



Patrick Saussay

Founder and CEO, GPSA

The respected spa consultant, who works with evianSPAs, explores the challenges of implementing international standards across multiple sites

The foremost challenge in working with a global operation with multiple sites lies in reconciling cultural differences while establishing international standards that do not conflict with local expectations. You need to be mindful of the maturity of the wellness market, as well as the expertise of teams or the operating costs, as they can vary significantly. This is a crucial consideration when shaping a model that can be successfully replicated internationally.

Even the very notion of spa and wellness differs depending on the cultural context. Drawing a clear line across such diverse realities is not simple. You must remain attuned to each market, while also embodying universal identity markers and consistent quality standards applicable to all sites.

“Addressing cultural differences must begin with a thorough study of the target market”

This can be done by visiting spas, meeting local stakeholders and assessing practices on the ground in order to avoid being disconnected from client expectations. Operational differences arise most acutely in human



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resources, where discernment is essential to ensure that guidelines remain practical. Conversely, in areas such as client comfort, quality of equipment, cleanliness and hygiene, standards must remain firm and uncompromising.

Concepts and wellness experiences are best defined with a degree of flexibility, leaving room for cultural nuances. What remains non-negotiable is a clear understanding of the brand’s essence, which must be recognisable across every site. Around this core identity, local specificities can be thoughtfully integrated in collaboration with each team, signalling both an understanding of the market and a genuine personalisation of the experiences, without compromising the brand’s DNA.

“At evianSPA we have translated this philosophy into a set of consistent identity markers”

This includes a graphic charter, design elements, a specific colour palette, treatment menu structure, protocols, fragrances, linens, soundscapes, the AquaBar and many more details that together create a recognisable evianSPA environment.

We have also established a hierarchy of operating standards, distinguishing between the mandatory ones and those considered nice to have. During the development phase, we work hand in hand with our licensees to adapt the concept to local contexts, ensuring harmonious integration with the identity and strengths of each host hotel. We also build cultural bridges within the treatment room offering by incorporating local experiences or brands, for instance, integrating a local skincare brand at evianSPA Tokyo.

Once the spa is launched, we secure quality and performance through continuous dialogue, and regular on-site visits and training. These interactions enable us to monitor client perceptions, listen to team feedback, and adapt the offer or the

procedures whenever necessary, all while preserving the integrity of the brand.

“Maintain an open mind and avoid a simplistic copy-and-paste approach to practices”

My advice is to visit local spas to grasp codes, methods and expectations in each market. Clearly define elements that embody the identity and quality of your concept, and ensure their presence in all sites while allowing flexibility to foster local acceptance.

Maintain regular contact, delivering training adapted to each audience, and cultivate a spirit of attentive listening, because genuine mutual understanding is a cornerstone of success. In essence, the art of international spa development resides in balancing loyalty to the brand’s codes with respect for cultural specificities. It is through this equilibrium, anchored in a clear DNA yet enriched by local nuances, that evianSPA continues to evolve. ●●●●

Taking a global outlook

Patrick Saussay is the founder and CEO of wellness project management consulting firm GPSA. The company supports executives and investors in their wellness ventures, from spa and brand creation to innovation strategy and international development. Specialising in complex projects, he led the design of the evianSPA concept and continues to oversee its global expansion. With his team, he has worked on projects across France, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and his expertise has been key in shaping the spa and concept for the iconic Hotel Negresco in France.

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