Engage the change

The Indonesian Island of Bali hosted the 2011 Global Spa Summit. European Spa reports back on the highlights and hottest topics delivered to spa leaders at the sizzling event...
[Report by Sarah Ward | Photography by Dugay Shegay]

There was a real sense of ‘coming of age’ at the 2011 Global Spa Summit (GSS). This, the fifth GSS, sold out to a record audience of 275 invitation-only, industry leaders – representing 35 countries – who travelled to Bali to participate in this premier industry event. It’s high-calibre guestlist of top-level executives from the spa, hospitality/hotel, wellness, product, fitness and medical sectors came together to share territorial intelligence and the latest trends influencing spas and wellness services, preventive health developments and health tourism.

The Summit’s core mission to ‘join together and shape the future of spa and wellness’ was self-evident throughout three action-packed days. Bali, known as the ‘Spa Capital’ of the Indonesian archipelago, also proved to be an inspirational backdrop, giving delegates the opportunity to appreciate this island’s unique spa heritage.

Action-packed agenda

The Bali International Convention Center at the Laguna Resort & Spa at Nusa Dua Bali was an excellent venue for three intensive days of business networking, namely: back-to-back seminars, keynote addresses, interactive networking sessions and concurrent breakout sessions – across a myriad of topics. For delegates, it was a challenge to keep pace with the blistering daily schedule, which presented countless opportunities to engage, learn and exchange vital business information.

Aptly entitled ‘Engage the Change: The Customer: The Money: The Future’, the 2011 agenda was the result of a year of intensive preparation by the GSS Board. The formula was also spiced up with new topics to reflect shifts in the global economic landscape, changes in consumer spending and, of course, the effects of more recent world events such as the Middle Eastern uprisings and the ongoing crisis at Japan’s Fukushima Daichi nuclear plant.

Special mention should be given here to this year’s GSS’s expert co-chairs, who hosted the faser details, namely: Anne McCall Wilson, Vice President Spa, Fairmont Raffles Hotels International, Canada; Jeff Matthews, President & COO, Mandarin Spa, Indonesia and Sue Ellis, President, SpaFinder Inc., US.

Day 1: The Customer

Highlights for the first day, which focused on ‘The Customer’, were numerous. However, an insightful keynote address by Kate Anckert, of the UK-based trends analysis and forecasting company GDR Creative Intelligence, set the bar. Her entertaining presentation revealed a host of trends and technological developments set to change the buying behaviour of health-conscious consumers.

At one end of the spectrum, she homed in on a growing consumer ‘need state’ for brands and services that deliver self-actualisation to counter the pressures of modern life. At the other end of the spectrum, Anckert outlined an explosion in revolutionary Nanotechnology and smart mobile technology, including health monitoring apps to improve sleep, monitor heart rates and even check for STDs – all at the touch of a smart phone screen!

Anckert’s key ‘takeaway’ was to ask delegates to consider reaching out to new customers through the power of video streaming as a key element of their future marketing strategy. She impressed upon the audience to look for new ways to incorporate powerful, expert video content on their websites.

Day 2: The Money

Day 2 focused on ‘The Money’, offering a wealth of financial advice to help delegates navigate unchartered economic waters. Speakers threw light on wellness and leisure opportunities in emerging markets such as India, China and Indonesia.
Global vision

Future fit, co-Chair 2011

The year’s Summit was very rich in content, here are some of my key takeaways:

- Change is everywhere—and it is accelerating. Some changes are political such as the Arab uprisings and globalization has not only reshuffled the economic map, it has also reshuffled the geopolitical scene. The world is a smaller, yet more complex, place.
- Technology is transforming the way we live, work, and interact with each other. The rise of social media, mobile devices, and online platforms is changing how we communicate and do business.
- New business models are emerging, such as crowdsourcing, which is disrupting traditional industries and creating new opportunities.
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Day 2: The Future

The third day of the Summit consisted of a roundtable discussion on the future of the spa industry. The discussion focused on the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, as well as the innovative solutions being developed to address these challenges.

Kaplan’s prescient ability to predict the future of the spa industry was on full display throughout the Summit.

Highlights included “Where has all the money gone?” expertly analyzed by Mary Tabachnick, President, and the new concept of “Spa and Wellness Modalities.”

The Summit also featured a panel discussion on the future of the spa industry, with experts from various fields sharing their insights and predictions.

Friedman, Medical Director, Barney & Barney and Founder, SuperSmartHealth, U.S., received a standing ovation from the conference attendees.

The biggest ‘takeaway’ from this year’s event was the engagement of the delegates themselves. The Summit 2012 provided fresh ideas and cemented new industry friendships—of which all of which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on shaping the future.

Eat, Pray, Love

My personal highlights? Time to relax on the memorable pre-GSS retreat with spa friends in the beautiful surroundings of Chilled out COMO Shambala (a spa health retreat that deserves its world-class reputation). Time to share ideas (thank you Sharon Kolka of Gwirgina Lifestyle Retreat for hosting a memorable lunchtime discussion on making that all-important emotional connection with spa guests). Time to celebrate at the unforgettable Indonesian Gala Night (hosted by The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, represented by Minister H.E. Jero Wacik, SE). Time to play ‘Hey Jude’ as part of the impromptu GSS Balinese Orchestra (thank you to CG Funk of Massage Envy and George Yim of Dragonfly).

Finally, time to be reminded to return one day to the spa capital of Indonesia, at Minister H.E. Jero Wacik, SE, told GSS delegates, in the famous words of novelist Elizabeth Gilbert: ‘Eat, Pray and be sure to return to Bali to strengthen your Love’.

Above global view, left: Delegates gathered for the Opening Night of the Summit, Anne McCall Wilson, co-Chair 2012 (left); Hwang Nue, Sook Hyun Kim, Yong Name, Soon Hee Joseh and Mark Cutler.

Global Spa Summit 2012 announced

Richard Susskind, 2012 co-Chair

"On behalf of the GSS Board, I am delighted to announce that the Global Spa Summit and the Asian Institute of Spas, Wellness and Beauty are pleased to announce the Global Spa Summit 2012, which will be held at The Alpina Hotel, Aspen, Colorado, USA June 4-6, 2012. While a theme for the 2012 Summit is still being finalized, this unique and timely partnership promises to attract key senior executives, including leaders and policy makers in the dynamic exchange of ideas on tangible solutions, opportunities and challenges that will impact on global health, spa and wellness industries."