



ASIA: INDIA

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

Climate change. Increase in population. Increase in stress levels, long work hours, low pay, high spending, and no savings. Lack of standards, lack of adequately trained manpower, lack of professionals serving the wellness sector, lack of proper education. Lack of Government support in many countries: governments should develop and promote medical tourism and wellness tourism separately. Wellness is a global language and the issues it faces are global. The wellness industry is growing rapidly and has tremendous potential, but at the same time is faced with challenges and issues obstructing its smooth and continual growth. Following the herd approach in terms of new innovations, technology and treatments to meet customer satisfaction.

What do you see as the main innovations happening around the world, those which are game changing and/or disruptive?

Prices of necessities are going up while pay stagnates. The fast growth of non-natural products causing chemical harm while not offering proper nutrition. Usage of machines is making mankind lazier and creating lots of health issues.

What do you see as the main innovations in the spa/wellness industry (existing and future)?

Concepts that may not go naturally with a spa, but may bring in more money (like serving alcohol), do not fulfill the true meaning of wellness: healing the body, mind, soul. We must avoid taking short cuts merely to make money. Spa and wellness companies are now introducing health games and wellness apps aimed at educating and encouraging us to partake in a healthier lifestyle program. Complete menu and spa-tour information, including booking, can be made available on iPads and PDAs.

Multi-sense spas: Sound, light, technology and LED have long been used in spa and health centers, with outfits introducing a number of hi-tech frequency and vibration techniques.

Family affair: Spas will soon become family wellness outings, with lot of destination wellness centers and different spa treatments marketed as places for families to come together.

Wow factor: spas are looking beyond traditional pampering to technology, swimming pools, spa suites, wine-dine-and-spa concepts, pre-pampering areas, post-relaxation deck - all designed to make spa synonymous with luxury.

Zodiac spas: spas with patented astrologically-informed treatments.

What do you see as the greatest opportunities/challenges for the global spa and wellness industry?

The spa and wellness industry faces vast opportunities, but also confronts complex challenges, having recently had to adapt to austere economic conditions.

There are two significant differences across the two groups. For consumers, mental health and medical health rank among the top ten terms associated with wellness, while they rank significantly lower for industry. On the other hand, industry ranks holistic health and spiritual health significantly higher than consumers do. The difference in perceptions of holistic health may indicate that consumers have less of a grasp on this concept.

When asked what activities they do when looking to enhance or improve their wellness, consumers most frequently mentioned exercise and eating better, followed by visiting a spa. Obviously, spa's high ranking indicates good news for

the spa industry. Close behind visiting a spa, consumers also emphasized taking a holiday, vacation or retreat, which has positive implications for resort and hotel spas. The placement of exercise and eating better at the top of the list indicates an opportunity for spas to add or enhance their service offerings in the areas of fitness and nutrition.

The challenges the spa and wellness industry faces today are numerous. Many of them are a consequence of the way the sector has evolved in recent years. Although spas becoming mainstream are faced with many obstacles, future trends hint towards a more rapid process.

The current economic crisis has raised another problem: many spas have cut their costs dramatically without reducing their prices. This not only endangers consumer confidence but also jeopardizes customer loyalty towards our industry. It is essential to figure out what the client is looking for (relaxation, health, leisure, etc.), and to understand whether all these services can be offered under a specific spa model.

What are some practical ways for businesses to create a climate for creativity and innovation?

Spas are increasingly tapping into ancient, culturally-based healing and wellness traditions to develop new services and products, and especially to develop unique options that reflect the country or region in which they operate. There is rapidly growing consumer interest in therapies that typically fall under the heading of complementary and alternative medicine – including Ayurveda, traditional Chinese medicine, energy healing/Reiki, homeopathy, and so on – and there is a small but growing body of scientific evidence demonstrating that such approaches do have real therapeutic value. Other related opportunities include developing specialized types of massages or treatments that target the needs of specific consumer segments (e.g., ROPE massage; anti-stress treatments for business executives; therapeutic yoga) placing greater emphasis on partnering services with products that have therapeutic value and that promote healthy aging and self image.

Developing a strong body of customer testimonials and evidence - for example, expert/scientific testimonials, or evidence showing how spa contributed to customers' wellness in specific ways - can be a powerful tool in this context. Wellness is an holistic approach: complete care for mind body and soul.

A few factors may be considered conducive to creativity and innovation:

Medical Collaboration: To research and develop consumer-specific needs, keeping in mind new trends and technology to meet the ever rising needs of clients.

Creativity and Appeal: Redesign and develop existing and new offerings to consumers, using different and new sales approaches.

Client Communication: Key factor in understanding their requirements, needs and sometimes helps in innovation. Customizing client needs and care is our topmost priority in today's competitive market.

Employee Care and Management: It has a direct impact on client service execution. Motivation and employee management programs are important to optimize results, efficiency and productivity.

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