

Spa and wellness trends in tourism



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The Impact of the Spa and Wellness Trends into the Tourism Industry

Introduction

1. 1 Introduction

1. 1. 1 Growth of Spa and Wellness

Spa and Wellness had become the main territory of wealthy women wanting to lose weight and look good by the mid-20th century. Its main focus was on prevention, healthy lifestyles, fitness, spirituality and relaxation.

Numbers of people use spas more and more frequently to fulfill some of their most important lifestyle pursuits. Nowadays spa experience covers not only medical and spiritual programs, but also outdoor adventures and exotic travel. These spas are located in every global region, including Africa, the Middle East, and the former Eastern Bloc.

The spa has turned into a popular culture, influencing everything from fashion and cosmetics, to architecture, home décor, and also cuisine.

Propelled by the growing wellness trend worldwide, the spa industry is booming. European travelers' number one consideration when making plans for their holidays is whether there is spa access.

The growth of spa facilities and increased awareness worldwide has led to spa-inspired beauty products, as well as the opening and blossoming of groundbreaking spas and resort all over the world.

1. 1. 2 History of Spa and Wellness

Spa- going has been practiced for many thousands of years dating back from the Mesopotamians, Egyptians and Minoans, to the Greeks and Romans and later, the Ottomans, Japanese and Western Europeans.

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Some say the word “spa” actually derives from the Latin verb “spagere” - to pour forth. Other say the origin of the word “spa” comes from the Belgian town of Spa, known since Roman times for its baths. Other even claim that “spa” may be an acronym for the Latin phrase “sanitas per aquas”, which means “health through water”.

1. 1. 3 Definition of Spa

The word Spa and the idea behind it derive from the time of the Roman Empire when a big number of soldiers tried to find a solution to heal their wounds.

They looked for hot wells and used it as a kind of bathtub to be able to treat their aching and pain on their bodies, these places were named “aquae” and the bathing treatment “Sanus Per Aquam” (SPA), which means, health by or through water.

After this incident SPA became famous throughout Europe starting in Belgium where it all started, from mineral water, to sea water and marine substances.

Even until today, the ideas of these healing forms are the basis of the spa culture worldwide and hydrotherapy is seen as its major highlight.

Well-being, as well as allowing you to relax, reflect, revitalise, and rejoice is the main importance in Spa.

“Mens sana in Corpore sano”

“A healthy Spirit lives in a Healthy Body”

1. 1. 4 The West

In 500 BC, the Greeks indulged in a variety of social baths, which included hot air baths. In 25 BC, the Roman Emperor designed and created the first, so called, "thermae", which is a large-scale spa. Each subsequent emperor then built something new to this thermae, which made the people grow fonder of these baths. They progressively grew into large entertainment complexes offering not only sports, but also restaurants, and other various types of baths. After such baths, the next visit was to three increasingly warmer quarters, where the body was soaked, rubbed in with oils, massaged and finally exfoliated. The practice would end with a cold plunge in ice water.

Besides the Roman combination of hot and cold baths, spa traditions kept growing spreading itself all over the world.

For example in Japan, "" its first "onsen" (hot spring), and later the first "ryoken" (inns) which were built, offered exceptional food, accommodations, Zen gardens, outdoor baths as well as indoor soaking tubs."(<http://www.topspahotels.com>)

In Finland saunas began appearing in 1000 A. D., inducting a rich Finnish spa-going tradition, which includes a treatment of sweating, as well as icy lake plunges, and to top it off plenty of beer or vodka. Nowadays these procedures still exists.

" And also the Ottomans were famous for their arched and beautifully mosaic hammam, the ultimate example is the Baths of Roxelana, which was built in 1556 and were equipped with the massive towering steam rooms, even containing private washing quarters, and extensive massage platforms.

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Roxelana became an important social center, mainly for Muslim women”
([http://www. topspahotels. com](http://www.topspahotels.com))

After these times, Spas became famous all around, starting in Europe, namely Belgium, Germany, and England. It even stretched to the United States of America, because in 1986 New York opened the first travel agency specializing in spa vacations. Since that time, the spa industry has grown from a baby egg business into a booming billion dollar global industry.

In the 19th century, Europe’s great spas were destinations for wealthy people, who went there to relax and rejuvenate. Until today, water treatments are still considered the heart of the spa experience in Europe.

1. 2 Backgrounds

This research attempts to examine strengths, threats, risks as well as opportunities and challenges Spa and Wellness Industries have to face, concerning on-going trends of the West and how they are influenced by Asian countries, as well as the changes of values and attitudes of tourists. Many people think or believe that Spa derives from Asia, due to all the marketing advertisements promotions and so on, but what they fail to realize is that, spa has also been in the west for a long period of time dating back centuries ago. Some tourists go to spa and wellness facilities to pamper themselves, relax and ease their minds as well as to get away from the hustle and bustle of their daily life style, but what they do not take into consideration, is that spas can cause more damage to their health, if they have specific pains or injuries which could worsen their condition.

1. 3 Research Objectives

The study can be used to have a better understanding of the Spa and Wellness Industry and the needs of consumers. It also provides strategies on how to improve Spa facilities. The specific objectives of this study are:

- to understand the spa and wellness market and the key factors
- to identify various treatments, including their benefits and risks
- to investigate requirements and necessities of spa- goers
- to recognize top spa trends that are booming
- to develop opportunities on how Spa facilities can progress in the future

1. 4 Research Problems and Questions

This research is trying to clearly respond to several questions that might be raised from this topic:

1. What are the benefits and risks of massage therapies and what could be done to minimize the risks at spa centers?
2. How did the value and attitude of tourists change, also concerning their age?
3. How was the West influenced by Asian countries, concerning the Spa and wellness industry?
4. What are top spa trends and what could be their opportunities and challenges?
5. What effect does the Spa and wellness industry have on men, since the majority of spa- goers are women?

1. 5 Importance of Significance of the study

Hotel industries as well as spa and wellness facilities could benefit from this study, because it points out facts like for example risks that have to be looked in further when running a spa - making sure water supply is in order etc. This study also states the mentalities tourists have when it comes to their values and attitudes concerning spas and furthermore how men nowadays are more interested in going to spa facilities. This could benefit these industries to change, promote or add extra facilities for men or even open spas for men only.

The importance of this study is to make sure hotels and spa facilities are aware of all these changes, challenges as well as risks and how they can benefit from the stated facts and solutions for improvement.

1. 6 Scope and Delimitation of the study

A major weakness of this research, which was beyond the control of the researcher, was that there was a big time constrain. There were also not that many plausible literatures available. Furthermore there are various websites and opinions of the correct definition of spa and wellness, and lack of statistics.

1. 7 Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Framework

This research is written in a way to explain different objectives in harmonic and well associated sentences to carry out the researcher's intentions clearly.

It explains how all the above listed points in Figure 1 relate to the Spa and wellness Industry. It describes the popular treatments with their risks and

benefits and also states the factors that are important to a human body to feel at ease and be in a relaxed state of mind. Furthermore, the Alpine Wellness is explained and how Spas in the West are influenced by other Asian countries not only concerning their therapies but more in terms of colours, lighting, décor and ambiance. Moreover the perception of consumers concerning their values and attitudes are listed and how men are more and more becoming a part of the Spa and wellness industry. Lastly, trends of this industry are explained which also goes hand in hand with opportunities and challenges they might face in the future.

II Review of Related Literature:

2. 1 Alpine Wellness

Before, wellness was only associated with well-being and relaxation.

However, now wellness is also connected with health. That is why the Alpine region is especially suited for this type of wellness, because Alpine remedies, like fresh air, pure and healthy spring water, the mild, invigorating climate, mountain freshness, herbs, stone oil combined with traditional knowledge and a balanced life has meant Alpine wellness has become a new trend, also with its interior furnishing, alpine cuisine and different atmosphere.

That is why today Alpine Wellness is a special form of wellness offering hay baths to herbal saunas, natural applications and products, surrounded by South Tyrol's, Austria, fascinating mountain landscape.

“ Alpine Wellness refers to nature, culture and life quality in the area. It displays an original charm of the alpine environment, which makes the special sensuality of the Alps a unique and exclusive experience.”

Therefore the Alps are promoted worldwide as one of the most attractive and effective regions for wellness. (<http://www.alpinewellness.com>)

2.2 Facial Treatments

A facial deeply cleanses and maintains the skin by exfoliating dead skin cells. The goal is to maintain smooth, clear, well-hydrated skin. It's the second most popular spa service after the massage.

Trying to stop our natural ageing process is not quite possible yet, but we can help our skins age with just a few simple steps. We need a lot of fresh air, enough sleep, relaxation, lots of water and a diet of fruits and vegetables so our skin stays free from blemishes.

Nevertheless, there are companies that have even come up with gadgets, which can slow down premature aging.

“ Slendertone, the British company behind the homonymous body trainers that tone the silhouette through electric stimulation of the muscles, has released a corresponding product for the face on Sept 9. As part of a 12-week plan, the Slendertone Face is supposed to help stimulate the muscles of the face through pads that, attached to the skin, receive small electric shocks” (<http://www.sun2surf.com/article.cfm?id=38421>)

A facial is given by a licensed esthetician with special training in skin care; it involves a few basic steps: cleansing, skin analysis, exfoliation, massage, extraction of blackheads and other impurities, and application of products targeted to your skin type (dry, oily, mixed, sensitive, and mature).

On the contrary of the West, the tropical Asian women have a head start on giving their skin all kinds of treatments, because the basic steps have always

been a part of their traditional life style for centuries. They have easy access to the ingredients they need for the preparation of their facial treatments, because they can harvest them right off their botanical garden.

The West does not have the same opportunities as Asians have and therefore use a night cream or neck cream and new oxygen creams.

Asians on the other hand used and still use raw plant extract to get rid off dead skin cells, fight acne, replenish moisture or achieve an SPF.

That is why a lot of women gather themselves in Asian spas, where they get traditional treatments, without any chemical input, but still giving them the softest skin and a very relaxed state of mind.

They will most probably have their faces treated with some ingredients, which they will also be able to find in their refrigerator at home.

Examples for these treatments are:

- Traditional honey- cucumber facial (honey, lime, cucumber)
- Traditional facial (corn, rice powder, cucumber juice, carrot juice.)

2.3 Factors of a complete well-being

“ Although our bodies detoxify naturally every day most of us lead busy lives that make it impossible for our bodies to eliminate these toxins completely, which leads to a build-up in our systems.”

(<http://www.mirrorreaderoffers.co.uk>)

Therefore the most important factors for a complete well-being are not only healthy and steady weight or solid relationships, but most importantly the

rejection of tobacco, sparing of alcohol, managing stress and having a high knowledge level.

Once one has fulfilled all of the points mentioned above, one will feel at ease, relaxed and out of worries, making it possible for a person to have a piece of mind.

2. 3. 1 Accommodation

The accommodation of a Spa and wellness facility plays a very important role. The wellness hotels have to be located in a very heartwarming relaxing area, away from all the traffic, noise, pollution etc., where the guests have to be able to feel at ease and get their desired treatment in a dimmed room with a relaxing atmosphere and warm colors.

For the guests it is also important to have a good choice of nutrition. The hotel has to offer light, healthy food, which also tastes excellent.

They have to have a stunning, breathtaking view from their room, where they can watch and observe the scenery while having a glass of wine on the balcony.

Of course facilities such as, swimming pools, whirlpools, sports club, fitness center, sauna, steam room, beauty salon, hairdresser, health center, bar and nightclub have to be put at the customers disposal as well.

But of course wellness is not enough. The main relaxation of a guest to fulfill his or her stay is, hospitality, comfort, a homey ambiance, personal care and many more comforting factors which are food for the soul.

2. 4 Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is seen as the oldest methods of healing, nearly 4000 years old. It is often referred to the use of many techniques to the muscular

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structure and soft tissues of the body. These therapies are usually done by using the hand, but other body parts such as elbows, forearms, or feet can be put into action as well. One applies fix or movable pressure, rocking, vibration, holding, kneading and compression. These massage therapies are a positive influence to the overall health and well-being of the person.

Therapies are for example *Acupressure* (using fingers or even toes to press key points on the surface of the skin to stimulate the body's natural ability to heal itself) and *Acupuncture* (stimulates key points of the body by inserting needles)

2. 4. 1 Benefits of Massage therapy

There are many beneficial aspects of a massage therapy to a human body.

For example it relaxes the whole body, by relieving tired and aching muscles, at the same time it also loosens tight muscles, and it also increases flexibility and range of motion and diminishes chronic pain. Additionally it calms the nervous system, lowers blood pressure and heart rate. Moreover it enhances skin tone and assists in recovery from injuries and illness and strengthens the immune system. Furthermore this kind of therapy can reduce tension headaches and mental stress as well as improve concentration, promote restful sleep and lastly aid in mental relaxation.

They can relieve muscle tension and pain in people who suffer from chronic back pain, or who have had an injury from sports or a car accident.

“ Mental Benefits of Massage Therapy

- Fosters peace of mind
- Promotes a relaxed state of mental alertness

- Helps relieve mental stress
- Improves ability to monitor stress signals and respond appropriately
- Enhances capacity for calm thinking and creativity
- Emotional Benefits
- Satisfies needs for caring nurturing touch
- Fosters a feeling of well-being
- Reduces levels of anxiety
- Creates body awareness
- Increases awareness of mind-body connection”

(http://www.holisticonline.com/Massage/mas_benefits.htm)

2.5 Spas for men

According to the International Spa Association men are going to Spas more often, not just to get a sports massage and manicures, but also trying out new things, like cocoa butter rubdowns, body wraps etc.

Men look for treatments that relieve shaving irritation or something that soothes the skin from dry weather conditions.

They want to be given the impression that they do not have to be in the same room as a bunch of women getting their nails done etc. so they look for a Spa that offers private rooms and other facilities like hot tubs and waiting rooms.

Nowadays there are even Men only Spas like in New York City, the Nickel Spa for Men or in Washington D. C, Grooming Lounge and the Absolute Spa at the Fairmont Hotel in Vancouver.

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More over, according to a Malaysian Newspaper *The Sun* (28/09/2009), nowadays there is even extra nail polish only for men, referred to as “ male polish”, which is supposedly to be the next big thing. “ Often used for filling and strengthening nails, there are also first product lines such as the one by hip Berlin label Uslu Airlines that focus on aesthetics.” These nail polishes for men are ranging from RM 14 - RM 105 each.

“ Knowing that men’s skin requires specific care, Nugeno Men has introduced an ultimate skincare range formulated especially for the modern men on-the-go. As healthy skin is the most important element of a great looking face, skincare solution is made easy to achieve and critical that one can do it at home on a daily fuss-free basis” (<http://www.sun2surf.com/section.cfm?id=24>)

2. 6 Body Treatments

Body treatments are basically a “ facial” for the whole body. It is just as important to wash and hydrate the skin on the body, as it is the skin of the face.

Various Spa centers provide a wide variety of essential oils or scrub materials, such as orange blossom, peppermint salt glow, cucumber salt glow and many more.

After the body scrub, one might want to make an additional body mask, which involves an application of mud, algae or seaweed over the entire body and afterwards wrapped in a thermal blanket, which is a treatment that stimulates the metabolic system, immediately fastening to carry away waste products.

“ Another famous treatment is the so called “ body wrap” , which originally was a treatment where bandages or plastic wraps was tightly wrapped around the body in order to induce weight loss through a process called vasodilatation.”

([http://www. populararticles. com/category160. html](http://www.populararticles.com/category160.html))

. Now it is seen as a treatment used to treat or prevent cellulite. Afterwards the body wrap usually ends with an application of lotion. This treatment is also called a “ body cocoon” or “ body mask”

2. 6. 1 Benefits and threats of Body Treatments

The benefits of a body wrap is to get rid off the body toxins through metabolic stimulation and softening the skin as well afterwards, by applying Shea butter and rich lotions which are hydrating treatments.

On the other hand, there are different threats when it comes to a body scrub, for example one should not expect a body wrap to be amassage. You can get both treatments. Another common threat would be, that if a person has claustrophobia, body scrub, wrap or mask, may not be the right treatment.

Furthermore one might be left alone during the treatment, so if there is uncomfoting feeling due to that, then one should ask before booking the service.

Yet, although there are some threats, there are also various positive aspects when looking at a body treatment. They are proven effective and safe for use in increasing blood circulation, improving appearance of skin, hair, and nails, as well as supporting the immune system functions, furthermore enhancing

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removal of toxins and waste products, also increasing the healing rate of soft tissue and finally helping relieve of discomfort and pain.

“ Stress reduction and relief, soothing sore joints and muscles, and simply feeling better about oneself.”

(<http://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/features/spas-the-risks-and-benefits>)

2. 7 Risks of Spas

According to Elizabeth Heubeck, while spas promise to restore, refresh, and renew – and some offer even more explicit health claims – they generally don't warn you of the potential risks involved, which do exist.

Certain spa treatments can worsen chronic and acute health conditions. All spas can establish risks to the general public, especially when operated in a state of uncleanliness.

One can never tell how clean a spa's water or supply is. But one can try to minimize the risk of becoming infected by contaminated water or supplies.

(<http://www.webmd.com/skin-beauty/guide/risks-of-spa-treatments>)

Poor water quality can transform into a breeding ground for microbes or germs, which could lead to skin boils from a chain of unhygienic whirlpool footbaths, which are used as part of a pedicure treatment.

“ A report released by the CDC in 2004 showed that more than half of all public hot tub spas in the US violate public health safety standards. Of the 5,000 spas inspected, 57% breached at least one safety violation. Poor water quality was the most common violation. ”

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(<http://www.littlespeck.com/content/health/CTrendsHealth-051218.htm>)

Some people find it extremely relaxing to sit in a sauna, a wooden room infused with dry heat that supposedly eliminates toxins as it opens pores and promotes sweating. But if you have the flu, the cold, a respiratory infection, or an asthma flare-up, you should not be sitting in the sauna.

2. 7. 1 What can you do to reduce your risk of infection at spas?

One has to lurk around the spa area before getting some kind of treatment as well as observe the spa for general cleanliness and also listen to the people who have been there before (word of mouth).

It is recommended to bring the own equipment to avoid the threat of contamination, when asking for special treatments.

One should also be very careful if there are any open cuts or wounds on the body, one should cancel the appointment until they have healed, because any open area of the skin can stimulate infection.

But knowing the risks that pertain to you and carefully judging the cleanliness of a spa before making an appointment, it can take a long time to ensure one's safety and satisfaction.

” If one is not sure about a certain treatment, which might affect one's wellbeing, then one should consult a doctor first.”

(<http://www.littlespeck.com/content/health/CTrendsHealth-051218.htm>)

2. 8 How the West is influenced by Asia

The interior designs of the western modernity are the influences of the Asian culture, an example of that would be the colour pink, which plays a big role in it.

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The best example for this is the “ Yi Spa in Berlin”. Since 2006 the modern Spa with an Asian flare seduces its customers in absolute relaxation. On 130 square meters diverse far eastern healing methods are applied. The team is led by three Thai women with the motto of “ We know the way to 7th heaven”. Asian massage arts like baths, packages, and peelings and so on are provided with natural products, relaxing music, small snacks and exotic drinks for long lasting stress reduction.

The hectic big city jungle immediately recedes after entering a wellness oasis. Slate, stone and dark wood in combination with magenta lures one to let him or her be spoiled from head to toe by such a peaceful atmosphere.

The western people who have been to Asian countries are inspired by the beautiful surroundings and therefore remember or look forward to their relaxing, enchanting and far eastern vacation experience.

One Problem that is faced is that there are various Chinese herbal pharmacies in the West, which is living proof of the crossover between east and west. These pharmacies are usually run by western biologists and supply mostly to non-Asians, where they get Chinese medical diagnosis and are prescribed herbal prescriptions, which they bring to their house and make up into a tea.

The only problem is that very often there is a language and cultural difficulty, which prevents customers from coming into such kind of shops.

There are differences as well as similarities of the philosophies between Eastern and Western medical models. The biggest difference in philosophy between them is how each sees the body. Western medicine looks upon the

body as being very mechanistic. In former times the beginning of the scientific study of the body through autopsy and the scientific method states that the man's physical body is separate from his soul.

“ Traditional Chinese Medicine dates back to nearly 5000 years. It views the body as an ecosystem, a garden within a garden. Their philosophy comes from Taoist teachings and is one of integration and balance. They believe in a life force called Qi, which flows through the body giving life energy. When the flow of Qi is disrupted the body becomes out of balance.

A diagnosis in Traditional Medicine differs from the Western medicine. The western people go to a doctor and complain about certain illnesses or pains. Afterwards a practitioner formulates a diagnosis and treatment of the symptoms. They believe that diseases develop from established causes, which are then treated by more or less fixed protocols.”

(<http://www.uwosh.edu/eap/updates/docs/Fall%202001%20Vol.%205%202.doc>)

Whereas, the Chinese relies on the three basic methods of diagnosis, namely:

Tounge

- Pulse.
- Patterns

2. 9 Trends – Why do people go to visit Spas?

The trend to wellness is the product of various overall social trends.

More and more people have the opportunity nowadays of decision-making-

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which was unthinkable in former times, where they were forced to follow certain political, economical or social statuses. A few examples of the changes are the age of getting married is increasing, and the education nowadays takes longer and a lifetime of learning is postulated.

They also feel that they are responsible for their own health and therefore are ready to change their lifestyle for it. They would like to stay in shape and also at the same time away from any possible diseases. It has been proven that people with high blood pressure, blood sugar or cholesterol have a higher chance of getting ill. Therefore more and more people have the necessity to improve these risk factors by having a wide interest in exercise and nutrition.

Exercise and nutrition is also part of getting old. Wide ranges of older people want to have a longer life and therefore there is a connection between the increasing life expectancy and the wellness trend. Here in particular we find a high interest in healthy nutrition, relaxation- and concentration techniques and also food supplements (Vitamins, trace elements etc.)

Women have more and more influence in social development. The increasing educational level and the growing participation of women in the workforce lead to their having a higher salary and higher influence in politics and economy. In Austria respectively Germany, women bring as much money home as men.

Women are the one that show more interest in these matters. Fitness and health magazines are mostly read by women, it is more likely for them to change their lifestyle to a healthier one.

However Wellness is not only a trend for women. A lot of men are starting to take more interest in it as well and will – in some degree- grow stronger in the future.

Spiritual tourism adds to this education of people seeking for a meaning while on vacation. The increasing individualism of our society and the loss of common traditions have combined to expand the need to find something deeper and more meaningful.

Bookstores have a lot of literature about self-healing, Buddhism or esoteric subjects. That is why more and more people are also starting to use their holidays to look for a new kind of inner peace.

Spiritual tourism has become one of the fastest growing segments in the travel industry worldwide; even it might be one of the oldest forms of tourism. Examples for this are Muslims traveling to Mecca, or Sikhs visiting the Golden Temple and Christians and Jews visiting the Holy Land.

2. 9. 1 Top Spa Trends

One trend is the Healthy Sleep at the Spa. With sleep comes exercise, nutrition and stress management. Hotels and resorts will put greater importance on creating ideal sleep environments, by minimal light and sound, aromatherapy, and ultra-relaxing spa treatments.

Also Detox at the Spa became a trend. As culture continues to discover more “toxins” – such as stress, environmental pollution etc, Spas look for more people to turn to spas for a range of detox solutions, which usually includes relaxation, all-organic diets, sweating, exercise, steams and saunas.

The next trend is Spa Retreats at Resort Spas. For years destination spas have offered “ specialty weeks” in yoga, sexual health, or medical concerns such as quitting smoking. Now resorts and hotels are getting into the retreat business, adding specialty programs or special accommodations that appeal to their past guests.

Another trend is Medical Tourism. Western people are travelling to global destinations, often in beautiful, culturally rich Asian countries like Bangkok, South Africa and India, where treatments are more affordable than in their own countr