

NORTH AMERICA: UNITED STATES

1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to wellness or wellbeing?

We see a “wellness mania” running rampant in the U.S. with the word extending far beyond the historic spa and health resort space and conceptually leap-frogging into everything from consumer packaged goods to clothing and even fast food. Businesses are acting on the rise in available data and creating products, services and experiences with the goal to capitalize (or monetize) consumer demand for all things “well.”

Within the “noise” are some very serious, noble efforts from large pharmaceutical chains such as CVS Health, cool technology apps like HeadSpace.com, and travel and hospitality brands (too many to mention), attempting to cater to a much savvier, U.S. consumer. This consumer spans generations – from millennial or baby boomer – and is simply more conscious and informed about factors affecting his/her personal wellbeing, and the wellbeing of those whom they care about.

In fact, according to the research team at Women’s Marketing, “wellness is the new black” and today’s wellness consumer is largely female – coined “Passionistas” – who share a core belief that “optimal health and wellness is rooted both in mind and body” and seek products, services and experiences that help support the cause. It’s clearly time to welcome her with open arms, but without authenticity and clear points of differentiation to rise above the chatter, do not be surprised if she does not hug you back.

2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think are important developments in your country for each of the following:

Spas: Are being put to the test as demand for wellness-related facilities, programs and treatments extend beyond their four walls.

Wellness Tourism: Is outpacing growth in traditional tourism sectors, and is producing higher-yield tourists; those who are willing to spend more money to simply travel well.

Wellness Living Communities/Real Estate: Is on the rise with pioneers moving beyond the health of buildings to consider both VOI (value on investment) and ROI (return on investment) for both residents and developers alike.

Beauty: Is now considered a key part of personal wellbeing, particularly for millennials who attribute looking good to feeling good.

Fitness: Is as much about technology as it is about movement, and smart companies are working hard to connect the two in order to sustain long-term relationships with their consumers.

Fashion: Must increasingly cater to well-minded consumers who consider brands like Lululemon Athletica to be status symbols akin to those of Louis Vuitton or Prada.

3. How would you describe the state of workplace wellness in your country?

I believe the state of workplace wellness in the United States is undergoing a period of “reinvention.” Early adopters who spearheaded programs to simply “check the box,” or who were solely motivated to reduce a company’s healthcare costs over time, are grappling with investments that have since underperformed. And forward-thinking companies are contemplating how to move the conversation beyond wellness-related programs and facilities (i.e., what’s offered to whom and where) to one that speaks to overall company culture, employee engagement and productivity.

I also believe that the market is finally ripe for meaningful dialogue among companies and providers, no matter how big or small. Today, the workplace wellness vernacular is more common place, and established spa and wellness providers can now connect with companies on a local level to identify mutually beneficial solutions to help keep employees happy and well.

4. What has been the general attitude about investing in spa/wellness in your country in 2015? Specific examples?

In a nutshell, there is a resurgence in the willingness to invest in the development of physical establishments, as well as the creation of wellness-related products and services. For example, we’ve seen major, multi-branded hotel chains like Starwood

Hotels & Resorts and Marriott International with strong hotel development pipelines, much like those witnessed pre-recession. And every day, there's a new mobile app or website promising content, tools and resources to help support time-starved consumers with healthful tricks and tips.

What's most compelling to me is the "budding" understanding that there are qualitative as well as quantitative reasons to invest in the greater spa and wellness community, and a seeming willingness from investors to consider how the two should go hand-in-hand.

5. Whose responsibility is it to create a well world?

Without question, we have a shared responsibility to create a well world. It will take business leaders and followers, managers and employees, educators and administrators, parents and children, non-profits and for-profits, residents and visitors, community members and developers, investors and operators, manufacturers and service providers, capitalists and socialists, realists and dreamers - and everyone in between - to elevate our collective conscience to build a greater quality of life for all of our planet's citizens.

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