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SPA STATISTICS

How to interpret them

By Raoul A. Sudre



During the ISPA Asia show in Bangkok a Singaporean Company: "Intelligent Spas" presented a paper on Statistics and how they can be used to implement decisions of Design and Management of Spas. The lecture was excellent, Stu Garrows did a great job of presenting in an interesting manner, what most would consider as dull and boring. Some of the results of the surveys they did in Asia were very much in line with what is happening in the Western world and it is no surprise since 75% to 80% of Spa goers in resorts in the Southeast Asia basin are from the U.S., U.K. and Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand. Interpreting statistics from client survey however can be quite tricky. Sometimes the obvious answer is not the right one: case in point; it was noted that many spa owners reported little or no use from their vichy showers. The deduction made was; it may not be a good idea to include this piece of equipment since its revenue

production did not warrant the relatively high investment! Sounds good....right? Wrong! The assumption that is made here is that those spas which reported little use knew how to use this apparatus! The truth is: They don't. On consultations assignments we have encountered many such spas and after we taught their technicians how to use it to deliver a multitude of treatments, not just to rinse out a Salt glow! And trained their front office staff to sell the service, the vichy shower treatment became the 2nd most in demand after massage!

A good statistician can make the numbers say whatever they want. Manipulation of the consumer's opinions can be achieved by an astute questioning. Sometimes it may not be done with nefarious intent, often it is simply by lack of in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, the one writing up the questions is subconsciously fishing for a specific answer! Another case in point from the Bangkok presentation: the survey indicated

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that 53% of men preferred receiving their massage in the nude whereas 59% of women preferred to wear disposable underwear...! So, what question prompted that result? One that did not give other choices of either nude or disposable underwear! On a similar survey done by ISPA inc. a similar question offered other answers: How do you like to receive a massage: 1) Fully naked, 2) with a towel over the genitals, 3) with disposable underwear, 4) Fully draped? Only 6% of women indicated their preference for disposable underwear! So obviously any deduction made from the first survey will only lead to errors in the anticipation of clients expectations and cause an unnecessary expenditure?

A recent survey done in Canada reported an amazing result where 98% of people surveyed indicated that their spa visit met their expectations. This misleading result might lead spa professionals in Canada to think that they need not improve, since their services were acceptable by their clients? Of course all one needs to do is to further look into the results of this survey to find that 30% of savvy spa goers would like to see improved technical delivery!! Bottom line when reading that survey is: as consumers become more knowledgeable they demand better services...the proper deduction is: "do not wait for your clients to tell you that your services are below par, upgrade ASAP! Your future success depends on it!

Interpreting statistics is an art which demands complete understanding and knowledge of the subject being tested. As long as it is, simply to canvas number of spas, number of attendants, their gender, etc...it is not difficult to use these numbers to evaluate the strength of the Industry

but when it comes down to identifying trends, evaluating clients likes and dislikes the task becomes more complicated and requires in depth knowledge of the Industry which many "survey companies" do not have! So, before committing thousands of dollars to create a Spa, or to make significant changes to an existing operation to improve the economic health of the business it will be imperative to "consult" a well established firm which will be able to read intelligently through the meander of questions and answers and draw the right conclusions to implement decisions.

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There are many companies that are excellent at gathering information such as "Price Waterhouse Lybrand, Yesawich Peppardine, etc....they

usually have done their surveys at the request of associations such as "ISPA" or "Hotel Associations" and in most cases bring valuable general information to anyone reading their results. In some cases additional canvassing of potential target consumers might be necessary particularly when a "New" business is to be created in an area that may not have been covered? This more specific vital information can usually be found through a good Spa Consulting Company which will have done those specific searches for their clients.

In all cases obtaining and interpreting correctly statistics to plan the construction of a Spa in a hotel, resort or as an independent business, is a definite "MUST," one cannot assume to know facts based on their own perception; in order to make good use of the "Past" and anticipate what the future will hold, it is necessary to have an objective analysis such as is provided by an impartial objective survey. ■