- Baseline Criteria of the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas
- International Standard Organization - ISO 9001 / 14001 / 19011
- Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
- Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria
- Agenda 21 and principles for Sustainable Development approved by 182 Governments at the United Nations Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992

Furthermore, a third party independent auditor works together with spas on-site in order to assure fulfillment of the highest international standards.

Additionally, the Green Globe Standard is updated as well as reviewed twice per year in order to guarantee a high quality (Green Globe, n.d. a).

3.8.2 Green Spa Code

Another global source for sustainability management is the Green Spa Code which was developed by Lutz Hertel, Catharine Banach and Thomas Jäger for the German Wellness Association. It contains guiding principles for ecological,

healthy, social, and economical sustainable actions in spa and wellness businesses which are the basis for an international certification program.

The code highlights the importance of the fact that health and well-being of people need to be regarded in the context of their environment. Employees and operators of green spas should be aware of this fact and take it into consideration while doing business (German Wellness Association, n.d.).

Moreover, the German Wellness Association (n.d.) advises green spas to follow the guidelines hereinafter:

- The focus of a green spa is on the health and well-being of its guests and all other persons involved in spa services and treatments.
- Green spas are mindful of resources they use during their service processes. Furthermore, the use of innovative products, materials, methods and technologies is recommended.
- A green spa is characterized by respecting the nature and biological diversity.
- Green spas recycle, reduce water use, care for a clean environment and conduct waste management.
- Supporting the local community and purchasing products from local suppliers is another rule a green spa follows.
- Satisfied and healthy employees are crucial for a green spa. Therefore, green spas care about safety, transparency and fairness at the workplace.
- Green spas also want to create awareness among guests for a healthy, ecological, economical, sustainable and social action.

Finally, the manager of a green spa approves the principles mentioned above by signing the green spa code. Consequently, the name of this person will be published on the German Wellness Association website. Additionally, suppliers can sign this code as well. In the end, members of the German Wellness Association who are in the working group which is called “Green Spa” are endorsed to display the logo “Green Spa Partner” (German Wellness Association, n.d.).

3.8.3 Green Spa Certificate

As a second step, the German Wellness Association (2011, p.2-9) also offers a “Green Spa Certificate” which can be obtained through signing the Green Spa Code and applying for a certification procedure.

A group of external auditors will do an inspection of the business on site by checking if the spa meets a predefined set of criteria. The basis for this set of criteria are the guidelines of the Green Spa Code the manager of the spa already signed.

In order to obtain the certificate, the spa needs to be valued with at least 60 percent out of the reachable percentage. Furthermore, the spa can be certified with a Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 seal (Level 3 would be 90 percent out of the reachable percentage).

If a spa obtains such a Green Spa Certificate, it will be valid for 24 months. Within this timeframe, the German Wellness Association is authorized to examine if the business is in compliance with the requested criteria or not.

If the spa wants to remain certified after the initial two years, it needs to go through a re-certification process (German Wellness Association, 2011, p.2-9).

3.8.4 GreenGain Sustainability Assessment Tool

The GreenGain Sustainability Assessment Tool is an online tool for members of the Green Spa Network. It is a points-based assessment method to evaluate the environmental as well as social performance of a green spa.

Originally, GreenGain was created for general business use. However, the Green Spa Network customized a version of GreenGain particularly for the spa industry together with Green America.

The questions asked during the assessment, which focus on the three areas environmental sustainability, social justice and accountability, emphasize an

operational action the spa can take or already has accomplished. Furthermore, the questions comprise both, general initiatives that are valid to every business and actions tailored to the spa industry.

After completing the initial assessment, which takes up to one hour, the tool creates a customized plan. Its implementation should help to improve the spa's environmental performance over time. This plan focuses on most possible progress with the least investment of time and money.

Moreover, spas that use GreenGain will be displayed in the Green Spa Network directory and on the spa locator map on the organizations website (Green Spa Network, n.d. c).

3.8.5 LEED

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is an internationally recognized green building program which provides owners and operators with an outline in order to identify and implement useful and measurable green building construction, design, operations as well as maintenance actions.

So far, LEED projects have been formed in 135 countries worldwide and international projects outside the United States of America count for more than 50% of the total LEED registered square footage (US Green Building Council, n.d.).

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in Washington, DC the LEED rating system offers a certification at four levels, namely Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum. The individual rating is based on the amount of credits awarded in the following five environmental categories which are: sustainable sites, materials and resources, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere and the quality of the indoor environment (Bokur, n.d.).

Commercial buildings like a spa need to satisfy all LEED fundamentals and receive a minimum 40 points on a 110-point LEED rating system scale in order to get a LEED certification (US Green Building Council, n.d.).

3.8.6 Summary of Standards and Criteria of Green Spas

Table 2 below gives an overview of the five different standards for the green spa industry which were mentioned within this subchapter.

Table 2: Overview of Green Spa Standards

	Set of Criteria Existing	Amount of Existing Criteria	Type of Inspection / Checking Procedures	Frequency of Review / Inspection
Green Globe	Yes	41	External auditor	Every year (on-site audit every 2 years, desktop audit in the years between)
Green Spa Code	Yes	10	Spa itself	-
Green Spa Certificate	Yes	200	External auditor	24 months
GreenGain Sustainability Assessment Tool	Yes	Not available	Spa itself	Not available
LEED	Yes	35	External auditor	Within 1 year after getting certified & maintain compliance for 5 years

Source: compiled by the author

As shown in Table 2, the different standards and certification options for green spas differ significantly. The Green Globe certification provides a wide set of criteria which is reviewed by external auditors. Additionally, the compliance of the

spa with the criteria and standards is controlled on an annual basis. This certification system can be categorized as an objective, strict and reliable seal for green spas.

By signing the Green Spa Code, the spa manager follows ten guidelines towards being green and sustainable within the spa operations. However, there is no external auditor who controls if the spa is following these guidelines. Moreover, there is no review after a certain time period – as soon as the spa manager signs the code, the spa will be published on the website of the German Wellness Association. As this certification is a subjective assessment of the spa through its manager, it is not very trustworthy and could further increase green washing within the industry.

In addition to the Green Spa Code, the German Wellness Association also provides the possibility of obtaining a Green Spa Certification. In order to be certified, a spa needs to comply with an extensive set of specific criteria and has to pass an external audit. After a 24 months' time period, the certification expires and a re-certification process needs to be conducted. This certification seems to be trustworthy and reliable.

The GreenGain Sustainability Assessment Tool is a relatively new standard which is checked by the spa management itself based on a set of criteria. Unfortunately, the author was not able to collect more helpful information concerning this tool.

The LEED certification process includes the external review of a wide set of criteria. After receiving the certification, the spa needs to prove compliance with the rules within the first year after getting certified. Moreover, it needs to maintain compliance for at least five years. The LEED certification system follows strict regulations and mostly promises authentic green building activities.

After taking all this information into consideration, the author would rank (on a scale from one to five, one being the best) the standards mentioned within this subchapter as following:

1. Green Globe
2. Green Spa Certificate
3. LEED
4. GreenGain Assessment Tool
5. Green Spa Code

3.9 Clients of the Green Spa Industry

According to Berlin (n.d., p.3), the average green spa guest can be categorized as following:

- Female
- Age 20-50
- White
- Income over \$30 000 per year
- College Graduate
- Has children
- “LOHAS” (Lifestyle of Health And Sustainability) consumer

The Organic Spa Magazine (2012) and Berlin agree upon a \$290 billion “LOHAS” market which is focusing on the environment, health, personal development and sustainable living as target group of the green spa industry.

Furthermore, the magazine states that “Super Green” consumers, which are engaged in the highest quantity of environmentally-friendly actions, can be seen as a second important guest segment of green spas.

These “Super Green” consumers comprise approximately five percent of the US American adults and are top earners with a household income of \$150 000 or more per year and have an affinity to eco luxury items.

3.10 The Problem of Green Washing

As already shortly addressed in chapter 3.6, green washing is a challenge as well as a problem the tourism-, leisure- and spa industry is facing.

On the one hand, consumers' and guests' expectations concerning sustainable activities of companies are constantly growing. But on the other hand, they are skeptical of green claims, companies advertise with (Cohen, & Bodeker, 2008, p.349).

However, this skepticism is justified as the results of a recent report called "The Six Sins of Green Washing" show. This report states that a majority of sustainable and environmental marketing statements in North America are inappropriate, inaccurate and misleading. The survey identified 1,018 consumer products which were bearing 1,753 sustainable and environmental claims. Only one out of the 1,018 examined products was truly sustainable and the remaining claims were false and misleading (TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc, 2007, p.1).

Finally, the six patterns in green washing, which are called the "Six Sins of Green Washing", were identified based on the survey results. According to TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc., (2007, p.1-4) the six patterns of green washing are the following:

- Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off

A product is declared to be green solely based on a single environmental attribute (e.g. recycled paper) or an unreasonably narrow set of attributes (e.g. recycled paper as well as chlorine free bleaching) without attention to other important environmental issues like energy consumption, global warming and forestry impacts of paper. These claims are usually not false but make the product appear greener than it actually is.

- Sin of No Proof

Environmental claims that cannot be justified by information that is easily accessible or by a third party certification are categorized as sin of no proof.

- Sin of Irrelevance

By making environmental claims that can be truthful but are not helpful and not important for consumers that are searching for environmentally friendly products, companies commit to sin of irrelevance. Consequently, the advertisement distracts consumers from finding an authentic and truly green product or service.

- Sin of Vagueness

This sin is committed by claims that are broad or poorly defined in its meaning. As a consequence, these claims may be misunderstood by potential consumers.

- Sin of Lesser of Two Evils

Green claims which may be true within their product category but distract consumers from their larger environmental impacts of the category in total are categorized as sin of lesser of two evils. Examples are “green” herbicides or organic cigarettes.

- Sin of Fibbing

This sin comprises making environmental claims that are simply inaccurate. An example would be a laundry detergent that claims to be packaged in “100% recycled paper” while the container is made of plastic.

As a consequence, green washing is problematic for the environment, consumers and for the businesses doing the green washing. First of all, it is bad for the environment because it can persuade consumers to do the contrary of what is good for the environment and make them buy no environmental friendly products.

Furthermore, consumers are misled and spend money for products or services they believe are good to the environment, but really are not.

And finally, companies that green wash can lose their good reputation and consequently sales when consumers recognize that they were misled and lied to (Green Washing Index, n.d.).

Also Wuttke, (2008, p.82) is aware of the green washing issue and states that spas often spend more money advertising they are green than they actually

implement sustainable and environmentally friendly business practices. He brings up the example that spas that want to appear greener often add images of flowers or plants to their label. Consequently, guests who are searching for green spas can be misled by this action. Furthermore, he states that in order to avoid the green wash spa label it is crucial to implement truly green business practices.

Moreover, Niederer, & Dorn-Petersen (2011, p.13) address the green washing problem in an article about green spas. They state that spas worldwide declare themselves as green spas for marketing purposes in order to attract guests – even if they actually are not green. Also the luxury segment of spas and hotels use this concept for guest acquisition.

However, a green spa should act in a sustainable way and be confident and authentic in its environmental friendly activities and not only use being green as a marketing tool.

There exist many examples in the wellness and spa industry where green washing strategies are applied. A spa hotel in the Alps, for instance, claimed to be a green spa with statements in its press releases. It promoted the use of regional woods but also used woods from the rain forest for construction. Furthermore, big windows in the relaxation lounge which enable a nice view into the nature was a green activity the spa announced. However, these activities do not make a spa a green spa and messages like this are misleading and harmful to the whole spa industry (Niederer, & Dorn-Petersen, 2011, p.13).

A tool that tries to solve the green washing problem is the so called Green Washing Index. It is a website where people can post and rate advertisements of companies that promote to be environmental concerned and act green. The goal of the green washing index is to educate consumers about understanding advertisements and making them more conscious of green washing. Consequently, the index creates better informed and conscious consumers and ultimately, companies will implement sustainable business strategies before they advertise that they are sustainable. Moreover, businesses should be accountable

for sustainable and green activities they claim to conduct (Green Washing Index, n.d.).

The criteria of the Green Washing Index (n.d.) are that the advertisement:

- Misleads with words.
- Misleads with visuals and/or graphics.
- Makes green claims that are vague and not provable.
- Exaggerates and overstates how green the company/service or product is.
- Leaves out essential information and makes the green claim sound better than it actually is.

4. Case Study

This chapter contains the case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa including a detailed description of the resort as well as an introduction to the experts that were interviewed. Furthermore, the results of the conducted interviews as well as of the guest question will be stated.

4.1 Research and Methodology

This subchapter provides an explanation and definition of case studies as well as of the methodology used within the case study of this thesis.

4.1.1 Definition of Case Study

Using a case study as research method allows the exploration and understanding of a complex issue or object. Furthermore, case studies can add strength and expand experience to already existing data gathered through previous research. In addition, case studies lay emphasis on detailed contextual analysis of a unit (like a company) or conditions and their relationships.

The case study research method has been used by researchers for many years in different disciplines including social science and politics. Mostly, social scientists have used this research method to study contemporary real-life situations (Soy, 1997).

Furthermore, Zainal (2007, p.1) mentions that when predominantly a holistic, in-depth investigation is required, case studies can be considered as a strong research method. As a consequence, the case study method enables a researcher to understand the behavioral conditions from the actor's perspective by going beyond quantitative statistical results. In the end, the inclusion of quantitative and qualitative data within a case study helps to give details on the process and outcome of a phenomenon which is done through observation, reconstruction and analysis of the case.

4.1.2 Research Methodology

During the planning phase of the thesis it is crucial to decide whether a qualitative or quantitative method will be used within the case study.

Quantitative research aims on quantifying data and generalizing results from a sample to the population of interest. The sample is a large number of representative cases and data is collected in a structured way and followed by a statistical data analysis. Quantitative research methods comprise surveys with questionnaires, observation as well as experiments (Ebster, 2011, p.1-2).

Qualitative research on the other hand aims to gain qualitative understanding of underlying motivations and reasons. The sample size is small and the data collection is done in a more unstructured way. Furthermore, the data analysis of qualitative research is non-statistical. The most common qualitative research methods include focus groups, projective techniques as well as interviews (Ebster, 2011, p.2).

This case study was designed using the qualitative research method in order to gather a holistic and in depth understanding of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as well as the green spa industry.

Within the qualitative research method, conducting expert interviews was chosen because - in the opinion of the author - they deliver the best results for answering the research questions stated in chapter 1.3.

Furthermore, it is very interesting and motivating to talk with well experienced people within the spa industry and to get to know their insights into the world of green spas. Moreover, most interview partners have been in the industry for many years and therefore, their answers can be categorized as precious and valid. In the end, their in-depth knowledge enables them to teach students like an author.

In addition to interviewing experts, 21 guests were asked the following question in the course of their booking process at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa: “Why have you decided to visit Deer Lake Lodge & Spa?” Guests received this question as part of a reservation email from the spa. It was included in the personal history and wellness form the guests should fill out before their stay. The question should help answering research question 2, which is about being green as a decisive factor for staying at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

The process of data collection within this study can be divided into three phases:

1. Pre Interview Phase
2. Interview Phase
3. Post Interview Phase

4.1.2.1 Pre Interview Phase

In order to be able to create the interview questions, a profound literature review on the topic of green spas was conducted. The result of this first step is the theoretical part of this thesis.

Furthermore, to get to know the working environment as well as the employees and managers of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa was crucial for establishing the interview outline as well as for choosing the interview partners.

Not only employees of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa have been chosen for interviews about the spa but also representatives of the marketing companies as well as the owner and the investor of the spa. Thus, the author was able to get a better insight and more opinions about the spa.

All interviews have the same outline of questions with minor modifications depending on the relationship to Deer Lake Lodge & Spa and the spa industry.

Additionally, a separate interview outline for the interviews with experts within the spa industry has been developed. The interview partners were chosen because of their knowledge and experience concerning green spas and the spa industry in general.

The interview design was structured and records of every interview have been taken. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in English as the experts, except of one, are Americans.

4.1.2.2 Interview Phase

First of all, the interviews that were crucial to answer the research questions about Deer Lake Lodge & Spa were conducted. These interviews took place in person directly at the resort. The average time of the interviews concerning Deer Lake Lodge & Spa was about 17 minutes.

After completion of interviewing experts of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, experts within the spa industry have been interviewed via Skype. These interviews helped to gather answers for the remaining research questions on the green spa industry and the average interview time was 29 minutes.

The interview phase started on the third of January 2013 and ended on the fifteenth of February 2013.

Every interview partner will be introduced in subchapter 4.2.1.

4.1.2.3 Post Interview Phase

The last phase of this study comprised the analysis of the collected data. After conducting the interviews a transcript of every conversation was made.

Afterwards, the tool named qualitative analysis of content was used in order to generate findings out of the conducted interviews. Using this method, the author

was able to analyze, compare and summarize the content of the answers. Experts giving concise answers are directly quoted within the findings section.

Finally, all results of the interviews are stated in the chapter called “Expert Interviews – The Results” and followed by an overall conclusion and recommendations for Deer Lake Lodge & Spa and the green spa industry.

4.2 Expert Interviews

In total, 20 expert interviews have been conducted in order to answer the research questions.

Interview partners that work directly at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as well as people that have a business relationship with the spa have been interviewed to gather results for research question one and two.

Furthermore, to be able to answer research question three and four, experts within the spa industry have been interviewed.

The results and findings will be described in chapter 4.4.

4.2.1 The Interviewees

This subchapter introduces all experts that have been interviewed within the scope of this study.

Interview partners concerning research question one and two are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Interview Partners Deer Lake Lodge & Spa

Name	Role at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa	Profession & Education
Tracy Boulware	Owner	MMA from Texas A&M in land development and ecology
Toledo Boulware	Sister of Tracy Boulware and Investor	Practitioning Doctor of Naturopathy
Tammy Pahel	Spa Consultant & General Manager	Graduated from Penn State University, more than 21 years experience within the spa industry, former ISPA Board of Directors, Owner of Spa Management Solutions
Sherry Graves	Massage Therapist	MA in Math, Licensed Massage Therapist
Carrie Harmon	Cosmetologist	Associates in Management, Licensed Cosmetologist
Janaki Mayhill	Yoga Teacher	Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher
Denise Leitch	Massage Therapist and Reiki Practitioner	Licensed Massage Therapist, Reiki Master and Energy Healer
April Reeder	Nutrition Class Teacher	Seminars of raw, organic, vegan, juicing, fasting, green, sustainable
Meredith Morton	AMMO Advertising	BA of Fine Arts, Art Director at AMMO Advertising
Allison Hradecky	The Padgett Group Marketing	BA of Arts in PR University of Houston, Account Manager at The Padgett Group

Source: compiled by the author

To answer research questions three and four, interviews with the following experts, which are listed in Table 4, were conducted:

Table 4: Interview Partners Spa Industry

Name	Profession
Susie Ellis	President of Spa Finder and CEO of the Global Spa & Wellness Summit
Lynne McNeas	President of the International Spa Association
Michael Stusser	Founder and Manager of Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary & Founding Member of the Green Spa Network
Amy McDonald	Owner of Under a Tree Consulting and former Spa & Programs Director at El Monte Sagrado Living Resort & Spa
Mary Bemis	Founder of the Organic Spa Magazine and Founding Member & Board of Directors of the Washington Spa Alliance
Roberto Arjona	General Manager of Rancho la Puerta & President of the Green Spa Network
Judy Singer	President and Co-Owner of HFD (Health Fitness Dynamic) Spa Consulting, former ISPA Committee Member
Dr. Peter Zimmer	Founder of FUTOUR (environmental, tourism and regional consulting), Green Globe Auditor and Green Globe preferred Partner for Germany, Austria and East and South Europe
Deb Berlin	Executive Director of the Green Spa Network & Member of the White House Climate Change Adaption Communications Task Force under President Obama
Bernard Burt	Founding Father of the International Spa Association, Spa Guide Examiner & Author of "100 Best Spas in the World"

Source: Compiled by the author

Tammy Pahel could help answering all 4 research questions because she is on the one hand working with Deer Lake Lodge & Spa and on the other hand she is an expert in the spa industry in general.

4.3 Deer Lake Lodge & Spa

This subchapter is aimed to give an introduction to Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. First of all, a company overview will be given; products and services will be explained and the philosophy and aims of the resort will be stated. Finally, the green activities Deer Lake Lodge & Spa follows will be described and analyzed.

4.3.1 Company Overview

As already stated in subchapter 1.1, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is an exclusive and sustainable destination health spa and wellness resort, which follows a green and sustainable business concept. Furthermore, it promotes enhanced living through holistic cleansing and fasting as well as therapeutic approaches.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the resort is situated on a 50-acre property in Montgomery, Texas, in the United States of America.

Furthermore, it is centrally located with a 40 minutes distance by car to Houston, the largest city of Texas. Moreover, it is the only spa in the Southeast that offers all five services of juice fasting, colonics, body works, spa treatments and energy works (Hradecky, 2012, p.1).

Figure 1: Map of United States including Deer Lake Lodge & Spa



Source: Google, 2012

Deer Lake Lodge & Spa was opened in December 2012 and is privately owned by Tracy Boulware, a Texan business woman who is following the green and organic movement not only private but also when it comes to business.

Currently, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa employs 30 people within the following departments:

- Management
- Front Desk
- Spa Therapists
- Hydro Colon Therapists
- Life Enhancement Consultants
- Housekeeping
- Security/Maintenance

As far as accommodation is concerned, the resort provides eight suites and three cabins. With that said, it has capacity for no more than 22 guests at a time. This low number of rooms helps to ensure the highest level of care for each guest (Hradecky, 2012, p.2).

Figure 2 below is a picture of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, particularly showing the suites and salt water pool that form the center of the resort.

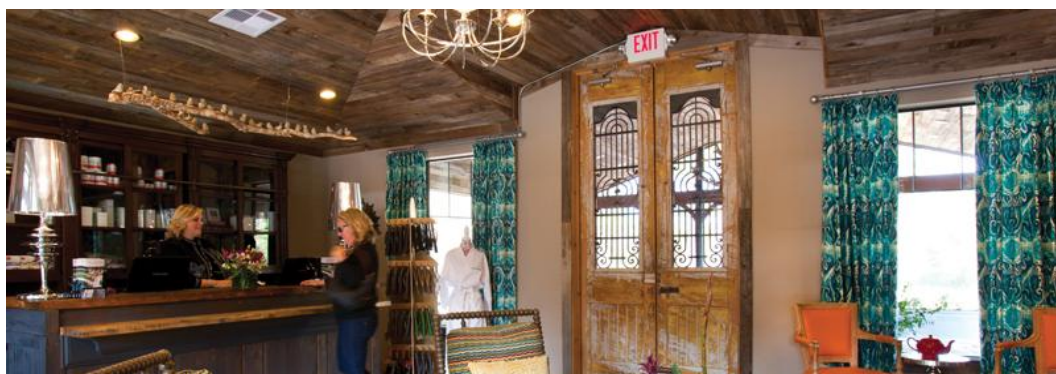
Figure 2: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa – The Resort



Source: Spa Finder, n.d. b

The rustic lobby of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa including the front desk area can be seen in Figure 3 beneath.

Figure 3: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa - Lobby



Source: Spa Week, n.d.

4.3.2 Products and Services

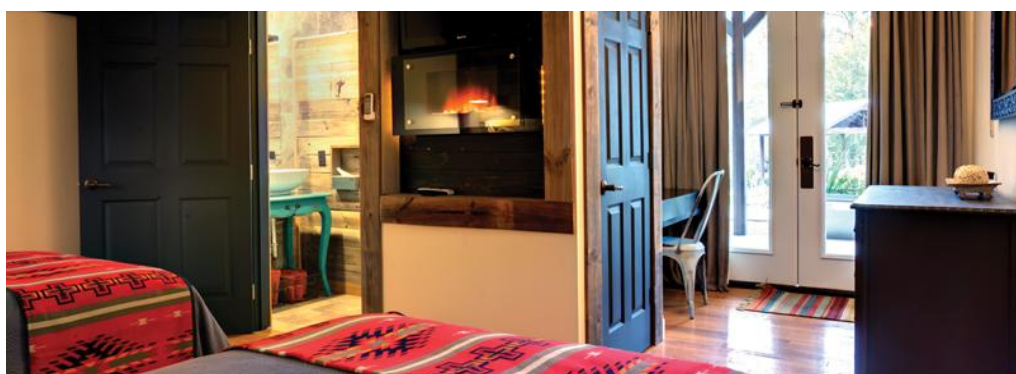
Deer Lake Lodge & Spa's core product is a program of cleansing and detoxifying that addresses body, mind and spirit. In order to achieve this goal, a natural and liquid diet named semi fast, herbal supplements, teas and colon hydrotherapies are provided to people visiting the resort. In addition to that, guests can participate

in holistic wellness classes and demonstrations like raw nutrition, local shopping, healthy living, Yoga and meditation. These classes purpose is not only to support the whole cleansing process throughout the stay at the resort but also to educate guests concerning a healthy lifestyle for their future (Hradecky, 2012, p.1).

At the beginning, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is offering this program in form of a four day stay from Thursday through Sunday. The price for this four day program at the resort is about \$ 2,000 and includes:

- Accommodation in a luxurious and comfortable suite (as shown in Figure 4 below) or cabin
- Organic robe & slippers
- Deer Lake Lodge tumbler & coffee mug
- Daily cleansing program
- 3 colon hydrotherapies
- Organic shampoo, conditioner & body wash in the rooms
- Complimentary Wi-Fi & DIRECTV®
- Fireplace in the rooms
- Yoga classes
- Meditation classes
- Introduction to “Life Enhancement” classes
- Nutrition classes

Figure 4: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa - Suite



Source: Spa Week, n.d.

By the time the resort has built relationships to loyal guests and an increase in demand for the program takes place, it will be extended to seven days a week.

Furthermore, numerous spa treatments ranging from facials, massages, body treatments and rituals to manicures and pedicures are services Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is providing to its guests.

Also important parts of the resort's business concept are the following "Life Enhancement Consulting" classes which are individually offered during the stay:

- Sound Therapy
- Reiki
- Acupuncture
- Iridology
- Biofeedback
- Thermography
- Yoga Therapy
- Chakra Energy Work
- Psychology
- Healing Powers of Drumming
- Organic Consulting

These classes support the detoxification process and help guests to balance body, mind and soul.

In addition to that, the resorts amenities, which are complimentary to its guests, include:

- A fasting lounge (illustrated in Figure 5 below)
- Heated saltwater pool
- Jetted spa
- Whirlpool
- Infrared sauna
- Fire place
- Scenic countryside walking trails

Figure 5: Deer Lake Lodge & Spa – Fasting Lounge



Source: Spa Week, n.d.

4.3.3 Philosophy and Aims

Deer Lake Lodge & Spa's philosophy is to revitalize body, mind and soul through the semi fasting program, colon hydrotherapies, organic spa treatments, yoga and holistic workshops in a natural and secluded environment. After their stay at the resort, guests should return home cleansed, energetic and educated about a healthy and sustainable lifestyle (Hradecky, 2012, p.1).

Tracy Boulware (2013, Interview), the owner of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa thinks that the resort provides an escape from daily stress. Furthermore, she describes Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as a catalyst to people who want to improve their health, lifestyle, general well-being as well as environment. Boulware also states that if you feel better you do and perform better in various aspects concerning your life.

According to Toledo Boulware (2013, Interview), the sister of Tracy Boulware as well as investor of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, the resort is an oasis to do some serious rejuvenation and regeneration in an enjoyable way. In her opinion, "serious" is the keyword – she means doing some serious work with and on yourself.

Moreover, she wishes that the resort continues to be a dynamic meeting place to rejuvenate that also acts as a nucleus. Being a nucleus means acting as a

meeting place for ideas and the exchange of not only new but also existing concepts and ideas that are at the highest purpose.

Ultimately, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa believes that taking care of our environment as well as of ourselves will directly influence our energy and health (Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, n.d.). Therefore, the resort was built in an environmentally friendly way and operates in a green and conscious manner.

4.3.4 Green Activities

As already stated within this subchapter, it is essential to Deer Lake Lodge & Spa to be as environmental friendly and natural as possible throughout the entire resort. In other words, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa categorizes itself as a green and organic spa by following and living a sustainable philosophy.

This subchapter summarizes the resorts' green and eco-friendly activities divided by its various business sections.

4.3.4.1 Construction & Building

- Most of the resorts' building facilities, like the main lobby and front desk area as well as the guest suites, were built out of recycled shipping containers.
- Recycled jeans and spray foam were used for insulation.
- Old doors from renovated houses in Houston were re-used as main lobby door and Yoga studio door.
- Recycled asphalt and leftover gravel were used for roads and paths throughout the resort.
- Parts of old fences were re-used for décor & sidings.
- Old furniture, for example, lounge chairs and mirrors, was renewed and re-used.
- A water retention system for erosion control was constructed.

- Each and every window is energy efficient.
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures were installed.
- All main buildings (lobby, Yoga studio, spa treatment rooms and fasting lounge) have sod roofs.
- Landscape irrigation as well as numerous local flowers, plants and trees help to maintain a healthy environment and landscape (Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, n.d.).

4.3.4.2 Guest Rooms

All guest rooms the resort is providing are equipped and furnished with the following:

- Organic towels
- Organic linen
- Organic mattresses
- Organic and self made pillows and quilts
- Organic curtains
- Eco-friendly pillow and mattress protectors
- Eco-friendly hangers
- Eco-friendly toilet paper (throughout the entire resort)
- Organic soap, refillable organic shampoo, conditioner and body wash

Moreover, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa follows a linen and towel policy which includes that solely if the guest requires it, the linen and towels will be changed during the four day stay. Otherwise, these textiles are not washed and changed for the time the guest is staying at the resort.

4.3.4.3 Spa Area

Numerous green and sustainable activities take place when it comes to the spa at Deer Lake Lodge:

- Heated saltwater pool (no chlorine necessary)
- Eco-friendly Yoga mats and organic Yoga blankets

- Organic spa sheets
- Organic towels
- Organic robes and slippers
- Organic Flip Flops
- Organic and natural skin care and spa treatment products as well as retail products
 - Spa Ritual
 - Sea Hag
 - DoTerra Essential Oils
 - Dancing Dog Goat Soap Products
 - Sunshine Farm Products
- Eco-friendly gift bags and gift boxes
- Eco-friendly hangers in treatment rooms
- Bamboo mats in treatment rooms

4.3.4.4 Fasting Program

The fasting lounge, which is the meeting spot for the fasting and detoxification program the guests conduct, is equipped with the following earth friendly and conscious products:

- Biodegradable cups & cutlery
- Eco-friendly napkins & paper towels
- Various organic juices
- Organic soups
- Organic teas
- Organic vegetables and fruits from local farmers
- Organic spices
- Natural and herbal supplements like Probiotics, Food Enzymes, Fiber Regulators, Green Power Capsules, ...
- In case of an event, the resort always provides an organic and raw buffet.

4.3.4.5 Waste Management, Water Use, Lighting & Energy Use

Hereinafter, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa's way to address energy, water, lighting and waste management is described:

- The resort solely uses its own well water.
- A solar water heater helps on the one hand to heat water and on the other hand to reduce energy consumption.
- Low-EMF wiring has been used in order to conserve energy and water.
- Energy efficient and LED lighting has been installed throughout the facility.
- Deer Lake Lodge & Spa has a contract with a recycling company for its waste.

4.3.4.6 Leadership/ Employee Engagement

It is crucial to Deer Lake Lodge & Spa that employees are satisfied and motivated to work at the resort. Therefore, the following incentives are offered to all employees:

- Natural and healthy working environment
- Seminars on products, treatments and spa software
- Staff Yoga
- Participation in Life Enhancement group classes
- Participation in detoxification and cleansing program
- Great compensation

4.3.4.7 Community Commitment

Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is aiming to increase awareness towards a healthy and sustainable lifestyle throughout the Houston area. Therefore, the resort provides events and educating seminars during the weekdays, where no guests are on property.

Furthermore, the resort supports small and local businesses and builds sustainable business relationships with them. All fruits and vegetables are bought at local farms. Juices, soups, spices and other items needed for the fasting lounge

are from a local health food store called “Healthy Living”. Skin care products used at the spa and products like shampoo, soap and body wash provided in the guest rooms are developed and produced at a local farm containing solely natural and organic ingredients. Additionally, the organic bedding for the guest rooms as well as curtains for other areas within the resort were tailored from a local, small company. Moreover, flower arrangements are individually and freshly made on a weekly basis by the local flowery. Furthermore, all employees are living in the surroundings or directly in Montgomery.

Finally, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa shows a great involvement in local organizations and charities on a regular basis.

Also worth saying is that no plastic water bottles are allowed on property. Furthermore, entirely organic cleaning products are used not only for cleaning the guest rooms and resort but also for doing laundry.

All in all, the resort promotes optimal health for guests, employees and our planet.

4.4 Expert Interviews – The Results

The aim of this subchapter is to illustrate the answers and results of the conducted expert interviews. On the one hand, there will be a result section concerning Deer Lake Lodge & Spa and on the other hand there will be a separate part containing results concerning the (green) spa industry.

4.4.1 Expert Interview Results Deer Lake Lodge & Spa

The results of the ten conducted interviews will be illustrated within this section. Headings will demonstrate the subject discussed during the interview.

4.4.1.1 Characteristics & Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Six out of ten interviewees directly stated that they perceive Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as a green, organic or sustainable and eco-friendly resort when they were asked how they would describe the resort. The remaining persons mentioned characteristics like natural, healing place and detoxification facility. The reason why not every interviewee mentioned organic, green or sustainable at first sight could be that the resort just opened four weeks before the interviews were conducted. Consequently, some of the employees, who just have worked there for one or two days so far, did not know Deer Lake Lodge & Spa very well at this time. However, all employees should have gained more knowledge and insights about the entire resort by the time the thesis was submitted.

Allison Hradecky describes Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as “A one of a kind spa I have never seen before, which is good for cleansing, detoxing and getting away.” Main characteristics nearly everybody mentioned are that it is a very healthy and healing place in a secluded and natural environment. Furthermore, the resort was described as a wholesome and rejuvenating detoxification place not only for the body but also for the mind and spirit. In other words, it is a unique spa following a completely new concept that ensures a real health benefit by following the big picture of overall health. In addition to that, the resort can be categorized as an educational training center for living a healthier life.

Moreover, all interviewees like Deer Lake Lodge & Spa because of the characteristics mentioned above.

April Reeder, the nutrition and organic teacher that is living a green and eco-friendly lifestyle in a very passionate way, even mentioned that “Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is pioneering in Texas”. She thinks that guests might think they come to the resort for a service but in fact it is much more than that. Staying at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is an introduction to a new lifestyle and a possibility of alternative living in a world where we really need it. Furthermore, Americans are very obese and face a lot of health issues. Consequently people really need to look at their health and change some of their ideas of what is good for them.

According to Tammy Pahel, the spa consultant and general manager of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa, the unique selling proposition of the resort is the all inclusive detoxification program. This statement is supported by similar answers, the remaining interview partners gave. Furthermore, Denise Leitch stated “that if a person is interested in detoxifying and healing the body then that is the most attractive part of it” as the unique selling proposition of the resort. All in all, the interviewees agree with Tammy Pahel and Denise Leitch concerning this matter as they identified the organic and wholesome detoxification program which benefits the guest’s health in the long run as the main attraction.

4.4.1.2 Working Atmosphere

“I love all the people I work with” is Sherry Graves’ reaction to the question concerning her employment at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. Her colleagues share the same opinion and overall, people are keen on working at and with Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. The most outstanding factor is that the team of employees is very friendly, caring and passionate. Consequently, there is a predominantly great and positive working atmosphere at the resort. Carrie Harmon, a cosmetologist, mentioned that you find “a different type of environment at the resort that you are not going to get working just anywhere”. Moreover, she highlighted the very unique blend of employees as well as the guests that come there.

Other employees stated that they love the fact that they are helping and educating not only guests but also co workers and that caring about the environment is crucial at the resort.

In addition to that, Tracy as well as Toledo Boulware stated that the environment and health of guests and employees is very important for them. They think that this is a corner stone not only of the program but also of the resort and what is promoted to people.

However, the interviewees mentioned that communication online and offline needs to improve as well as working schedules need to be better organized. These are

weaknesses Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is facing right now because it is a startup business. By establishing more consistency in the future, these problems should get solved.

4.4.1.3 Guest Perception

The interviewees think that potential and actual guests should perceive Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as an educational retreat and a self indulgence escape or opportunity. They should perceive it in that way because of the core program and the resort setting that is offered to them.

4.4.1.4 Reasons for Guests to Stay

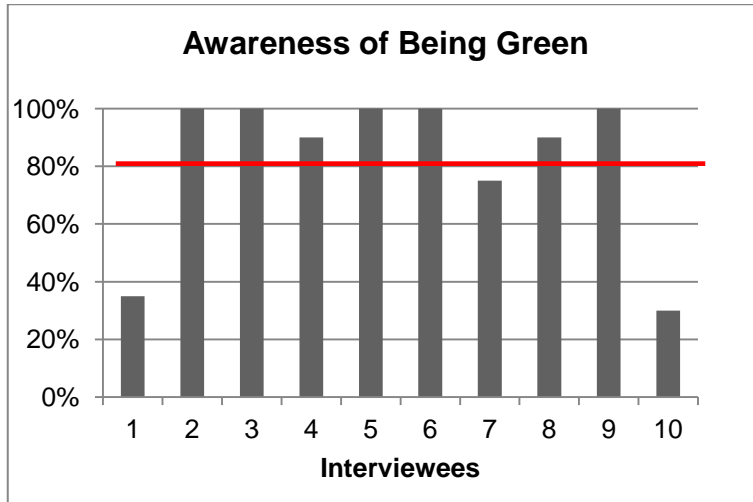
According to the interviewees, the most crucial factor for people deciding to stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is to participate in the detoxification program and consequently do something good for their health and focus on healing.

Furthermore, the resort provides a setting to get back in touch with your body and the nature without any distractions. In other words, a visit at the resort can be seen as an escape from the fast paced daily life with a chance to learn how to live in a better and healthier way.

4.4.1.5 Awareness of Being Green & Decisive Factor

Generally speaking, most interviewees think that nearly 100% of guests are aware of the fact that Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is a green resort. The average percentage for this question was 82%. The results regarding this question are presented into detail by Figure 6.

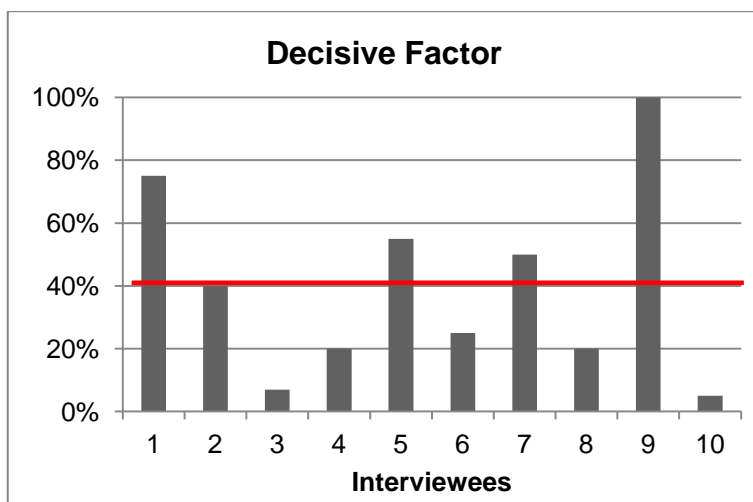
Figure 6: Assumed Percentage of Guest Awareness by Interviewees



Source: Compiled by the author

However, solely three interviewees think that the percentage of guests that decide to stay at the resort because of its green concept is between 50% and 100%. The majority stated that being green is not the main reason for people to come to the resort – the average percentage was 39%. An overview of the results concerning this question is given in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Assumed Percentage of Guests Deciding to Stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa Because of its Green Concept



Source: Compiled by the author

However, the green concept can be seen as a bonus. The interviewees explained that due to the fact that the green and sustainable movement is a very young one

and not yet main stream it cannot be the decisive factor for guests to stay. Moreover, many Americans are not educated what it means to be and live in a green way, so they do not know what to expect from a green spa.

In the end, all interviewees agree that for people who are living a green lifestyle and care about the environment, being green can be the decisive factor for choosing to stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

4.4.1.6 Advertising

Tammy Pahel thinks that advertising in the United States is a challenge. Nowadays, the key to success is doing more aggressive marketing. She said that it is necessary to go to your local city and find markets and businesses to partner with. Furthermore, focusing on social media got crucial. According to her, magazines are struggling and she thinks that people are not reading magazines like they used to. Consequently, the whole strategy for marketing has changed in the last four years in the United States. Running ads is not enough, focusing on editorial, like inviting editors for magazines and newspapers and video stations and partners to come up and stay for free, is essential. She says word of mouth is more valuable at present than ever.

“I think advertising specials like you are doing right now is a good idea for an opening place!” Meredith Morton, the art director at Ammo Advertising, explains that this strategy is a good one for a resort like Deer Lake Lodge & Spa to draw people in.

Furthermore, the resort is advertised as a wellness resort focusing on detoxification, health and education. However, the green part of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa has not been advertised so far.

The interviewees' opinion concerning strongly advertising the fact that Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is a green resort is that it could attract people who are already part of the green movement. Furthermore, they stated the necessity to advertise the

green concept in specific areas like on eco-friendly websites to draw green conscious people in. This opinion concerning advertising is supported by Allison Hradecky, a marketing specialist for the resort. She stated that “If you advertise in more eco friendly media outlets, like the Houston Green Scene, those people would definitely want to go to Deer Lake Lodge & Spa because of the green aspect.”

However, they stated that the main attraction is the core program including detoxification and colon hydrotherapies.

4.4.1.7 Green and Sustainable Policies & Activities

Every interviewee, except for Meredith Morton, who works for Deer Lake Lodge & Spa’s advertising company and does not know the resort that well, stated that the entire business follows a sustainable and green concept. Each person mentioned some green activities including the use of recycled materials for building purposes, organic linen and towels, the salt water pool and fruits and vegetables from local farmers.

Tracy Boulware, the owner of the resort, explained that she and her sister use the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) principles, that have already been explained in subchapter 3.8, as a guideline. “We try to use recycled materials and organic or all natural and locally sourced products, to utilize conservation practices and take advantages of solar opportunities and water conservation.” Furthermore, the sisters make use of native landscaping to leave the land in a natural state.

Employee Training

The interviews revealed that there was no employee training concerning energy and resource conservation conducted at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. Two employees mentioned that they were told to reuse things if possible and to keep lights off and doors shut so that the cold air does not get in when the room is heated or vice versa.

Community Commitment

First of all, the new and unique concept of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa will bring a fresh recognition of Montgomery as a progressive area that still provides a less urban field. Additionally, the resort can be seen as an educating place for people who share the vision of healthy living. Moreover, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is highly involved with local and green organizations and invites speakers talking about being healthy, eating raw and the concept of wellness.

According to Sherry Graves, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa “has a very mutual beneficial relationship with a lot of small businesses”. Furthermore, all interviewees stated that the resort utilizes different services through organic farmers and people in the area that have organic products, as well as shops. Consequently, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa supports an increase in sales of these organic and sustainable products in the area. That drives customers to small business people that are specialized in organic and sustainable resources and helps their business to grow and gives more information into the public and community.

Moreover, the resort not only purchases from local farmers and health food stores but also employs local and small manufacturers of eco products as well as local healers and teachers who interact with guests.

Products

When asking the question about how many products within the resort follow a sustainable concept, April Reeder answered: “A lot of products are green because they are local.” The remaining interviewees gave similar answers and confirmed that almost all products used within the spa area, retail area and the fasting lounge are organic, natural and eco-friendly. In total, the spa carries about twenty supplements for the detoxification program and ten to fifteen eco body products which are all natural and mostly organic. Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is partnering with “Sunshine Farm” – a local farm that grows organic fruits and vegetables and that produces body products which are used for spa treatments and in guest rooms.

Moreover, the spa carries DoTerra essential oils which are all natural. These oils are used during body treatments and for the nutrition classes and are, for example, added to smoothies and juices. Furthermore, they are sold in the retail area of the spa.

As far as spa treatments are concerned Spa Ritual, a vegan and organic product line, is used for manicures and pedicures. In addition, Sunshine Farm body butters, massage creams and oils are used for body treatments and massages. However, the interviewees agree with Carrie Harmon's statement that "only Natura Bisse is not 100% organic". This product line for facials and rituals is not all natural or organic and additionally, it is produced in Spain and does not follow the corporate concept of purchasing locally.

Towels, Linen & Textiles

Every person the author interviewed affirmed that all towels, sheets, linen, mattresses and robes at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa are eco-friendly and organic. Pillows, quilts and curtains that go into guest rooms are out of organic fiber as well and tailored by a small local business. Janaki Mayhill emphasized the fact that "it is all organic and not filled with chemicals".

Furthermore, all textiles are washed with all organic and natural products on property.

Waste, Water and Energy Management

Solely three out of ten interviewees did not know if Deer Lake Lodge & Spa implemented activities in order to conserve water and energy.

However, the remaining interviewees acknowledged that the resort tries to get as much as possible recycled and therefore, signed a contract with an external but local recycling company.

The resort also uses fresh well water and septic systems so that it does not have to be dependent on the city. Furthermore, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa uses grey water for irrigation purposes.

Tracy Boulware explained that they also use LED lighting and built the resort in a certain way with the intention of optimizing energy efficiency.

In addition to that, a solar water heater is installed on property. This should also help to reduce energy consumption. She is also planning on putting solar panels on the roof throughout the resort.

Missing Activities

Six out of ten interviewees think that Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is not missing anything to be categorized as a green spa.

Overall, everybody stated that the resort is very green and takes care about people's and the earth's health.

However, the following measures were suggested and recommended:

- To grow an own organic garden
- Food composting
- Rain water collection
- Use of recycled paper

In addition to that, Tracy Boulware admitted that documentation and tracking of the green and sustainable improvements are missing and would be important to have.

Green Spa Standards

Tammy Pahel is very skeptical when it comes to green spa standards like Green Globe, LEED and the GreenGain Assessment Tool. She stated that they are "too young and unfortunately they don't have the influence that they should have". However, she thinks that standards and criteria in general are very important for running a business, as they give necessary structures.

Toledo Boulware is not familiar with standards like Green Globe and the GreenGain Assessment tool. However, she thinks that standards in general are good to have because they create awareness and a model, platform or structure for places such as Deer Lake Lodge & Spa within the spa industry.

Tracy Boulware mentioned that a business “always needs to have a standard that you set to follow”. It is all about rating your business whether or not it is improving or declining.

Furthermore, she thinks that green spa standards are good guidelines but they can also be tedious especially if you are not very well organized.

Finally, both – Toledo and Tracy Boulware - are interested in getting a green spa certification for Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

Final Green Score

All interview partners were asked to give their opinion on how green Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is on a scale of one to ten (ten being the best). With an average score of eight, the results reveal that the resort is perceived as organic and green. The interviewees explained their individual score by listing all green activities they know Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is applying. Among other things, they mentioned the saltwater pool, usage of organic and local products, recycled building materials and well water usage. The results of this question are illustrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Final Green Score of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa



Source: Compiled by the author

The reason why the score is an eight and not a ten is because there are still minor things missing to be an exceptionally green spa. A lack of power self generation

and using energy in a not only eco-friendly way, as well as Natura Bisse as non organic product line was mostly mentioned as weaknesses of the resort.

4.4.1.8 Advantages & Disadvantages of Being Green

Toledo Boulware recognizes advantages like saving resources and promoting awareness as well as being healthier for our body and our world. Moreover, she admitted that “done in the most optimal way, it is a less expensive way to operate too”. She does not think that the green philosophy brings any pitfalls with it.

Tracy Boulware stated that advantages of being green are the “feel good factor” and the marketability of the resort.

However, she thinks that being green can be costly and that you have to keep the big picture in your mind in order to make adequate decisions.

4.4.2 Expert Interview Results Spa Industry

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the results of the eleven conducted expert interviews. Headings will demonstrate the subject discussed during the interview.

4.4.2.1 Trends & Changes within the Spa Industry

Half of the interviewees refer to Susie Ellis’ “Spa Finder Trends 2013”. These include, amongst others: healthy hotels, being out in nature – which is referred to as “earthing”, more mindfulness, medical advancements as well as a trend towards being green. However, Judy Singer, who has been working in the spa industry for 30 years, stated that being green is not really a trend but trendy and often used as a marketing tool.

Furthermore, Tammy Pahel, Michael Stusser as well as Roberto Arjona think that more and more spas are converting themselves into resort spas which can be categorized as wellness centers. These wellness centers focus on education,

holistic health and wellbeing. In Tammy Pahel’s opinion, there will be a lot more of holistic resorts like Deer Lake Lodge & Spa in the future. Going to the spa will not solely be about getting a treatment; it will be about participating in an integrated program that includes nutrition, physical activity, mental stimulation and spa therapies.

Additionally, many interviewees mentioned that spas start to offer more authentic as well as simple core treatments with therapeutic effects.

4.4.2.2 Green Spa Experience

Two out of the eleven interviewees said that, in their opinion, they have not visited an all green spa so far because they do not even know if there does an all green spa exist.

Solely three experts that have been to a green spa stated that visiting a green spa was not a different experience than visiting a traditional spa. The remaining interviewees agreed that the spa experience of a green and sustainable spa is a different one. These results are visualized in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Green Spa Experience

Nr. of interviewees who agree	Opinion
2	Have not visited a green spa at all.
3	Have visited green spas but did not experience something different.
6	Have visited a green spa and had a different experience.

Source: Compiled by the author

Amy McDonald said that the difference is tangible and that the air quality is much better and cleaner in a green spa. Furthermore, she thinks that having more natural light in a green spa makes guests and employees feel better. Additionally, she stated that spas that are “committed to be green obviously have better quality

products and are taking care of staff better”. All in all, the energy of the place is more authentic and healing.

Dr. Peter Zimmer agrees with Amy McDonald and also mentioned that the atmosphere, architecture, design and treatments the spa offers are different than in a traditional spa.

Mary Bemis, the founder of Organic Spa Magazine, thinks that differences can be seen in products the spa uses and offers. According to her, a green spa is a chemical free place that creates a natural experience through products and everything that touches the skin.

4.4.2.3 Characteristics & Principles of a Green Spa

The Green Spa Network developed principles for spa sustainability that include environmental management practices, mindful building practices, an employee engagement program as well as being active in the community. These principles are, according to Deb Berlin, the pillars of sustainability a spa should incorporate.

Judy Singer stated that with all the green conscious practices like the installation of fast flush toilets and water saving showers, a green spa acts as an educating place and helps guests to learn how they can live in a way not hurting the environment.

Amy McDonald characterizes a green spa as a business that always thinks about making decisions in a greener and more conscious way. In other words, every time the spa orders or purchases something, the management is asking itself the question “Is there a better and greener way to do this?” In the end, she thinks that being green is more about the intention to be earth friendly than about adhering to standards.

Susie Ellis states that characteristics of green spas are “commitment to organic products, organic cleaning, less use of paper, and being conscious in every regard”. Overall, the interviewees agree with her statement and mentioned the

utilization of eco-friendly building materials as well as organic and natural products, water and energy conservation, waste management and organic spa materials as principles a green spa should follow.

4.4.2.4 Importance of Standards & Criteria

Every expert declared that standards and criteria are important for the green spa industry. Reasons for their positive attitude towards standards are for example a quote in sustainability, Deb Berlin mentioned, that goes “What can be measured can be managed”. In other words, that means that businesses that know, for instance, their energy use can measure their carbon footprint and finally, they have a benchmark against which they can reduce their energy consumption.

Furthermore, standards are important for the industry in order to know which spas are green and sustainable and which are not. Consequently, standards are helpful tools to compare businesses and their green efforts.

Furthermore, standards and criteria are essential for quality control and consistency. Michael Stusser stated that “criteria provide guidelines for people to understand what they can do in their operations to engage authentically and make progress towards an earth friendlier way of doing business”.

Nowadays, it is also an advantage to have a quality seal or international standard which represents the quality of the spa. Dr. Peter Zimmer thinks that today, people do not trust businesses that claim to be green if they do not have such a certificate or label. These labels are mostly based on standards and these standards need to be transparent – guests need to be able to look them up on the internet and additionally, they have to be honest and senseful.

In Amy McDonald’s opinion, there also need to be different standards and criteria within each country. And within the different countries, there needs to be different ones depending on the location – whether it is rural or urban.

4.4.2.5 Implementation of Being Green

Lynne McNees stated that “there are things that are very easy” to implement for greening a spa. The majority of experts agrees with her and thinks that being green is rather easy to put into practice. However, they stated that it largely depends on the building of the spa, the available time and budget and the enthusiasm and passion for the green movement.

Tammy Pahel mentioned that an obstacle of having a green and organic resort spa is that it is very hard to find good products, service and support. In other words, it can be very time consuming and needs a lot of intense research in order to come up with the desired products and vendors.

In the end, mostly everybody said that the first steps of greening a spa, including understanding what green practices are, what sustainability stands for and the basic concepts of reducing and reusing and applying them in day to day operations are not that difficult. A company can easily change lighting in the spa, ensure that equipment is not wasting energy or water and change shower heads for low water use.

4.4.2.6 Problems of the Green Spa Industry

Solely Lynne McNees and Roberto Arjona think that the green spa industry is not facing any problems.

The majority of the interviewees mentioned the following problems green spas have to deal with:

- Implementing green activities can be very costly (particularly in the beginning).
- The industry is still affected by the economic crisis. People do not want to spend so much money.
- There is an identity problem concerning the existence of a green spa industry and what a green spa is.
- People do not really know what being green means.

- The word “green” seems to be very outdated and does not help the industry to further evolve itself.

4.4.2.7 Green Spas – Marketing Tool or Authentic Business Principle

Half of the interviewees think that some spas are not honest when they claim to be green and some are. Solely one interviewee, namely Tammy Pahel, stated that people and businesses are using the word “green” but are not authentic with their statements. She thinks that “people do not even know what the standard of being green is and what it means to be green”. Therefore, it is easy for businesses to say that they are green, even if they are not following a green concept. Table 6 below gives an overview of the answers concerning this question.

Table 6: Being Green as Authentic Business Principle

Nr. of interviewees who agree	Authenticity concerning Green Claims
5	Yes
5	Yes and no – there is a range.
1	No

Source: Compiled by the author

Some experts mentioned the problem of green washing nearly every industry is facing nowadays. However, many of them, like Dr. Peter Zimmer, think that spas that are not green will not be successful if they claim to follow the green movement. He thinks that by claiming to follow a green concept, a business attracts like-minded guests. And if these guests visit the spa and experience that it is not green, the spa is at risk to lose its reputation very quickly.

On the other hand, Michael Stusser explained that the Green Spa Network only accepts members that are able to “present themselves as authentic and transparent in terms of their effort”. Furthermore, the organization is including these regulations into the membership protocols and the website. The Green Spa Network does not want to prevent somebody to become a member who has a

good intention. Moreover, he stated that the organization wants to make sure that businesses that are following green practices are credited and recognizable for people.

Furthermore, Deb Berlin stated that “the green spas that I know and that are in our network are definitely concerned about the planet”. According to her, they are purchasing and retailing organic and natural skin care products because they care about the guests that visit the spa. Additionally, they are thoughtful when it comes to air quality and clean water because they care about their staff.

Half of the experts agree with Michael Stusser who thinks that “there is a range” of spas that are concerned about the planet and some that just want to attract more guests by implementing green activities. Two interviewees, namely Tammy Pahel and Judy Singer, think that green spas focus more on guest attraction and use their green initiatives as an effective marketing tool. However, both state that this only happens because of the lack of education on the customer side. As already mentioned, green spas are not main stream nowadays and many people do not know what a green spa is and what to expect from a visit of such a spa. The results of this question are illustrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Spas that are Honestly Concerned about our Planet

Nr. of interviewees who agree	Concerned about Planet
5	Yes and no – there is a range.
4	Yes
2	No

Source: Compiled by the author

On the contrary, Susie Ellis stated that green spas may be getting fewer guests because to some extent green has a bit of a bad perception. In her opinion, a number of people think that green spas might not be very luxurious and results oriented when it comes to their spa treatments.

4.4.2.8 Competitive Advantage of Being Green

The majority of interviewed experts think that being green can be a competitive advantage for a spa. Some of them are intend on the fact that an eco-friendly and green conscious spa can be considered as outstanding and as a benefit for its image in these days.

Furthermore, it is crucial to market the business properly. That means that spas should emphasis on marketing activities towards people that are part of the green movement and interested in living a healthy and sustainable life. If they are successful in advertising within this customer segment, customers will choose the green spa over a traditional one.

Solely three interviewees declared that a green spa's competitiveness is not higher than the competitiveness of a not green spa. In their opinion, the market for green spas is too small and only a small percentage of customers is actively searching for it.

Table 8 below gives an overview of the answers given by the interviewees concerning this question.

Table 8: Being Green as a Competitive Advantage

Nr. of interviewees who agree	Competitive Advantage
3	No
4	Yes
4	Yes, if marketed appropriately.

Source: Compiled by the author

However, Tammy Pahel stated that being green conscious “is the right thing to do for the world we are living in”. All interviewees agree with her and believe that being green is the right thing to do for our planet and that it is a great philosophy to follow when doing business.

Moreover, the interviewees were also asked if being green attracts more guests to a spa. Five out of the eleven experts stated that the fact of incorporating green

practices into a spa will not attract more guests. However, the remaining interview partners think that if it is marketed in a proper way and the correct outlets, being green will drive more customers to the business.

Furthermore, the LOHAS segment as well as younger people are more attracted to green businesses. This is because of their lifestyle and desire to do something good for the planet.

4.4.2.9 Green Washing

Nine out of eleven interviewees agreed that green washing is an issue within the spa industry.

Susie Ellis stated that “green washing is just an overall challenge” not only in the spa industry but also in the hotel and restaurant industry. Furthermore, it is often used to drive business to the spa even if the spa is not as green as it claims to be. However, as already mentioned before, guests will find out the truth very soon and that can consequently lead to a bad reputation as well as a loss of trust.

Mary Bemis as well as the remaining interviewees identified that green washing “is a problem mostly with the beauty companies”. Many of them pretend to sell all natural and organic products in order to be part of the green movement. In fact, many of them do not offer healthy and natural products and it is not easy to differentiate truly wholesome and organic products from artificial ones.

Moreover, not every spa that is doing anything sustainable and green is doing everything in a sustainable way. As a consequence, there is always an opportunity of doing more and to have someone label the business as green washing.

Some ideas of how the problem concerning green washing could be solved are:

- Standardization of green and holding businesses to these standards (this goes hand in hand with certifications for green spas)
- Education for consumers, media and spa professionals (what being green means)
- Laws like the “Green Guide” that help to prevent dishonest claims

- Media, television and magazines that check spas and reveal green washing
- Spas need to demand more transparency from vendors, consumers need to demand more transparency from spas and spas need to be more transparent to consumers.
- More control over skin care products by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States of America

4.4.2.10 Future of Green Spa Industry

Susie Ellis as well as the majority of interviewees “hope there would be no need to differentiate a green spa industry and the spa industry”, as spas by definition follow green principles. Spas are about wellness and health, and being green incorporates these factors as well. Moreover, most spas should be green because people will realize the high effectiveness of their treatments and principles.

Being green will become main stream and customers will be demanding it. However, it will be called something different than “green” because it is an already outdated buzzword.

Roberto Arjona puts the green spa industry of the future on another level and thinks that a green spa will be “the place where the community wants to gather”. It will address concerns and issues like obesity, mental stress and lack of mindfulness and will help to make everyone a better and healthier person.

In the end, the green spa industry of the future should also provide more structure and better as well as reliable certifications and standards. Moreover, people should be held accountable for their claims.

4.5 Guest Question – The Results

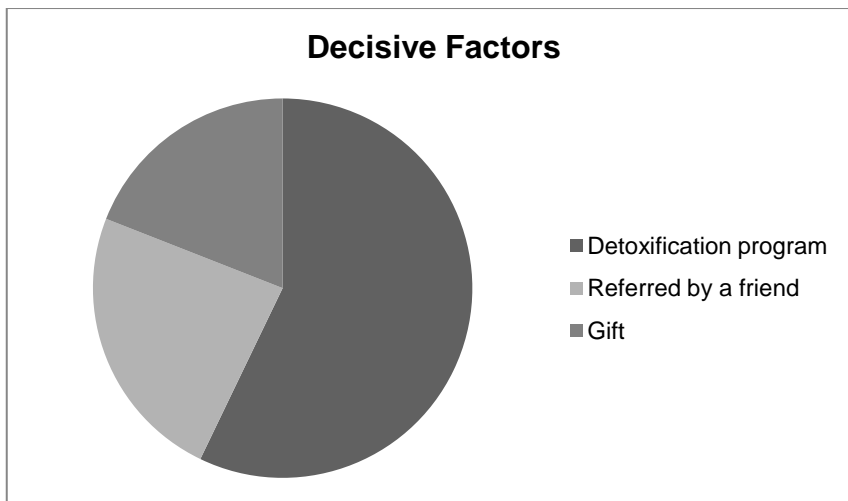
As already mentioned in chapter 4.1.2, during their booking process, guests were asked a question concerning the reason for their stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

All together, the author received 21 responses for the following question: “Why have you decided to visit Deer Lake Lodge & Spa?”

Solely three decisive factors, which are illustrated in Figure 9 below, were mentioned:

- Detoxification program (12)
- Referred by a friend (5)
- Gift (4)

Figure 9: Decisive Factors for Guests to Stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa



Source: Compiled by the author

The core program, the resort is providing to its guests, is the main reason for people to come and stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. Furthermore, referrals by friends and gifts led to a visit of the resort.

The green philosophy and activities the resort is following were not mentioned at all.

Within the next chapters, the results of the case study as well as the results gathered in the theoretical part of the thesis will be further discussed. In chapter 5, the conclusion of the research, the research questions stated at the beginning of the thesis will be answered.

It will be followed by recommendations for the spa industry in general as well as for Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

Finally, limitations of the thesis will be revealed in the last chapter.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to critically analyze green spas including a case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa in Montgomery, Texas. It was crucial to find out if Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is a truly green resort and if it consequently can be categorized as a best practice example for the spa industry. In addition to that, the author wanted to learn, if green washing can be considered as a problem within the spa industry and what could be done in order to solve this issue.

This study has shown that being green is a trend that will affect the spa industry globally. On the one hand, consumers start demanding eco-friendly spa experiences and on the other hand spa owners and managers create green philosophies in order to save resources and the environment.

Moreover, being green is associated with not only numerous advantages but also with disadvantages and challenges on several levels.

Combining the knowledge gained within the literature review as well as the case study, the research questions, which have been developed at the beginning of this Master thesis, can be answered as follows:

Q1: Does Deer Lake Lodge & Spa follow an authentic and sustainable business strategy and can therefore be classified as a best practice example of a green spa?

The case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa including the expert interviews conducted within this setting revealed that the resort follows a green and sustainable business concept. Being green forms an important part of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa's philosophy and is therefore incorporated whenever and wherever possible.

Not only does the spa comply with the definition of a green spa given in subchapter 2.2, but it also reached an eight on a score from one to ten, rated by the interviewed experts. This result clearly supports the findings gathered from the case study on the resort.

In addition to that, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa follows principles and characteristics the experts within the spa industry identified during the interviews.

Moreover, the resort incorporated sustainability on all three recommended levels – namely economical, ecological and social. The building materials, equipment and products within the resort are recycled, reused and organic. Furthermore, the spa created jobs for 30 people in the surroundings of Montgomery, Texas and provides an enjoyable and well energized working atmosphere. Additionally, supporting and educating the local community is one of the resort's goals and a mission the owner wants to achieve.

Finally, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa can be categorized as an authentic green spa and consequently be classified as a best practice example for the spa industry.

However, there are still minor aspects that would need improvement in order to be certified as a 100% green spa. Recommendations concerning this matter will be given in chapter 6.

Q2: Is “being green” a decisive factor for Deer Lake Lodge & Spa’s guests to come and stay at the resort?

Even though the green spa consumer is similar to the average spa consumer in some aspects, the results from the literature review prove that the green consumer slightly differs from the traditional spa consumer. Due to the fact that the green consumer is also part of the LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health And Sustainability) market segment, this part of consumers is – until now – small but one with a high spending power. In other words, green spa guests, which form a little component of the entire spa guests, focus on health and personal development, the environment in general as well as a sustainable lifestyle. Consequently, some of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa's guests belong to this market segment and care about the green setting at the resort.

The interview results with experts at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as well as the answers given by guests to the question why they decided to visit the resort

provide evidence that “being green” is no explicit decision criterion to stay at the spa.

The main reason for guests to stay at the resort is the core program – the detoxification program – Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is offering. Further decisive factors are that they were referred by friends or got the stay as a gift.

However, the detoxification program, which was stated as the main reason to come and visit the resort, is a very sustainable and educating as well as healthy type of vacation. The content of the program can be categorized as green and organic and helps guests to live a healthier and more environmental aware lifestyle in the future. Therefore, being green represents an indirect and unconscious factor for guests to stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

Q3: Do spas pretend being green in order to attract more guests?

In course of the theoretical research it has been found that green and sustainable business practices help to establish a positive image as well as support the brand creation of a spa. Furthermore, this study has found that the fact of being a green business is a good strategy for marketing as well. However, findings indicate that numerous spas categorize themselves as green in order to draw more guests to the business.

These findings go hand in hand with the results of the expert interviews, which show that many interviewees share the same opinion concerning making use of the advantage of being green for guest attraction.

However, taking the information collected throughout the entire thesis into consideration, this research question cannot clearly be answered with a yes or no. Some spas pretend to follow the green movement, when in fact they are not, solely to attract more guests to their business. On the other hand, many green spas are operating in an authentic and sustainable way and are honestly concerned about the planet as well as their guests and employees.

Q4: Is “green washing” a problem in the spa industry? And if yes, what can be done about it?

Expert interviews revealed similar findings to what was described in the theoretical part regarding green washing.

The phenomenon of green washing is definitely a problem the spa industry is facing. Spas are advertising and communicating to potential as well as loyal guests that they are environmentally conscious and oftentimes list numerous green activities they claim to perform with the hope to attract more customers to their business. However, customers searching for a green spa can be misled by these statements.

Many spas that claim to be green, when in fact they are not, do not consider the consequences their dishonest behavior can cause. They put themselves at a high risk that guests will find out the truth about their business philosophy and activities very soon. In the end, that can lead to a bad reputation as well as losing the guest's trust.

Moreover, the results of this investigation show that beauty and skin care companies green wash very often nowadays. This fact takes the problem concerning green washing to another level. Lots of them act as if they sell natural and organic products in order to be part of the green movement as they identify the advantages it could bring to the business. However, many skin care companies do not offer organic or natural products even if they sell them as such. As a consequence, it is hard for spas to differentiate truly organic and natural products from artificial ones and it can happen that spas buy and use non health-promoting products without knowing about it.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest several measures to solve the green washing issue. First of all, consumers, media as well as spa professionals need to be educated on the topic of being green. Creating transparency on the market as a whole – including skin care companies and spas – would be crucial to fight against green washing as well.

Moreover, websites like the Green Washing Index help to educate consumers about how to understand advertisements.

Furthermore, standardization and certification processes for green spas could help spas as supportive and pointing guidelines and guests as an insurance against spas that green wash.

Taking all this information into consideration, it can be stated that green spas belong to a niche where little research has been done so far. Therefore, the current findings add significantly to the understanding of the green spa industry.

Finally, this research serves as a base for future studies in the field of green spas and helps to create transparency for customers as well as businesses.

6. Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest several courses of action concerning future research, Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as well as the spa industry in general. These recommendations are stated within this chapter and serve as suggestions for the future development of green spas.

6.1 Future Research

It is recommended to conduct further research in the area of green spas as well as green washing within the spa industry. As this thesis is an initial investigation of green spas, it would be of high interest to further study reasons for green washing and measures to solve this issue.

Furthermore, monitoring and further researching the development of the green spa industry would be crucial as the green movement is a rather young phenomenon with a high potential for change.

Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct the interviews at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa again after about one year. The interview outline should contain the same questions in order to be able to determine changes that may have occurred in the meantime.

6.2 Deer Lake Lodge & Spa

As far as Deer Lake Lodge & Spa is concerned, the author would recommend creating and writing down an environmental policy statement. This statement should contain the resort's philosophy, green activities and goals concerning the planet as well as guests and employees. It is of high importance that not only the employees of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa but also its guests have access to the policies in order to get informed about the green efforts the resort is making. In addition to that, such a policy statement would help in the process of transparency creation.

Furthermore, there is a need for the implementation of a green committee including staff and managers at the resort. This committee would be a great tool

for planning, developing and implementing green activities at the resort. Moreover, the committee could be used for creating tracking tools to quantify the resort's progress and efficiency.

Moreover, it is strongly recommended that Deer Lake Lodge & Spa gets certified for its green activities and strategies. Due to the fact that the Green Globe certification was assessed as the most valuable one, the author would suggest applying for the Green Globe certification. Being certified would prove the fact that the resort acts environmentally friendly and create further transparency on the market.

Additionally, the creation of an own garden for growing fruits and vegetables, using a more natural and organic skin care line than Natura Bisse as well as the installation of low flow toilets and shower heads and of sensors for the lighting system would further strengthen the green concept of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

6.3 Spa Industry in General

Taking all the information gained within this study into consideration, the author identified recommendations for the spa industry as follows:

The development of a uniform standard and certification program would be a crucial first step that would help to create more transparency on the market. Not only customers can compare green spas and inform themselves about the stage of being green of individual spas. Also spas themselves get guidelines and standards they can and need to stick to in order to be taken serious about their green philosophy.

This standard and certification needs a common base for every spa worldwide. However, it is essential to adapt it to certain countries and regions when it comes to specific regulations because a green spa in a city in the United States is able to stick to different criteria than a green spa in the Alps in Europe.

Another essential measure would be to focus on education what being green and sustainable means. As the results of this thesis show that many people do not have knowledge in this field, it would help a lot for the further development of green spas to educate people on this topic. Furthermore, the better educated

people are – not only guests but also spa professionals – the fewer frustration can occur and less green washing will take place.

Additionally, sustaining organizations like the Green Spa Network is crucial. These organizations try to make the green spa industry more transparent, give helpful tips to spa professionals and serve as information exchange platforms.

It is of high importance to further support the Green Spa Network as well as like minded organizations so that they can further grow. As a consequence, these networks will get more powerful and influential within the spa industry and will be an essential help for further developing and internalizing the green movement.

7. Limitations

Even though this research was conducted with the highest possible amount of accuracy and effort, a number of important limitations need to be considered.

Due to the fact that little research on the topic of green spas has been done so far, there were not many books or statistics available that the author could get data from. However, a proper literature research was conducted and suitable and relevant literature has been included into the thesis.

Furthermore, during the process of writing the thesis, the author has been an employee of Deer Lake Lodge & Spa. Due to the fact of working there and being connected to the resort, it has somehow already been considered as “being green”. However, the case study on Deer Lake Lodge & Spa as well as the expert interviews have been conducted in an as objective and as critical way as possible.

Moreover, the author was solely able to conduct the expert interviews at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa during the in subchapter 4.1.2 mentioned timeframe. However, the resort just opened four weeks before the performance of the interviews. Consequently, the overall results of the interviews are satisfying but conducting the interviews at a later point in time would have been preferred as employees and managers would have gained more knowledge and insights about Deer Lake Lodge & Spa.

In addition to that, the investigation about “being green” as a decisive factor to stay at Deer Lake Lodge & Spa was limited by the small amount of guests that responded to the regarding question. However, the results go hand in hand with the findings of the expert interviews and indicate that being green is not a direct or prevailing reason to stay at the resort.

A further limitation of this study is that even though Deer Lake Lodge & Spa was identified as an authentic green spa, it is difficult to categorize it as a best practice example for the entire spa industry. The reason for that matter is that there neither

exists a universally valid definition of a green spa nor a uniform certification or evaluation system for the green spa industry at all.

As already mentioned in the recommendation chapter, it would be of high importance for the future development of green spas to create and implement universal definitions, standards and certifications.

Due to the fact that all experts interviewed, except of one, are Americans, the findings of the empirical part are especially valid for the American spa industry. However, the results of the interview conducted with the German expert are almost identically with the ones conducted with Americans. Moreover, the theoretical part of this study revealed similar problems, for example, cornering green washing all over the world. In the end, the thesis focuses more on the American spa industry but is also of high importance for the spa industry worldwide.

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