

General Session: A Look at the Japanese Spa Industry

Tuesday, May 22nd

10:00AM – 10:30AM

Empire Room

Scribe: Marina Pires and Fransisco Cunha

Presenter: **Tomonori Maruyama**, Chief Researcher, Research Institute, Mitsui Knowledge Industry Co. Ltd., Japan

Today, every luxury hotel in Japan has spa facilities to survive and compete in the market. Japan has amazingly advanced skills to dig the ground and make a spring bath. Japanese developed some unique spas. Using the Japanese volcanic stone beds, is an example of that. The spa-related market, such as the wellness and relaxation market, is growing very fast. The spa industry is growing fast and is projected to be quite big in Japan.

Trends in the Japanese Spa Industry:

- § In Japan, mineral spa has the biggest share in the spa-related market unlike in the US, where day spas enjoy the biggest share.
- § In 2005, approximately 17 million people visited spas and this number is growing very fast.
- § As per our estimation, approximately 5800 people will work as the therapist in next 5 years.
- § “Facial Treatment” and “Aromatherapy” have been and will continue to be in high demand.
- § “Shiatsu” will likely decline in its popularity in near future though it is now one of the most popular services.
- § “Thai Traditional Massage” is likely to be offered though it is not so much popular now.
- § Day spa in the malls and department stores, Spas in the city/resort hotels or independent facilities will be more likely to employ the spa service staff for their facility.
- § Japanese spa industry is now inviting the western spa industry regarding not only the services but also the educational systems and the standards.
- § The Japanese spa industry will experience shortage of spa therapists.

There is no definition for the term ‘spa’. The spa concept in Japan is not well established. They need common guidelines and standards, education, and qualification.

Q&A

Q. Why is the popularity of Shiatsu going down?

A. This is mysterious. For some reason, owners of old traditional Onsen (mineral hot spring Japanese Inn) and providers are willing to take the western concept of spa. That would be the main reason why the Shiatsu is declining in popularity in our estimation.

The western spa concept would be good not only for the western visitors but also the Japanese young women. However, the Japanese authentic traditional services will serve the domestic visitors (and there are so many old customers). Thus, now the Japanese spa industry seems to be trying to find the way to integrate both Western concept of spa and Japanese concept of spa.