



Spa, health and well-being

Dr. Gerald Huber offers an insider's view of the spa world, examining trends and growth in the industry



by Dr. Gerald Huber | July 4, 2010



Health remains mankind's greatest asset. In times of crisis, we need to hold onto our health under especially stressful conditions at a time when our spending is likely to become even more selective.

The spa - an acronym for 'Sanus Per Aquam', meaning 'health by water' - is modern day's answer to many of our stress-related problems.

Its not surprising then that spa customers or guests are becoming more demanding, getting more and more selective and insisting on more than simple beauty treatments and short-lasting pampering.

This is where health and wellness facilities that can offer visitors a tangible added value, on top of a simple luxurious holiday, can distinguish themselves and create guest loyalty.

Through this two-pronged approach to wellness and leisure, a new form of hospitality emerges where holiday and holistic health for body, mind and soul are combined in a clever and cross-supportive concept.

If you look at profit figures during the last few years, many conventional hotels have seen a substantial profit decrease, whereas spa destinations have largely remained stable.

Meanwhile resorts with a strong holistic health approach have even seen an increase in both occupancy and revenue per available room [RevPAR - a performance indicator used by the hotel industry to measure year-on-year revenue growth and loss].



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A holistic spa should not only be seen as an isolated profit centre. The spa has to be designed as the sales motor of a wider project, which can influence the guest booking behavior in terms of encouraging longer stays and increased customer loyalty.

This positively influences the overall project turnover in regards to room rates and occupancy, on top of the direct spa turnover generated by treatment fees, product retail and membership fees.

Get all the ingredients right and you find an incredibly high return on investment.

Conceptual success parameters

In order for a spa-design company like Schletterer to maximize the overall project profitability via the spa's functional concept design, certain key parameters need to be ascertained.

For example, the guest structure (leisure or business, couples or singles, nationality mix, lifestyle and spending power) and the number of spa guests (resulting from the hotel typology, the number of hotel rooms, the minimum/average/maximum occupancy rate, the average staying time – in combination with the external membership potential) are crucial factors to consider.

The more luxurious a hotel strives to be, the higher is the demand for unique and fully individualised solutions in regards to both design and functionalities, in order to create a really unique selling proposition.

Traditional spa design was often based on simple pampering treatments, but modern and holistic spas have to follow latest trends in regards to aesthetics and sophisticated health.

Nowadays, through the use of medically proven technologies, spa companies are applying sophisticated health beneficial ritual experiences and new technologies such as our signature 'Holistic Cocooning' by *inviton*.

To use our own philosophy as an example, over the last decades we have developed an in-depth knowledge of functional flow and content, so that our designs are able to cope with the increased demands of the international client.

We base our designs on the theory that 'design follows functionality' and the demand has changed over the last few years into multifunctional rooms, to economise on space and maximize the range of treatments available for guests.

For example, one treatment facility can offer a selection of different treatment options to widen the treatment menu or to enable room-booking flexibility.



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Design trends

When Schletterer develops a unique and innovative spa approach, we consider the prevalent trends and customer demands in our design solution:

- Combination of traditional cultural therapies and modern medical know-how
- Rituals where treatments are combined with relaxing, inspiring and refreshing experiences
- Contact with nature – use of natural features within the spa design
- Smart combination of different materials – wood with steel, water with fire, glass with grass, hot with cold elements etc – all to create an atmosphere of well-being
- Fascinating lighting solutions – flexible lighting that can change according to the mood and temperament of guests
- ‘All senses’ approach – combination of sight and touch experiences, together with sound, scent and taste

When a spa room is designed we look at the trends of today but also take into account the future upcoming trends to prevent it from quickly falling behind the times.

The key to a successful design is that it not only fulfills the current fashion but also sets a unique trend of its own.

Providing a basic room design with flexible multimedia features and an additional touch of trendy accessories allows the design to easily evolve with upcoming trends without the need for a complete refurbishment every couple of years.

To keep our trend-setting market leadership in regards to new materials and state-of-the-art technology, we work closely with universities, engineers, physicians and therapists as well as specialists within the fields of safety, lighting, water hygiene and energy saving.

In the field of innovative equipment design we are quite proud of our own research centre by inviion, Schletterer's most innovative equipment solution provider.

So why should investors, and indeed governments, think about pouring their cash into the spa industry?

Holistic spas treat guests for complete mental and physical health – for a healthy balance between body, mind and soul – and therefore for holistic wellness shining from the inside out.

Therefore, capital investments into health generate long-term profitability and stability for the entire economic cycle worldwide.

ABOUT

Dr. Gerald Huber is the regional director, Middle East for Schletterer - The Wellness & SPA Company LLC.

His vast experience in health and hospitality allowed him to establish Schletterer's regional office in Dubai in 2005, after earlier receiving a research award from the University of Innsbruck in his native Austria for his doctoral thesis on building innovations.



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