



## Asia: Thailand

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WHAT ARE SOME CHANGES YOU HAVE NOTICED IN YOUR CUSTOMERS THIS PAST YEAR? ARE YOU SEEING ANY NEW REQUESTS FROM CONSUMERS?

In the past year, despite the political and socio-economic challenges that have impacted the industry as a whole, we have noticed certain areas of growth in particular from emerging markets i.e. India, Russia, Middle East and China. In a year of decline, these countries actually increased in terms of room night production, reflecting not only their stronger economic spending power, but also their interest in wellness. Overall, guests are staying longer, and they are now diversifying their needs with stronger spending in areas of anti-aging, rejuvenation, physiotherapy, and in particular how to grow older and yet maintain a good quality of life. This is something we excel at in terms of addressing these needs through our broad range of services and emphasis on educating about wellness and longevity. We have seen more younger children, and baby boomer parents bringing their children along, especially father with daughter/son or mother with son or daughters.

WHAT SECTORS DO YOU SEE ATTRACTING THE MOST INVESTMENT CAPITAL THESE DAYS? WHAT ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE SPA AND WELLNESS ARENA?

Hotel/resort spas have long been the mainstay of the Thai spa industry, and with the continued construction of hotels and resorts across the kingdom this is definitely where most of the investment is going. There has been a significant growth in investment of 'beauty' related businesses, primarily fuelled by dermatologists opening their own 'spa' related businesses, focusing on external beauty.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE LOOKING LIKE FOR SPA AND WELLNESS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Thailand is the largest spa market in the Asia Pacific region, when looking at 'real spas.' If you add in the traditional massage centers and the beauty sectors, other countries may well top the total number. However, the support of the Thai government and the cohesiveness of the private sector in maintaining a professional industry perspective is key to the continued growth and development. Presently, from both the private sector and the government side there are three industry standards under development, each with a very different target sector, and each with its own role. The Thai Spa Association, through its involvement in all three of these standards, is endeavoring to ensure that these standards are appropriate to the industry, and cohesive and uniformly beneficial to the industry, on a local, regional and international level.

The boom in hotel spas is expected to slow somewhat as hotel/resort operators look at the market saturation and query if having a spa is the essential profit centre that it has been in the past. For name brand hotels, yes, it seems to remain an essential element, but some of the more 'boutique' independent operated hotels are now bypassing these outlets.



Also the steady and progressive move away from external beauty to internal beauty is becoming evident in the long established spas, as they continue to evolve their own market positions, and with changing expectations of long standing clients. External beauty for the most part is being left to the more clinical environments (still with a spa edge), as spas are focusing more and more on the body with the face being less important, or perhaps being seen as an area of specialization that is best left to others.

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