

# ASIA: MALAYSIA

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## **1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to spa and wellness?**

From a consumer perspective, Malaysia is still a nascent market. Local consumers are looking for results-oriented treatments when it comes to beauty, but not necessarily when it comes to massage or other treatments. Foreign consumers visit Malaysia expecting similar experiences to those they get in Bali or Thailand. From a media perspective, the focus is always on the 'beautiful Asian spa' or the latest exotic treatment or the most recent product release from spa skincare companies. From an industry perspective, the discussion continues to centre around lack of clarity from the government on issues related to industry standards, licensing and foreign labour.

## **2. With the buzz about wellness technologies, how do you see spa and wellness establishments using wellness technologies in your country in the future?**

With an internet penetration rate of around 70 percent and a mobile penetration rate of 140 percent (because many have more than one device), Malaysia is a reasonably developed country in terms of technology. [[http://www.ecommercemilo.com/2014/03/mobile-users-mcommerce-mpayment-malaysia.html#.U-BAw\\_mSzTo](http://www.ecommercemilo.com/2014/03/mobile-users-mcommerce-mpayment-malaysia.html#.U-BAw_mSzTo)]

However, in line with the emergent nature of the wellness industry, wellness technologies, predictably, are underdeveloped. In terms of beauty-related fields, Malaysia has most of the latest technology. However, in terms of broader wellness technologies, I don't see much happening.

### 3. When it comes to wellness tourism, what is happening in your country?

Wellness tourism in Malaysia is still dominated by resort spas largely offering pampering and relaxation. In recent years we have seen a few attempts to create destination wellness facilities, but with only limited success. I believe the lack of success is due mainly to a belief, among both locals and foreigners, that Malaysia isn't able to deliver a high quality destination wellness product. This lack of belief can then be related back to issues of poor management of the wellness industry in general, by both the government and by the industry itself. A lot of time and money has been invested in trying to establish Malaysia as a hub for medical tourism. If this is successful, more general wellness tourism should follow.

### 4. Please provide one sentence that best describes the latest developments in your country for each of these categories:

**Hotel spas:** Services and facilities are generally in line with what you would expect in Asia (albeit absent of any innovation), though lacking in service delivery when compared to other countries in the region.

**Destination spas:** Few and far between, although some resort spas would like to claim that they are true destination spas.

Hot springs spas: Only one of note: <http://www.thebanjaran.com/>

**Wellness living communities:** Often a tag that is applied to increase property prices and almost always more focussed on eco-friendly issues than on wellness.

**Corporate or employee wellness programs:** Slowly gaining some traction, though almost entirely focussed on medical health rather than overall wellness.

### 5. Fast-forward five years and tell us what you think the spa and wellness industry in your country will look like.

If Malaysia is successful in becoming a hub for medical tourism, I believe that the spa and wellness industry will have the opportunity to ride on those coat tails to grow the industry. Success in medical tourism will see a rise in medical spas which have the ability to be profitable businesses, and also the potential for true wellness living projects. Without this,

I don't expect significant development in the country. Resort spas will continue to offer the standard fare. Day spas will emphasize beauty over massage. Development of destination and hot spring spas will remain stagnant.

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