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GREEN SPA - Why should a SPA be “green”?

Risks and rewards of building sustainable Spas

To understand current efforts in the “greening” of our lives, we have to understand where we have come from and where we are today. Starting with the years of rebuilding after Post World War II in the 50’s and 60’s, we went into an era of greed, egocentrism and “Glamour Capitalism” in the 80’s, cultivating this into a stylistic hedonism while playing golf in the 90’s and ending up with the Lifestyle Collapse of the New Economy in the 2000’s. Presently we are dealing with financial crises all over the world.

Trend Scouts (Trendforscher) like Matthias Horx from the “Zukunftsinstitut Germany” (“Future Institute Germany”), are tracking the emergence of new “MEGA-TRENDS” which they believe will last for the next 30 to 50 years. These trends are categorized under the headings of “Health & Aging”, “New Gender Relationships”, “Digitalisation”, “Globalisation” and “NEO – ECOLOGY”. New-Ecology includes the issues of environmental protection, resource conservation and corporate social responsibility.

These mega-trends shift the coordinates of the entire economic system towards new business ethics and the frequently quoted perspectives of “Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability” – referred to as “LOHAS”.

Neo-ecology includes not only the classic “green” issues of sustainable development, but also the social-ecological requirements and effects of our actions:

- The use of responsible and honourable morals in social and environmental efforts to economize ecologically
- Environmental protection, fair labour practices, erasure of corruption, educational opportunities and equal rights for women and minorities are being used more and more often as levers in the area of economic competition
- Consumption takes place under completely different assumptions regarding environmental criteria and sustainability

The big opportunity:

- Conscious consumption is a growth engine.
- The organic market is booming, as are “green” investments and business deals with fair-trade products.

More than 30% of the world’s people, especially those living in major cities, are following these new mega-trends...and probably you yourself are one of them. For example, if you are living in Europe, you may be choosing to buy local apples rather than those imported from New Zealand.

PIONEERS AND EARLY BIRDS

There have been early adopters to this movement such as companies like Scandic, Marriott's and Six Senses, for example.

Since the mid 90s, measures for sustainability have become an integrated part of corporate philosophy for Scandic.

Through targeted staff training and wise shopping, between the years of 1996 to 2007, Scandic Hotels was able to prevent more than 400 million packaged toiletries from being disposed into the waste stream.

Today, Scandic's environmental sustainability programs are no cost to the company. They are instead the source for revenue and profit and have thus become a real competitive advantage.

Do you remember the massive problems with formaldehyde in particleboard in the 1980's?

IKEA started a new direction through the use of chipboard and also used the same concept to resolve packaging problems. The resolution of these challenges became an innovative opportunity for greater growth and re-positioning.

Even McDonalds turned a corner by introducing cardboard packaging and eliminating the foam packaging previously used.

Today there is a worldwide victory of renewable energies

Companies have embraced these "Green Markets". Today products such as "bio-plastics" as well as many other new materials, characterize our everyday lives. Renewable energies have become an important economic factor and a driving force for employment. Consider the of photovoltaic and the windmill-industry. Currently there is also a huge discussion going on about "clean coal" and the storage of carbon dioxide.

The building industry

Unfortunately, the construction industry is responsible for 50% of the pollution of our atmosphere and an annual production of 70% of all waste products. In total volume, the building industry generates an enormously large proportion of worldwide pollution.

Additionally, the wide spread development of suburbs - - whose impact on natural resources through their requirements for travel to and from work or school and to and from their leisure activities -- might also as be considered hidden pollutants of the construction industry.

In Germany during the 1990's, universities began to provide attractive "Climate-Designed" study possibilities instead of the old fashioned in-house classes, however students were not interested.

The knowledge of how to build climate neutral, or climate friendly, houses and cities

has been in use for several thousands of years. No one needs to re-invent ecological architecture again.

However, what is needed is a departure from baseless claims.

If you look at the building clear about is that it is warm in winter and cool in the summer that the sun shines in the south, not north, then they have laid the foundation of rational architecture already.

The use of more technology will solve those problems, however little, caused by yet more technology only.

The implications for construction and property industry is clearly to have a sustainable construction and operation of real estate with efficient saving in building and operation, observation of life cycles and an optimized risk management

Examples of passive and active construction

Passive Systems: Air tightness with breathable materials, Borrowed internal light to corridors, North light/ stack-effect ventilation, good natural daylight and ventilation, Orientation to maximise solar energy, High-insulation carbon negative lime-hemp wall construction and living roofs, Rainwater harvesting, Reed bed drainage.

Activ Systems: Rainwater/ grey water recycling, Low-energy/ daylight sensor activated lighting, Chilled-beam ceilings in public areas, Photovoltaic solar panels and solar water heating, Wind turbine, ground coupling/natural air conditioning, heat exchangers, ground-source heat pump, hydro-electricity, Biomass boiler, Natural/ ultraviolet swimming pools

Also to add during the building process: cradle to cradle, reused and recycled materials

With active Design construct hotel will serve as a living machines that would naturally purify the air and the water in the building. It can easily support a spa and a green roof. A certain percentage of its profits will be raised from the hotel and would be donated to a Natural Resources program. The use of glass would ensure maximum use of daylight, thereby cutting down on the lighting costs. But this way the hotel would get too hot inside, which would raise the cooling costs. Without the use of any renewable electricity generators, a hotel could prove to be a costly affair. To learn: you can't heal a problem by using technique only. You have to use a balanced mix between active and passive designs.

Architecture and building in the process of change

To achieve comfort and architectural quality in the future requires the least amount of energy and resources, the highest possible total cost, in the achievement of overall economy, comfort and architectural quality. To assess the sustainability performance of buildings the international certification systems such as BREEAM, LEED, MINERGIE, GREEN GLOBE are the most widely used.

The sustainable quality process

- Quality of project preparation - Integrated planning - Optimization and complexity of the approach in the planning - Evidence of sustainability issues in tendering and contracting - Creation of conditions for optimum use and management - Construction site and construction - Quality of the construction companies - Systematic introduction/ implementation in the use of the building

And there should be honesty in the implementation to take care for social-ecological AND ecological-economic standards. There was a **survey done of Union Investment 2009** and they got back about 16,2% (256 answers) from banks, Churches and foundations, Insurance companies, Pension providers and pension funds large companies, with a sad result: Sustainability is mainly a „Hollow marketing babble“, „Image and PR are the only motivation“, and „Shareholders pay for hypocrisy“ was the result. See book „Nachhaltige Kapitalanlagen für Stiftungen – Aktuelle Entwicklung und Bewertung“ Nomos Verlag (ISBN 978-3-8329-4250-2).

Commercial Advantages “Green Spa”

A change in viewing angle also leads inevitably to a change in business vision, starting with the personnel policy .. to the procurement/ acquisition guidelines and the environmental expense planning of the company:

- Savings in expenses
- Product- and Service-Innovation
- Flexibility
- Customer- und Employee; Loyalty and Trust
- Higher Shareholder Value

Those hotels who embrace an ecologically and socially enduring plan, that is to say, a renewable energy strategy, have a commercially much more solid value: Instead of being part of the problem, they become part of the solution! For example in cost savings: The energy and raw material / commodity consumption has a notable impact in the direction of sustainability and lowers operating costs significantly.

Products and Manufacturers should agree and commit to products in a natural way produced without preservatives, sustainability in the extraction of raw materials, in the production and packaging, for related products and semitools from emerging countries, there is also the climate balance to observe.

Staff must be trained

Training to become aware of the use and purchasing of products using measuring units and stations for the economic use of spa media/ Consumables

- Careful use of cleaning products and chemicals
- Full documentation, Introduction of standards, workbooks and taking quality

assurance measures (TQM)

- Training for new, alternative treatment methods

Questions

- Who is driving the issue of re-newability and ecological health in your company?
- What are your deficits/ challenges/least effective areas?
- Which concrete steps can you take now to strategically minimize the disadvantages under which you are currently working?

GREEN WASHING (see also the “report on environmental claims made in the North American consumer market“ sinsofgreenwashing.org.)

„All-natural“ is an example. Arsenic, uranium, mercury, and formaldehyde are all naturally occurring, and poisonous. “All natural“ isn’t necessarily “green“. Or “CFC-free“, since it is a frequent claim despite the fact that CFCs are banned by law. Organic cigarettes might be an example of this category, as might be fuel-efficient sport-utility vehicles.

Paper, for example, is not necessarily environmentally-preferable just because it comes from a sustainably-harvested forest. Other important environmental issues in the paper-making process, including energy, greenhouse gas emissions, and water and air pollution, may be equally or more significant.

Missing a third-party certification. Common examples are tissue products that claim various percentages of post-consumer recycled content without providing any evidence.

Committed by making environmental claims that are simply false. The most common examples were products falsely claiming to be Energy Star certified or registered.....committed by a product that, through either words or images, gives the impression of third-party endorsement where no such endorsement actually exists; fake labels, in other words

3 Columns of sustainability

First idea for sustainability comes from forest harvesting in 1700. It’s simple said: don’t cut more trees than growing after, or to be precise as the Dictionary definition says: "Regenerative living resources should be used only to the extent that such stocks naturally grow."

Nowadays we have so many labels for sustainability that the market needs to become regulated. Mostly of them where made by industry.

To highlight one Certification System for the tourism-industry it is the worldwide mostly spread Green Globe Standard for hotels, cruise ships, Veranstaltungsorte, Stadthallen and also spas:

Green Globe International got started in 1993 as a member of UNWTO and with 5% Shareholder of WTTC, They made Worldwide more than 1.000 Certifications, and based on International Standard Organization like ISO 9001 / 14001 / 19011.

What a GEEN SPA should be

Ecologically „clean“ equipped spas, which are built with biologically healthy and natural materials, are oases for a healthy, balanced and relaxing guest experience.

To become a “Green Spa “, the Spa must strive towards a sustainable development with a zero environmental footprint, a positive impact on a social standpoint and be economically profitable. To evaluate how far or how close to their objective the spa is, one needs a clear roadmap with a breakdown of business assets and practices:

1. Contribute our resources (financial/human) to help better the environment
2. Strive to be in harmony with the environment
3. Reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases
4. Reduce our consumption of fresh water
5. Reduce waste, reuse and recycle
6. Minimize raw materials, especial paper
7. Conserve the natural heritage and biodiversity
8. Contribute to social and environmental project
9. Ensure environmental trainings and awareness
10. Continuously monitoring
11. Buy products from fair trade and Organic-Osco-Label
12. Improve on provision of the law, international agreements
13. Contribute to the sustainable development of your country
14. Produce annual transparent report based on Global Reporting Guidelines
15. Communicate regularly to host and guests, shareholders, interested parties

How to construct? Reflect traditional local styles and construction methodes and use natural materials.

All buidling materials must strive to 100% eco-friendlyess (FSC..). Minimize the need of air-conditioning and lightning, reduce the need of energy. Find sustainable alternatives to burning fossil fuels, offer Guests fresh air and natural ventilation instead of air-conditioning. Turn down heater if the treatment allows this, cover a blanket over the guest. Avoid leaving water tubs running during a treatment. Fullfill nationwide Energy Saving Law and environmental impact study

THE INVISIBLE

Buildings causes illness, even in a Spa. Well known is today the MCS- Syndrom «multiple chemical sensitivity“, People suffering from a lack of energy and many physical symptoms what make them unable to take part of social life and work. Buildings today are suffering from Electrosmog, W-Lan, Radiation and the people from the Building-Related-Illness (BRI)

Today, Architects and Planners should care about this all. Fundamental to the Spa experience is the essential, although non-visible, atmosphere whose details must be planned with care and awareness in order to inspire the spirit of the spa.

Creating certain qualities of space, that facilitate certain qualities of being ...

A Spa facilities must fit the „bared“ Guests like a comfortable garment

Darkness and warmth alone don't make for cosiness. It is the “right” quality of light that conveys the desired atmosphere which in turn creates trust, prerequisite for letting go of stress.

Uniqueness is not reproducible

A space touches one through presence... and spirit through inspiration. Spas are places of power, purification, contemplation and introspection. Thus they are also spiritual places enabling mystic experiences and holistic healing. Besides ambiance and furnishing what counts most is the quality of relationship, So, to know - Wellness is a service business.

As a summary it is to say: In a Spa you create ...individual worlds of... experiences, to allow customers to do nothing but to do nothing . Therefore: The future belongs to the one-of-kind, carefully designed and professionally operated Spas

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