

Why more people will need Spa Vacation

(And why every Resort/Hotel/Tourist Destination in North America cannot afford to ignore this)

By Jay Wahono (Taman Sari Royal Heritage Spa, Whistler, BC)

Member of International Spa Association and Leading Spas of Canada



“They all long for appreciation from the world around them, so no wonder they miss their comfort zone”

Imagine the day-to-day activities that the average person in North America experiences today. Most of them now live and work in industrial towns, far away from their own hometown and their family. They are all connected to their workplace all the time and being followed by their work everywhere they go. They have abundance of information about everything and yet lack of attention to anything. Their professional life demands every bit of their attention and their time, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. They are all busy trying to make the best out of it and yet it all does not seem to satisfy the people around them. It seems that the world demand more from them than what they can offer. They all long for appreciation from the world around them, so no wonder they miss their comfort zone.

Imagine the typical vacation that every person or every family in North America has. Less and less people take vacation within 100 miles from where they live. Enticed by Travel ads, they now want to explore the exotic places and experience the extraordinary. Long haul travel becomes part

of every Vacation. Beside “Road Rage”, many travelers now are all too familiar with “Airline Rage”, “Register Rage” and “Hotel Rage”. People complain about everything in every chance they get; if this is their typical Vacation, imagine their typical business trip.

Naturally, they all wonder where the good feeling about their Vacation goes. When was the last time they feel good about them self? When was the last time they feel relax and feel well in their life? Vacation used to be taken to invoke that particular feeling, and yet rarely they feel relax and feel well after Vacation. On the contrary, they felt exhausted and felt worse about them self after long Vacation. Remember about looking at your own Credit Card bill after long Vacation? The longer the Vacation, the more miserable they became. As the result of this past experience, they are more stressful planning for their next Vacation and Christmas holidays than planning for their own careers. Hospitality and Tourism sector anywhere in North America feel more pressure because of this nature and guests are more difficult to please. So, how should the Hospitality Industry react to this?

From this struggling Industry emerges the new term: *Spa Vacation*. Hotels in every town and resorts all over North America build Spas as a desperate measure to lure their guests back to their properties. But, do these Hotels and Resorts fulfill the needs of these Spa Travelers? Do they comfort their clients with their new services? Do Hotels/Resorts honestly

“Beside Road Rage, many travelers now are all too familiar with Airline Rage, Register Rage and Hotel Rage”

“Spa Vacation is about experiencing this ultimate comfort. It is not all about Vanity or expensive locations, but it is more about feeling well and feeling relax”

understand what their Guests are looking for? Understand this, according to ISPA/CTC survey 90% of the Spa Traveler in US and 85% in Canada insist that they are personally involved in planning their Vacation*. Clearly, there is lack of trust on Travel Ads, traditional Travel Agents, national/regional/local official Travel Guides or even their Hotel/Resort Reservation Agents when it comes to planning their Spa Vacation.

The answer to the problems lies on the reason why people need Vacation at all. More than anything else, they are now looking for resurfacing their positive feelings. The deeper the feelings they invoked, the more meaningful their Vacation will be. People are craving for

“The better the Service/perception on the Quality of the Hotel/Resort, the less concern the Spa Traveler will have on its Spa”

comforts because they rarely experience them anymore. Spa Vacation is about experiencing this ultimate comfort. It is not all about Vanity or expensive locations, but it is more about feeling well and feeling relax. What is the effect of location to perception of Service among the Spa Travelers? Consider this, 81% of US respondents and 71% of Canadian respondents visited the Hotel/Resort Spa, compared to only 23% in US and 37% in Canada visited Day Spa during their Spa Vacation*. This might be the result of certain perception among the respondents that Hotel/Resort Spa has better Quality of Treatment/Service than that of the Day Spa. Actually, US respondents rank “Quality of Treatment/Service” as their biggest concern on choosing a Spa, while the Canadian respondents mention “Hygiene of Staffs and Cleanliness of the Facility” as their biggest concern*. It all has the same notion, Spas that are located inside a Hotel/Resort are preferable than Spas that are not. It also comes to this, the better the Service/perception on the Quality of the Hotel/Resort, the less concern the Spa Traveler will have on its Spa. One indication of the Spa’s commitment on Quality, Hygiene issues and Service Excellence is by becoming the member of Spa Industry Association like Leading Spas of Canada or International Spa Association.

The emergence of Spa Traveler market in North America then is not only a respond to shifting demographics but it is also a respond to shifting Psychographics. Baby Boomers are not only getting older but they also demand ultimate comfort during their Vacation. 90% of the respondents in US and in Canada said that the single most important benefit of Spa Vacation is

“The emergence of Spa Traveler market in North America then is not only a respond to shifting demographics but it is also a respond to shifting Psychographics”

“To Relax and to Relieve Stress”*. Vacation in general is not serving that intended purpose anymore, which is why the Tourism Industry invented a new term: *Spa Vacation* and call the people on Spa Vacation: *Spa Traveler*. If this is the case, shouldn’t every Resort/Hotel/Tourist Destination promote itself as a Spa Vacation Destination? Because the success of luring the more sophisticated, more demanding and better traveled Spa Traveler will result to the success of luring their guests back to Vacation in general.

*Identifying Spa Traveler: A look at US and Canadian Consumer Attitudes and Motivators for Spa Vacation (2006), Hartman Group of Seattle, presented in partnership of Canadian Tourism Commission and International Spa Association.

Author’s note

According to the above report; *“Spas are entities devoted to enhancing overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit”*. Spa Vacation is then Vacation with Spa Activities involved and Spa Traveler is the person who is participating in Spa Vacation.