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Spa mantra

India's Spa & Wellness Magazine

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India - Emerging Global Spa & Wellness Destination

India provides a perfect environment for holistic retreats.

Serenity Capital-ized

The capital's must visit spas

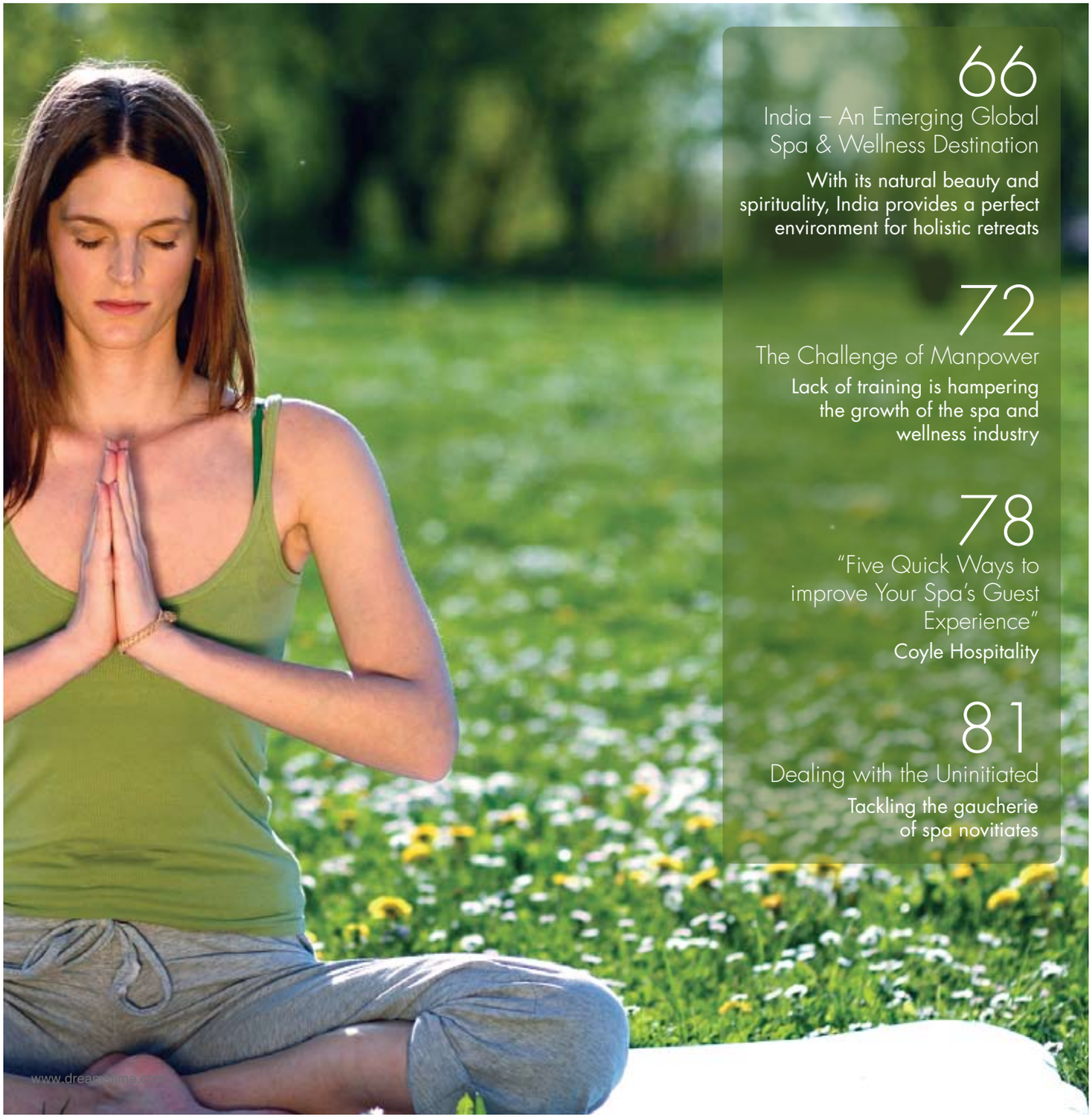
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"Five QUICK WAYS to improve Your Spa's GUEST EXPERIENCE"

One of the most important aspects of managing spa clients' expectations is to ensure a stress free, easy and pleasant experience right from the booking of the service, upto a smooth check-out. And spas around the world check and double check every step of this journey so as to make it as easy for the client as possible.

Spa Mantra speaks with **Stephanie Perrone Goldstein**, V.P. Sales and Marketing, Coyle Hospitality Group to garner a fresh insight based on their extensive research on the spa industry.



Stephanie Perrone Goldstein,
V.P.Sales and Marketing, Coyle Hospitality Group

Spa Mantra: Your research "5 Quick Ways to improve Your Spa's Guest Experience" spells out some areas that need greater attention, even from customer savvy spas. Why did you feel the need to do this evaluation? What were your key observations?

Goldstein: We conducted the first global spa survey in 2010 when approached by the Global Spa Summit with a need for spa consumer research. Spa operators, owners and managers wanted to better understand what drives the consumer today and what works and does not. The active and positive response from our previous report is what prompted us to repeat the survey again this year.

How often should spas undertake an audit?

Though every spa is different and some may prefer more or less frequency,

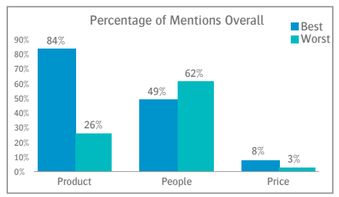
1. Don't waste the call. Unfortunately, this golden moment to create a better guest experience and more revenue for the spa is often squandered.

2. Provide ease of booking. Are you losing business by not offering potential clients (or loyal ones) a way to click and book at any time of day or night?

3. Reward loyal customers in meaningful ways, to them. Offer them the treatments they would most appreciate, and at the appropriate times.

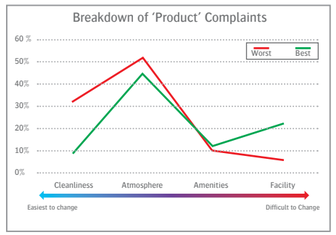
4. Don't overlook the check out. Develop an approach to address unhappy customers and explore their concerns away from the front desk.

5. Audit your guest experience. Consider using a mystery shopping provider or create a spa audit of your own.



we generally recommend doing a full spa evaluation on a monthly basis. This frequency enables spas to collect regular, detailed feedback to supplement their other guest comments but not to overwhelm the team. It also allows for trends to emerge over quicker periods of time. I would, however, add that during a new or re-opening, spas benefit greatly from conducting additional evaluations over a short period of time to ensure the team is ready and delivering the service levels outlined in their training.





All your suggestions need re-orientation/ training of the spa staff. Who would be best equipped to do that to best results - internal trainers or an external agency?

This depends. Having someone on the team; a lead therapist, front desk supervisor and lead spa attendant who can be responsible for such tasks is ideal. They would be well versed in and capably executing on your spa's guest experience promise daily serving as both role models and capable trainers, a go-to with any questions they might have. When time and/or budget does not allow for this luxury, working with a skilled and capable consultant can also be effective. The most important element is that feedback, positive and negative, gets back to the team quickly and constructively and that change is re-tested once training is complete.

2011	No Trust	Some Trust	Neutral	Trusted	Well Trusted	Not Used
Friends/Family word of mouth	0%	1%	6%	35%	56%	2%
Co-workers word of mouth	0%	2%	19%	42%	25%	11%
Feedback sites (Yelp, etc.)	1%	5%	31%	38%	10%	14%
Blogs	1%	9%	36%	19%	3%	32%
Spa magazines (SpaFinder, Spa Magazine)	1%	6%	29%	32%	9%	24%
Spa Websites	1%	5%	34%	45%	9%	6%
Physician	1%	1%	17%	20%	16%	45%
Professional Organizations (ISPA, etc.)	0%	1%	22%	15%	9%	52%

How often do guests actually voice their unhappiness over their spa experiences? Where are they most likely to do that?

We did a survey several years back



which showed that many spa guests, due to embarrassment or not wanting confrontation, would not say anything and would just not return. This is where the follow-up element in our research becomes crucial. If a guest is unhappy, reaching out to them once they are out of the spa and have had time to think, might give them the outlet they need to explain what happened and allow you to rectify the situation. Otherwise, the spa may never hear about it and may never get them back or earn their word-of-mouth referrals.

> One factor that is most important is delivering on each individual guest's expectations, meeting and exceeding guest needs

Once a spa has won someone's business, regardless of what the deciding factor was to bring them in, ensuring that their expectations are met or exceeded is crucial in garnering their loyalty, either by way of returning or referring friends and colleagues. Keep in mind that Coyle's 2011 Global Spa Survey showed that word of mouth from friends or family is still the most trustworthy method of learning about your spa (91% rated it trustworthy or extremely trustworthy) and Coworkers word of mouth (67% at trustworthy or extremely trustworthy) was a close second. That, added to the countless ways to source feedback about your spa and the increasing trust of these methods should be enough to warrant a focus on consistent high quality service

So while you have the guest on-site, what is the most important thing to get right? Coyle's research analyzing the key factors contributing to both best and worst spa experiences from 2010 demonstrated that the 'People' are mentioned most consistently as a deciding factor in both best (49%) and worst (62%) experiences. Any way you slice it, who you hire and how they deliver will generally be the reason people enjoy their visit with you. Having a well trained, confident and capable staff from desk to treatment room and beyond remains the most effective way to win loyalty.

The physical spa product was also mentioned in 84% of best experiences but in only 26% of worst experiences. This would indicate that, while it can contribute strongly to a positive spa visit, it is not necessarily what causes a negative one. In those that contributed to worst experiences, cleanliness and atmosphere came up the most (over amenities and facilities). This should be promising to operators as they are generally lower cost elements to fix. Atmosphere was also mentioned frequently on contributing to positive spa experiences.

Some guests, on the other hand, will voice their concerns at the spa desk, to a manager or even to a spa attendant or therapist. Training on service recovery in all areas of the spa is crucial, though, because if a complaint is mentioned and not relayed appropriately, the guest is left feeling that their concerns were ignored. This can make or break a spa experience.

What do guests rate as the most important factor in their entire spa experience?

Our research shows that spa guests, over any other reason, seek out a spa experience for relaxation and stress relief. Delivering on this element and ensuring that the experience creates that environment is key to delivering a positive experience for most guests.

What one factor is guest loyalty most often based on?

Guest loyalty is based on just about every element of the spa experience. I would have to say that the one factor that is most important is delivering on each individual guest's expectations, meeting and exceeding guest needs. Spa guests are seeking so many things: a great treatment or service, a friendly team, recognition, value, to feel better. The list goes on and on and varies guest to guest. Being able to deliver on that guest's needs time and time again, without disruption or added stress, is crucial to winning their repeat business and their word-of-mouth referrals. I wish the answer were simpler but, unfortunately, it is understanding and anticipating guests needs, then consistently delivering on them that wins repeat business.

**Coyle hospitality Group is a market leader in providing mystery shopping, quality benchmarking, brand compliance, and market research services exclusively for the global hospitality industry, including hotels, restaurants, spas, cruises, and venues worldwide. www.coylehospitality.com*