



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What is making news in your country?

In the United States spas are exploring a variety of business models and alliances in the wellness arena. Spas are investing in rebranding themselves as vitality, wellness, healing and mind-body centers. Trade Magazines and conferences are highlighting the role of spa in stress reduction, vitality and health.

What is happening in your country when it comes to wellness tourism and/or medical tourism?

Local governments are teaming with business chambers to define the role of medical tourism. One example is Vail, Colorado's Health & Wellness Initiative: "The Initiative plans to have a broad target market with a focus on partnering with like-minded businesses, employers, business and trade associations, consumer organizations, and economic development organizations whose goal is to increase medical groups and meetings and the Vail Valley's brand awareness as a Health & Wellness destination." Additionally in Vail, wellness tourism initiatives are being spearheaded by hotels in concert with local integrative practitioners and non-profits. Both initiatives face the implementation challenge of securing participants for these programs in a town that is not known for "wellness" and whose medical infrastructure is primarily orthopedic focused.

Please give us one sentence to describe the latest development in your country for each of these spa categories:

Hotel Spas – bringing wellness into the room, with Yoga Mats, DVDs and Private Meditation.

Destination Spas –aligning with Integrative Medicine practitioners to build vitality centers.

Hot Spring Spas – growing more sophisticated spa operations and skincare service offerings.

General perception in investing in the spa/wellness?

We see a significant investment in mind-body studios. For those who already have studios, businesses are piloting events and retreats to increase ROI.

Looking back at the past four decades of spa and wellness, what would you consider a "defining" moment?

The "defining" moment for the spa industry is the present moment. There is no better time for spas to invest in their own upgrade and take action directed toward delivering on the true promise of spa and its impact on humanity.

We all know that the United States' health care model is a disease care model. Corporations are receiving government incentives for Corporate Wellness Programs, launched in 2014. Individuals are learning that they must take responsibility for their own wellness.

What's even timelier is science and medical research support programs that lend themselves to spa. Leading hospitals like Mayo Clinic have been documenting wellness programs that include massage services and mindfulness (breath work, meditation, yoga); and validating the impact these programs have on stress, anxiety and depression for their patients. These studies include patients with cancer and heart disease, the top two killers in the United States.

But hospitals in general do not have the space for these programs and are looking to partner or refer to others. Hospitals have identified the spa industry as a potential vehicle to deliver these services but want to ensure that practitioners are well trained to deliver said services.

This provides an opportunity for spa associations and special interest groups to partner with hospitals. For example, non-profit Spa4ThePink aligned with The University of Colorado Hospital to offer Integrated Oncology training for acupuncturists, massage, skin care and yoga professionals. This training was co-developed to bring together medical practitioners with wellness and spa professionals to raise the standard of training for the niche of Oncology, define scope of practice and foster relationships locally.

Additionally, some spas are revamping their menus with words like stress reduction, corporate wellness, nutrition and adding separate mind-body rooms/gyms. But is this approach enough to capture and retain “wellness” market share over the long term?

Spas will need to build from the core spa offering into a whole product. A product, which is integrated and truly augments the core spa offering with the additional elements required to create value and deliver on the promise being made to clients.

Are spas willing to:

- Invest to transform themselves into true wellness centers from the inside out?
- Develop their own corporate wellness program for their employees so that spa employees embody the very lifestyle and values that spas want to teach and provide to others?
- Support education that upgrades spa professional skills to a new mind-body practitioner?
- Study the different approaches between separating mind-body studios from the core offering or integrating them into a simple and innovative offering?

Leading spas will take the time to develop a blueprint, allocate investment resources properly and establish iterative service offerings to explore and expand into the diffusion of wellness innovations and extensions.

The present moment is filled with many opportunities for the spa industry and it will be the actions that are taken in the present moment which determine if this is truly a Defining Moment. What an exciting time!

SUBMITTED BY:

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