

# Spa Asia

WELLNESS • SPA • LIFESTYLE JULY - SEPTEMBER 2008

From Spa To Wellness...  
**SOFT CELL**

- The Next Generation Of Spas

Romancing  
**the Stone**

**ANTIOXIDANTS**  
GUARDIANS OF THE  
**SKIN**

Spas of the  
**NORTHERN EMIRATES**

Less **SLEEP**  
More **FAT**

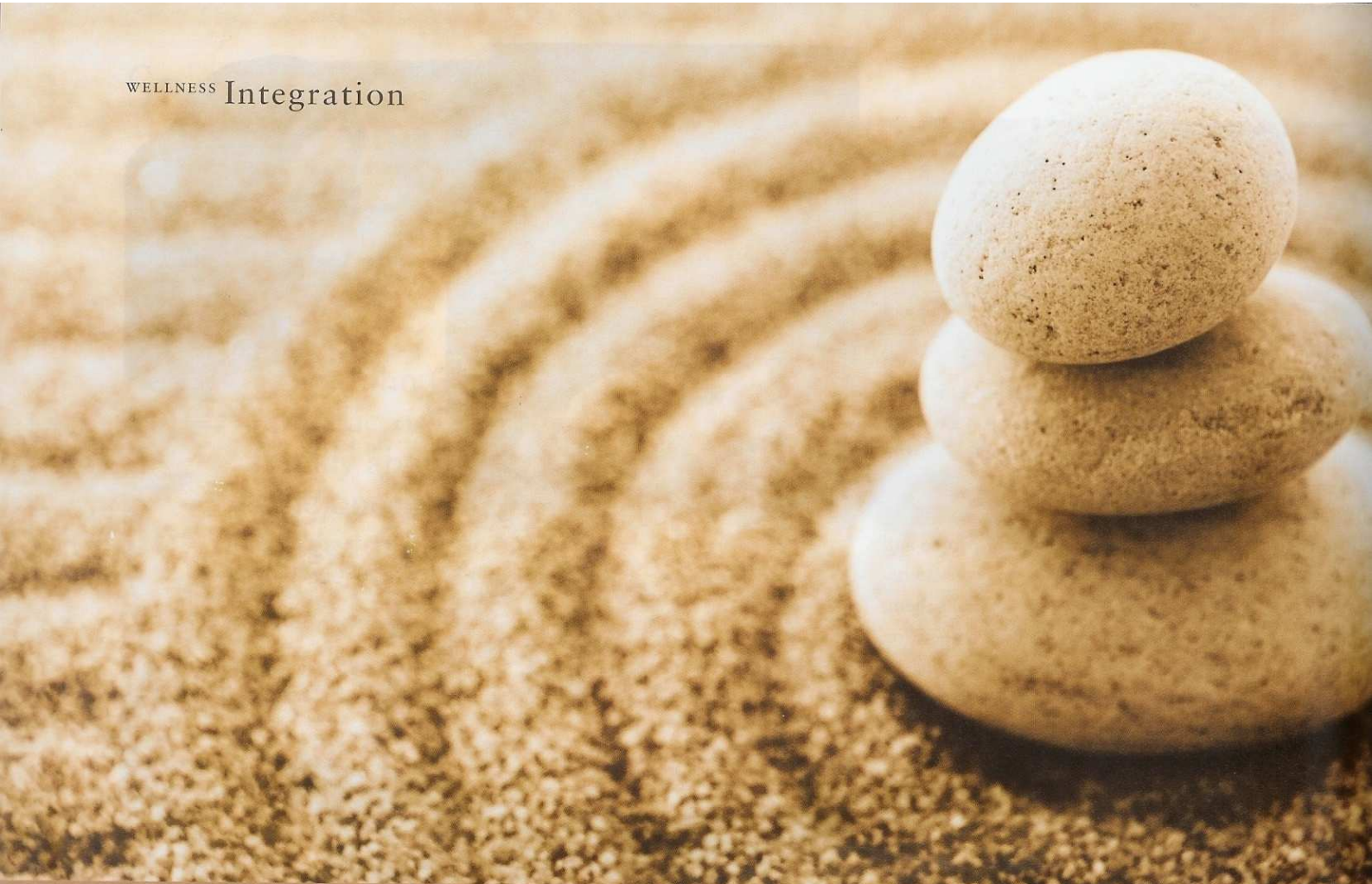
[www.spaasia.com](http://www.spaasia.com)

KDN PP1505(13146)/07/2008(010614)



Singapore S\$6 • Malaysia RM13 • Thailand THB250 • Indonesia IDR40,000 • Hong Kong HKD48 • Taiwan TWD200  
Philippines PHP280 • Australia AUD10 • New Zealand NZD11 • Japan JPY800 • All Other Countries USD7





# the Evolution of spas

## Towards Life Management Programs

by Dr. Franz Linser

Spas have to be seen as a mirror of society. A Spa offers what life outside can't. It is crucial for the sustainable success of spas to understand the customers' lives outside. We need to find out what the real desires of the potential spa customers are.

Our working and living habits have changed dramatically. The current society is the first generation in mankind that no longer works physically. If not compensated specifically with movement and workout in our leisure time, the lack of natural behaviour and the

misuse of our body by means of "not-use" lead to imbalances – physically, psychologically and socially.

People worldwide reacted similarly to this change: having worked hard and not having taken enough care of themselves, people developed a strong desire to take time-outs, to relax and to reload. This was the rise of the classical pampering spa. Inhaling the warm atmosphere, getting the good relaxing smells and feeling the touching hands became the antithesis to the cold and dehumanized world

outside. The pampering spa was designed to make people forget about the outer world.

Needless to say, the kind of well-being achievable with this strategy was wellness for the moment. No improvements to take home, basically. People, however, began to ask for physical improvements as part of their spa experience. What soon was to be called medical spa was focussing on many cases on improvements of the "surface": Botox, face-lifting and creams. This approach touched the people's problems; however, it



was fighting the symptoms rather than the problem as such.

Some medical spas offer efficient programs in depth, most of them on a curative basis. "We fix this, we fix that... and when the problem returns we'll fix it again!" European cure tradition basically worked this way. Great medical work, scientifically proven, serious and of substantial practical help for those who needed.

However, times have changed. The problems have changed. The reasons for feeling bad and for getting sick have changed. It seems logical that our health strategies will have to change as well. The health criteria that the World Health Organization has specified clearly show this change. It is the socio-cultural and the psychological features that influence our health more than mere physiological processes. In addition to healthy workouts, nutrition and relaxation, we need more than ever a healthy relation to our selves and our surroundings, healthy social contacts and a meaningful work.

Can a Spa provide programmes for that? One is tempted to say no. On the other hand, scientific knowledge indicates that many of today's sicknesses originate in mental and/or social deficiencies (the physical problems being only their visible symptoms). Therefore, a medical approach that exclusively treats the measurable symptoms of ill health will fail to heal the person as a whole and thus will fail to lead to overall well-being.

With the ongoing socio-cultural and psychological changes in our modern society, health and well-being must therefore be redefined. Health today is more than the absence of diseases. It is more than the physiological normality in terms of weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. It is about the acceptance of the rules of nature. It is about the deeper understanding of the interference of body and spirit. It is about strategies to balance emotions, work and leisure, social

interactions and personal desires. Health today is about life as such.

He who can't manage life can't manage health.

Therefore in the Spas of the future it won't be enough to provide customers with medically correct know-how. It will be crucial to deliver strategies for the actual "do-how". The do-how is the motivational bridge between know-how and change. Only he who has developed a concept for his life will be motivated to live a sustainable and healthy lifestyle.

In order to deliver motivation one has to deliver sense. People who understand why to change will adopt change. This way change becomes a positive strategy for their very personal goals. People will want to change. Not considering this process of delivering sense leads to unsuccessful pseudo-strategies as for example "making a diet". These are fights against one's own body and usually end in failure and frustration.

Consequently, future spas will widen their horizon, knowing that life is more than health and momentary well-being. Life is about happiness, happiness deriving from sense. Spas ignoring this fact will not be able to satisfy the growing number of customers who are healthy but unhappy. What is the strategy for them? Pampering and distraction? Hopefully not. A successful strategy has

to be holistic, dealing with the person as a whole and dealing with all relevant spheres of life. Modern health management is life management.

The spas of the upcoming decade will be the spas that accompany people along this truly passionate and emotional way to their individual self. Their success will be based on the simple fact that they deal with life. Many of the problems that customers have when entering this new kind of spa experience will disappear soon as if they never had existed, as in fact many of these problems never did exist except in their heads.

If it is true that markets always react to the real desires of the customers, it is to be expected that after the medical doctors it will be the psychologists, sociologists and priests to join the spa teams of the future. They won't be dressed in white nor will they be curing sick people. However, they will be there, ready to talk and help, and they will be an integrative part of the life management programmes of the future spa. They will be the life coaches and partners of the next-generation customer. **sa**

Dr. Franz Linser is the Founder and Managing Partner of Linser & Partner Consulting GmbH, an Austrian-based management consultancy that specializes in health tourism and health related spa projects. He will deliver his keynote 'The Evolution of Spas Towards Life Management Programmes' on Day 3 of the Wellness Summit 08 in Kuala Lumpur.

