Design Principles of Spa Areas in Accommodation Facilities

Burcu Pehlivanoğlu

Abstract—Combination of industries, traditions and therapeutic practices resulted in the emergence of spa industry as a source of interest all over the world. Spa therapies have been in use as of primeval days in various forms which give a general idea of the cultural, social and political background of the societies of that time. Consumers all over the world now have access to everything. Modern technology, travel and globalization have provided the opportunity for people to travel around the world and reside. All airports in the globalizing world are similar and all other luxury hotel facilities, including Spas, have all common features. However a world-class Spa should have many unique aspects. Location, architecture, design, size and proportion, feeling aroused by the place, harmony of the color and texture of the space, function or special treatment and massage opportunities should be emphasized in design.

Keywords—Design, hotel, spa, wellness

I. INTRODUCTION

Spas in Europe are the driving forces of tourism with their worldwide-known therapeutic thermal baths. Germany, Italy and France are among the Europe’s leading healthcare destinations in this area. In fact, therapeutic accommodation and spa cities in Germany account for 40-45% of the total tourist market [1]. Until 1970s, spa and treatment centers were located around the natural thermal waters in general and were organized in accordance with the intended treatment. These hotels were being built around the hot mineral waters recommended by the physicians for medical purposes [2]. Today, however, meaning of the spa sections designed within the hotels has changed and spas have begun to be included in most of the hotel structures as income-generating areas which increase the business volume. It is seen that especially new spa areas or spas which have been renovated in terms of design increase the overall revenue of the hotels [2]. It is observed that spa areas are crowded even during the periods when the occupancy rates of the hotels are low and that with the increase in the healthy lifestyle awareness spas have become places where wellness opportunities are offered especially for the daily visitors. The emergence of this opportunity is not accidental. Increasing social interest in nutrition and healthy living has caused these centers to become more popular. It is also seen that spas which offer alternatives aimed at healthy nutrition behaviors and restaurant services are integrated on some occasions. Massage, reflexology, aromatherapy, services such as yoga and meditation are included within the spas, too. Analyses reveal that concepts such as ‘relaxation and recreation’ ‘escape’, ‘self-reward and tolerance’ and ‘health and beauty’ are important motivation tools that encourage going to spas. Such desires as physical relaxation, self-rewarding, self-indulgence, mental peace, to get away from the business and social life stresses, to improve the overall health, to experience spa life, mental relaxation, to experience a luxury item, to benefit from the latest spa cures, to increase physical attractiveness, rejuvenation, having good time with friends, to lose weight, to keep up with a popular item are also among the motivation tools [3]. Another important reason why spa areas are so popular around the world is the people’s desire to stay young. Spa tourism is currently one of the fastest growing sub-sectors of health tourism [4]. Spas are believed to be named after a small town, hot mineral springs of which were believed to have a healing power, in Valon and Liege region of Belgium. It is possible to see words which are written in different ways but have the same meaning with the word “SPA”, which means “health by water” in short. For example it is the common meaning of the words “Salus Per Aquam”, “Sonus Per Aqua”, “Salut Per Aqua”, “Sanitas Per Aquas” and gives the meaning of health coming with water in Latin [5]. Zeki Karagülle, President of Termal Spring Thalasso and Cure Centers Association in Turkey, describes the relationship between the concepts of health and Spa as follows [6]: “Modern man, whose awareness of good health and healthy life is constantly evolving, wishes to have access to globalizing health services around the globalized world both to protect and improve his/her health and to benefit from the new and effective treatments. World population, which is getting “much” older day by day, wants to be healthy in the old ages and even desires not to grow old. Being healthy is perceived as being “fit” not only in physical terms but also in spiritual and socio-cultural terms. This changing health paradigm created the concept of wellness. Classic and “unhealthy” summer vacation concept, which is associated with sea, sand and sun trilogy, is replaced by a modern and healthy summer or winter vacation which is characterized by Spa and wellness”.

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II. SPA TYPES AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Spa industry include beauty, massage, hospitality, tourism, architecture, property development, landscape design, fashion, food and beverage, fitness and leisure, personal development, as well as complementary, conventional and traditional medicine [7]. International Spa Association (ISPA-International Spa Associations) defines the spa areas as places which “encourage the regeneration of body, mind and spirit and provide professional services for this aim” and reviews them in six groups [8]:

1. **Club Spa** Facilities, the main purposes of which are to provide professionally managed spa services on the basis of a sports facility and daily use.
2. **Day Spa** These are the facilities which are generally opened in city centers and suitable for daily SPA use. These types of facilities are easy to access.
3. **Destination Spa** Destination spas are the facilities which offer guidance services for individual spa goers to get them adopt healthy habits. Spa services, which have been converted into lifestyle, are carried out by providing a comprehensive programme aimed at physical fitness activities, wellness education, healthy cuisine and special interest areas.
4. **Medical Spa** Operates under the supervision of a licensed medical doctor and provides integrated medical care and wellness facilities.
5. **Mineral Spa** Facilities which offer natural mineral, thermal or seawater sources that are used in Hydrotherapy.
6. **Hotel/Resort Spa** Areas, which are located within resorts or hotels that provide professionally managed spa services, fitness and components of a healthy life.

In this study, Hotel and Resort Spa type, which is determined by the International Spa Association, will be discussed. In the article, mistakes and how the spatial setup should be will be explained. With the randomly selected hotel examples, spa architecture and design will be illustrated. The identity intended to be given to the area should be in harmony with the furniture, massage rooms or baths in the spa. The most important phase of the design is the concept integrity of the spa area and the hotel in general.

Spa areas accommodate multiple and distinct functions. Such factors as the business type of the hotel and whether the hotel is operated seasonally or for 12 months also affect the design. If the hotel is in service for 12 months, the spa areas can be designed larger. In addition, while some of the spas are designed as unisex some of them can be divided as woman and man depending on the cultural requirements. And similarly for spa areas which are distinguished as Woman-Man, larger areas are needed.

III. THE DESIGN PROCESS IN HOTEL SPAS

The design process is a combination of art, science and accidental discovery. The starting point of the design process is vision. Testing the vision and forming a model, finding the specialists with the required qualities and providing consultancy for them until the completion of the project come afterwards [9].

Each spa has its own hallmark: this may be provided with the interiors, building design and abundance of last touches. Views of the common areas or treatment rooms or the lighting, which is a key component in spas, may also be among the contributors [9].

Each Spa begins with a vision and continues with a story. The story which makes up the concepts should be exceptional and unique (Figure 1). Concept development is in direct proportion to imagination and world view and is a characteristic that may be found also in hotel owners –even it is rare. In fact, even the experts experienced in design and engineering occupations sometimes struggle with one another to communicate about the concept. However, by its very nature spa design requires very advanced specialization.

![Figure 1. Spa pool of Hotel Marques de Riscal designed by the famous architect Frank Gehry, The architect was inspired by the famous vines of the region for the design concept; the red color reflected on the pool represents the vine, Spain](image)

Spa requires a logical design process. Service and social areas should be separated from the areas where silence is required and similarly dry areas should be apart from the wet areas. Rest areas should be designed so as to prevent eye contact in the room. In these areas, where the individual is alone and mental and physical relaxation occur, the sense of peace should be created with the smells, sounds and colors in such a way that the design appeals to the soul. The keyword for this creation process is “material”. Soft color palettes, natural materials and large areas should be used in design. For some people, the concept of luxury means larger areas. One of the design features a spa should have is the sense of comfort.
The relationship between the places is among the most important inputs of the design phase. By making a spatial function diagram, the hierarchy of the spaces should be determined and programmed accordingly (Figure 2). Main areas required to be found in spa centers are as follows:

- The reception and waiting areas
- Administrative offices and staff rest areas
- Fitness Zone (Optional)
- Indoor and/or outdoor swimming pool (Optional)
- Men's and women's dressing rooms
- Men's and women's restrooms
- Beauty units (hairdresser, solarium, skin care rooms)
- Massage rooms (massage units can be diversified, for example Tai massage or VIP massage rooms etc.)
- Café-vitamin bar
- Baths and wet areas (sauna, snow room, steam room, bath, VIP bath, shower, Jacuzzi, floating swimming pool, thalassotherapy pool and similar areas)
- Storage and installation areas

![Spatial function diagram of a spa designed with separate areas for women and men and a fitness area](image)

Proximity of the areas should be taken into account. For example, massage rooms and rest areas, which are called as areas of silence and privacy, should be planned so as to be close to the entrance and reception. They should be designed so as to be close to the entrance and reception. Since they are associated with such services as yoga, meditation and massage and due to the sophistication of the spa centers in Far East, figures of Far East such as Buddha sculptures are used in the designs in Turkey quite often. Due to the fact that these types of centers, no matter where they are, are areas which appeal to everyone regardless of religion, language and race, use of religious symbols should be avoided in the areas as much as possible. Also candles, which are frequently used in the areas, are products of petroleum and tacamahacs disrupt the air quality so they should not be used indoors.

Product display holds an important place in the design of a spa, because the products displayed are usually not sold in a fixed way, they are products which are sold in practice by a professional expert on the basis of trust. Spa areas are an important market for the sale of these products and therefore product display stands should be established at the reception, beauty related units, massage rooms and rest areas. Fitness areas should preferably receive daylight and cardio equipment such as treadmills should be located towards the landscaping and green area. Gym section can be positioned more inside. Yellow light should be preferred for the lighting of the fitness areas. Spinning, aerobics and meditation rooms can also be considered. High energy areas such as salons and fitness should be acoustically separated from the tranquil lounge and treatment areas [9].

Fitness, spa and swimming pool which are close to the entrance of the dressing rooms should be dispersed around a common area which connects these to one another. Locker cabinets should have ventilation at their back sides. Areas for the laundry baskets for the towels and loin cloths and rest areas should also be included in the design. Showers should also be considered in these areas.

If the indoor swimming pools in the hotels will be designed with the Spa areas, the swimming pools should have a separate entrance. The reason for this is that while hotel customers do not pay extra money for the indoor swimming pools, they can avail from certain parts of the Spa such as massage rooms in return for a certain fee. Therefore entrances of these areas should be separated from each other. Also the sound, steam and smell of chlorine from the swimming pool may spoil the ambient of the spa area. Shower, dressing cabins and vitamin bar areas should be designed in the indoor swimming pool area. For the lighting color, white light should be preferred since it makes the water look cleaner.

Vitamin Bars are the areas which are located in the middle of these places and at which especially drinks are served. While determining the location of the vitamin bar, they should be close to the rest areas but should not be directly related to them because proper privacy and silence are required in the rest areas. In addition, storage areas should be considered for the vitamin bars.

Resting areas furnished with lounge chairs or furniture aimed for liying should be located at the common point of such areas as sauna, snow room, steam room, bath, VIP bath, shower,
Jacuzzi, floating pools and thalassotherapy pool. These rooms can be designed either as lodges which can accommodate several people or as single lounge chairs or heated reclining chairs. If these areas are designed especially for the group seating, then they should be designed so as to allow people extend their legs (Figure 3). With the survey carried out, it was found out that the soothing music played in these areas increased the customer satisfaction. The sound of water can also be used as a soothing sound in these areas. However the pool to be positioned in the middle should not be convenient for people making noise by swimming.

Figure 3. Lounge chairs in the Spa area of Esperanza Hotel in Mexico, relaxation area which is separated from other areas visually and formed with natural materials

Turkish Bath, which come from the tradition of bathing by pouring water in Islamic culture, is derived from the word “hamam” which means “heating, being hot” in Arabic. These areas, which were established in tourism structures, especially in thermal therapy facilities, for therapeutical purposes, are being designed in relation with the spa areas. They are also among the areas which should be in relation with the overall concept of the hotel. The most important thing to be done for the Turkish bath is to keep the bath hygienic and hot enough. The bath temperature should be around 45-50 degrees, while temperature of the body scrubbing chamber should be 30 degrees. Especially for the hygiene of the water-related areas, the areas designed for sitting and scrubbing such as the navel stone should be designed with a certain inclination and their drains should be located not to allow water accumulation at any point. It is important in terms of hygiene that the Turkish bath basin is demounted and that it is dismantled from time to time and washed. The space should not be too low and the height of the dome should be sufficient. As in the historical Turkish bath structures, natural lighting is preferred however if the dome has been designed so as not to allow natural lighting and ventilation, the humid air, which is heated and vaporized, should be discharged by means of a ventilation channel in the middle of the dome. Also proximity and spatial narrowness and bath basin locations of the scrubbing chambers inside the baths should be planned in a proper way. Rest area (warm room), which is positioned outside the baths should be large enough and convenient for food service (Figure 4). Turkish baths and wet areas, areas such as sauna, snow room, steam room, baths, VIP baths, showers, Jacuzzi, adventure showers can be designed together. Even these areas can share a common rest area.

One of the most significant problems during the design phase, which disrupt the overall integrity, is that while such units as baths have the cultural codes of Romans of Turks, massage rooms are inspired by the Far East culture. Therefore it is important to properly determine the design integrity to be used for bringing the areas, which are established by imitating such different cultures, together.

Figure 4. Rest area in front of the bath of Rixos Premium Belek Hotel, Antalya

If the Spa is large enough, two saunas are suggested to be designed. The reason behind this is that different nations use the sauna at different degrees. For example while the Turks usually prefer to use the sauna at 70 degrees, the Russians use it around 90-100 degrees. Also there certainly should be a drain –loophole- inside the sauna. And the last stair of the sauna should be removable so that it can be wash-cleaned when required. The floors should be coated with ceramics before coating with the sauna materials. Steam rooms should also be designed with the sauna principle and should certainly have a drain inside and have a tap to wash the area, in hygienic terms. The seating areas are preferred to be designed as three-staged and inclined. The purpose of this inclination is to enable that the sweat flowing from the body is slipped away. The reason why the seating areas are designed as three-staged is due to the fact that the heat increases from bottom to the top. Therefore people who prefer the steam room hot can seat at the top stair. A technical room should be located next to the steam room. And there should be an alarm system inside the sauna and steam room. Storage areas are also very important in spa venues. However it is more suitable to establish several small storage areas in several places rather than establishing a large one in one place. Cleaning supplies, buckets, towels, loin cloths and beauty supplies are kept inside these storage areas. The reason for designing these storage areas frequently is to avoid that the staff carry the buckets from one place to another in front of the
customers. When one of the groups (staff rest areas or storage areas) including service rooms is opened, a white fluorescent light should not be emitted into the interior area by disrupting the harmony. Also the staff providing therapeutical services should not have chats in the corridors. Dazzling should be avoided with artificial lighting in the massage rooms; lights, intensities of which can be lowered and increased by means of dimmer systems, should be preferred. The rooms should be designed in neither hot (red, orange etc.) colors nor in cold colors. In terms of relief, natural colors should be preferred. Importance should be attached to the designs of the spa areas, which appeal to all five senses, in the tourism facilities. They appeal to the eyes with their design and lighting, satisfy the sense of hearing with the special music system in the area and the sense of smell with different aromatherapy oils while appealing to the sense of touch with the massage. In these areas, which arouse the feelings of people, even the location of the mirrors is important because the person receiving the massage should not see himself/herself. Therefore the mirrors should be positioned in such a way that person receiving the massage would not see himself/herself (Figure 5).

Ceiling and floor materials should be clean and custom designed. In these areas, when the guests are receiving massage or scrub they usually view the ceiling or the floor. An inspiring atmosphere and physical satisfaction are important in the design of the spa areas because people react emotionally to the physical environment. In order for the spa experience to be unique, people should always remember the design of the areas where they are physically satisfied.

IV. CONCLUSION

Development of spa industry has gained considerable momentum in the recent years. All corners of the world offer alternatives which can provide innovation to these areas in terms of design. In Turkey with the already existing bath culture, a healthy lifestyle and hygiene concept have become integrated. Designs of the spas all over the world are diversified and spa of a hotel in Bali Island and spa at a hotel in the city center differ from one another in terms of concept. However it is necessary to set forth certain principles during the design phase and increase the quality of such areas. Principles to be taken into account during Spa Design can be summarized as follows;

- The place should have sufficient storage area (Areas where the laundry, professional products and cleaning supplies will be positioned should have sufficient space).
- Cross-circulation areas should not be created in the place; i.e. the area should be designed as dry – semi wet – wet. There should not be direct pass from a wet area into a dry area, semi wet areas should be considered.
- Capacity calculations of the places should not be mistaken, for example the number of the cardio and stretching equipment in the fitness areas should be properly calculated.
- Suitable flooring should be preferred for the wet feet walked areas.
- Sales areas should be pre-designed and stands should be positioned afterwards.
- Privacy areas should be designed so as to avoid eye contact.
- Factors to cause noise pollution in the place should be eliminated.
- Design and location of the relaxation areas should be convenient.
- Details and finishes of the shower areas should be clean.
- Design of lighting should be proper, the heat amount should not be low or high, the color of the light should be properly adjusted.
- Relaxing colors should be preferred in the place; however striking colors can be used in design within the framework of the main theme in relation to the concept.
- Ventilation should not make noise especially in the areas such as massage rooms.
- The place should be designed to be fit for the old and disabled.
- Attention should be paid to the hygiene of the wet areas.

REFERENCES


