

2013

Global
Destination
Spa
FORUM

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IHWA

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH & WELLNESS ALLIANCE



Global Destination Spa Forum

Breakout Discussion Forums: Global Destination Spa
Monday, October 7, 2013
Yamuna/Narmada, The Trident

Facilitator:

Sharon Kolkka, General Manager, Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, Australia

Panelists:

Roberto Arjona, Chief Executive Officer, Rancho La Puerta, U.S.

Alejandro Bataller, Vice President - Sales & Marketing, Sha Wellness Clinic, Spain

Samantha Foster, Director, Destination Spa Management Limited, Thailand

Sheila McCann, General Manager, Chiva-Som International Health Resorts Co., Ltd, Thailand

During GSWS 2012, a small but global group of people gathered to discuss ways to legitimize ‘wellness’ with a shared goal of empowering the wellness industry to have a greater impact on global health and wellbeing. Subsequently the group discussed the possibility of forming an alliance that would help support this initiative. It was recognized that most of the participants in this group were proprietors of destination spas.

The GSWS Board of Directors also recognized the value of helping to facilitate the aggregation of destination spas worldwide and decided to add time on the 2013 GSWS agenda for this group to meet in India. At the same time, the board acknowledged that it was important to open up the conversation to anyone interested in the issues of this unique and important sector.

A group that had met previously at the 2012 Summit included the following:

Alejandro Bataller Pineda	SHA Wellness Clinic, Spain
Corinna Yap	COMO Shambhala, Bali/UK
Daniel Friedland, M.D.	Super Smart Health, USA
John Stewart	Kamalaya, Thailand
Karina Stewart	Kamalaya, Thailand
Lucie Brosseau	Consultant, Canada
Nazir Sacoor	Longevity Wellness, Portugal
Roberto Arjona	Rancho La Puerta, Mexico
Samantha Foster	Destination Spa Management, Thailand

Sharon Kolkka
Sheila McCann
Stella Photi

Gwinganna, Australia
Chiva-Som, Thailand
Wellbeing Escapes, UK

Subsequent to the 2012 Summit the possibility of an alliance was discussed with the name the International Health and Wellness Alliance (IHWA). There is an ongoing effort to consider aggregating destination spas under this name with a vision of "empowering humanity to embrace health and wellness" and a mission of "bringing together wellness visionaries and seekers to define, educate and advance health and wellbeing for individuals and communities.

Purpose of the Forum at GSWS

The forum at GSWS 2013 was intended to begin a conversation with a broad cross-section of spa and wellness professionals, to determine how destination spas can best serve the emerging wellness industry.

Summary of Discussion

Sharon Kolkka led the discussion, and a series of questions were posed and feedback from the group was obtained. Below is a summary of this feedback. Comments have not been listed verbatim, but rather grouped and consolidated to identify and emphasize the key issues.

Note: Unfortunately there was insufficient time to hear from many who wanted to speak or to delve deeper into the important issues that were raised. We trust that this is just the beginning of the discussion, and we look forward to engaging more fully in due course.

1. Responsibilities & Opportunities

Sharon posited that destination spas deal in the currency of wellness and are often seen as the keepers of wellness wisdom – with a responsibility to maintain and advance this authentic wisdom and share it with the industry and humanity.

Question: what is our collective opportunity and responsibility within the wellness mega trend?

Responsibility

- Our key responsibility is to deliver lifestyle change: It's the core of what we offer.
- Learning by doing: A key strength of destination spas is that they provide opportunity to teach people in an immersive environment.
- Socially augmented cognition enhances the thinking process.

- Results: By taking the high ground on wellness, destination spas have a responsibility to be honest (evidence-based) in the promises we make and information that we provide—and to ensure the quality and efficacy of our treatments and practitioners.

Opportunity

- Data: Collectively we can gather data (before and after) to obtain the evidence required to demonstrate benefits. This is otherwise difficult because of the multifaceted nature of wellness programs and the uncontrolled environment.
- Benefits are often very personal and hard to measure: we can demonstrate value through narrative (not just numbers). It is important to tell stories (from the consumer's perspective) that demonstrate how destination spas have been able to transform lives.
- Credibility: Guests want reassurance about the credibility of practitioners and treatments.
- Standards: Based on aggregate data and practices we can create standards that outline the minimum requirements for destination spa/wellness programs.
- The name 'destination spa' is insufficient—it is too limiting and doesn't communicate the substance of what we can do.
- Market needs: To maximize impact, we need to understand what people *really* want and need. We think we know, but do we? We are often talking to ourselves; we need to engage the consumer and conduct a needs analysis.
- The tour operator's perspective (Stella Photi): People often *don't know* specifically what they want; they just know that they want to feel better. Destination spas need to do a better job of defining and communicating what they can do.
- One-off surveys would not be sufficient, as needs are diverse and evolving (as are wellness solutions). We need a way to understand peoples' stories and motivations on an ongoing basis.

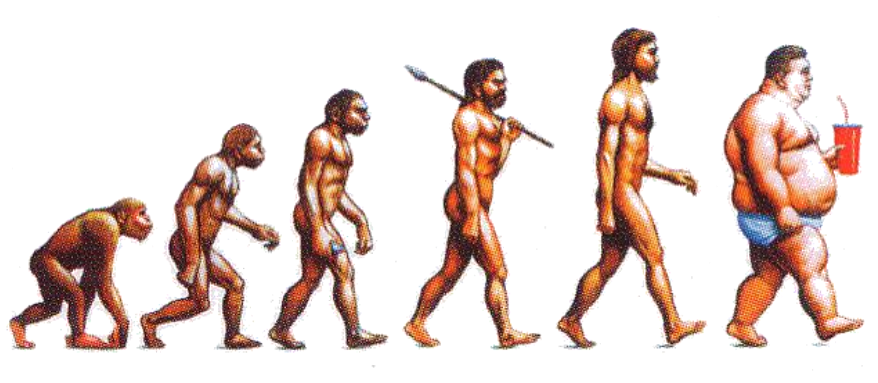
2. Who do we serve?

Question: Whom are we serving? Investment and revenue production or the greater good? How can we achieve both?

- Our guests are the decision-makers. We need to give them full information and tools to help them make better decisions.
- The big issue is the cost to society if we don't change. We need to educate the public about quality of life, and how to achieve it.
- And we need to include key influencers to experience first-hand benefits.

- Getting to the CEOs is the best way to instigate change; target leaders to have a trickle-down effect.
- Growth in destination spas is three times higher than other tourism sectors so there is some sense of need; we need to make sure we understand what is driving it.
- No.1: “Motivation is Longevity” (source: Lazlo Puczko–The Tourism Observatory)

3. How do we support humanity to thrive?



Sharon noted the following global health statistics and asked, "Is obesity our greatest potential?"

- In Australia alone 60% of the population is overweight or obese.
- Globally, there are more than one billion overweight adults.
- In the USA the number of overweight children has doubled and the number of overweight adolescents has tripled since 1980.
- Obesity and overweight pose a major risk for chronic diseases including Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, and certain cancers.
- It has been predicted by David White [global trend analysis] that by 2030, 75% of the global population will have cancer.
- Stress was also recognized as the number one contributor to all chronic/lifestyle diseases.
- The top five diseases are heart disease, cancer, diabetes, autoimmune disease and depression.
- The science of epigenetics tells us that, based on research, prolonged unmanaged stress affects our 50 trillion cells negatively and has the potential to negatively affect our DNA, affecting future generations.
- Side effects of stress include: hormone disruption, obesity and sleep deprivation, just to name a few.

Each individual's ability to navigate stress, uncertainty and self-doubt has an incredible impact on our wellness. It needs to be understood by the masses that wellness is more than healthy food and exercise alone.

Question: how do we as the 'wellness industry' support humanity to thrive?

- A stay at a destination spa is not enough: we need ways to keep the experience going after people leave, such as:
 - follow-up wellness coaching
 - maintaining relationships through technology and communication, e.g. through social media
 - partnerships with urban clinics

If partnering, what can we do to create a seamless transition for the guest? Issues regarding protection of client data and also client retention need to be overcome for the benefit of guest and business alike.
- Work more with the brain. There is a massive amount of research being done in the field of neuroscience. We need to keep on top of this and find ways to incorporate it into our wellness offerings.
- Bring people back to nature. Our resorts are usually in beautiful natural environments, but how do we get people to engage with nature more frequently?
- Social/cultural element: create communities.
- Medical and holistic: These are often difficult to integrate; however destination spas are the most conducive environment. Gathering more solid data on efficacy will help this.
- Corporate world and insurance companies: This is a big opportunity, but we need measurement in order to convince them and focus on building data first.
- Organic food: Destination spas can champion nutrition education and promotion of the organic industry. Teach regarding the need for a wholefoods, non-processed diet. Inform regarding the risks of GMO foods, where appropriate.
- Products: This also applies to products—educating people on the toxins that are absorbed transdermally and therefore the need for safe cosmetics.
- Detox: Raise awareness of toxicity in the environment, and how to combat this through detox programs as well as things that people can do in everyday life.
- Hospital partnerships: Most hospitals have stress reduction programs but they need the bed turnover so they want to get patients out ASAP. They need partners to refer their patients to. What do we need to do to build these partnerships?

4. Education Empowers

Education is key to wellness transformation.

Can we share our wisdom and collectively create a research-based educational platform, accessible to guests and the public (potential guests), as well as spa and wellness industry professionals?

Sharon gave the example of Khan Academy, an online educational resource where people worldwide can access quality education for free.

Questions: Are we interested to explore collaboration for the good of the industry as a whole? Are we stronger if we unite? How do we still retain our resort's individuality and intellectual property?

- Mechanism / structure is critical: How do destination spas engage with the rest of the industry to collect and deliver the educational material?
- Wellness is multi-faceted so we need to take a broader view and bring in people from many fields. We need to include all aspects of wellness: social, intellectual, financial, environmental, etc.
- We need a collective vision that we can all work towards.
- We also need to involve elements of our resorts beyond the wellness directors, such as F&B, administration, etc.
- We have to inspire, but follow through is more important than the original inspiration. We need to constantly educate after we inspire.
- It was noted that 85% of what people do is habit, and when something becomes a habit it doesn't need willpower. Therefore we need to consider ourselves more in the 'behavior change' industry, to improve new habit creation.
- We need to think about our market as 'people' rather than 'customers'; individuals who are complex– we shouldn't use a one-size-fits all approach.
- Each of us have a different 'turn on'. Understanding people's needs is critical, because only then can we develop effective interventions that are specifically designed to suit. A 'needs assessment system' should be established.
- One-offs don't work: Whatever we do must be ongoing over time and accessible to people whatever their situation. Partnerships with urban centers were again suggested. A web-based system is ideal.
- The concept of a collective education platform –something we can all contribute to–received support from the group. It would need to be screened and regulated, again requiring structure, systems and careful criteria.
- Honesty and authenticity are essential to maintain.

- We're currently preaching to the choir, in that the destination spa industry tends to be elitist, and these higher socio-economic groups have better knowledge of and access to health and wellness information, products, tools and services. Need to democratize wellness and become the thought-leader of the wellness concept.
- A significant amount of the population still don't know what a destination spa is. We need to define it, tied strongly to its core purpose of delivering wellness.
- We know that we can make a difference, but do our customers? We need to put more emphasis on communicating that we can and do create a manageable process of health improvement.
- We need to develop programs for university students, or even school students, to shape people's attitudes and behavior earlier, before bad habits are ingrained and damage starts to occur.
- And we need to create new entry points:
 - Expand beyond the luxury segment to 3-4 stars.
 - Urban healing hotels
 - Affordable healing hotels
 - Kindergartens, families, universities <= preventative focus
- "Impact those who can impact," i.e., work through doctors, nurses and other health professionals and those pursuing health careers to reach those who need wellness but who might not come to us directly, and/or cannot afford to visit.
- In creating educational programs, we have to be mindful of how people learn: they learn in baby steps. We need a way of getting manageable tips out regularly.
- Resorts shouldn't worry about loss of (intellectual property) IP. Information marketing proves that openly sharing information builds credibility, trust and whets the appetite of potential consumers. By giving, resorts and the whole industry can grow stronger.

Thank you once again for your participation.

The Global Spa & Wellness Summit gratefully acknowledges the support of the International Health and Wellness Alliance (IHWA) as sponsor of the Global Destination Spa Forum

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