

## SpaTrade

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### Spa Conference at Cosmoprof Asia 2015

As Cosmoprof Asia 2015 returns to celebrate its 20th anniversary, spa and wellness experts come together to take a close look at the rising Chinese industry

**Celebrating its 20th** anniversary, Cosmoprof Asia is set to return as the region's most influential and trendsetting beauty fair for its 2015 edition. For three days between November 11 and 13, the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre will once again play host to this international event, featuring an extensive programme that covers every facet of the beauty and health industry.

This year, the Cosmoprof Asia Spa Conference – to be held on November 12 – has invited a panel of industry leaders to share their insights into a number of questions related to the evolution of the spas and wellness industry. Part of the discussions will highlight the growth and future of spas in China, where the spa business has seen a significant increase over the past decade.

"The number of spas increased from less than 50,000 at the beginning of the decade to more than 200,000 by the end of last year. The industry output is estimated at US\$150 billion in 2014 – an increase of 15 per cent from 2013," notes panelist Johnny Chang, CEO & Founder of Spa Solutions Training & Management Consultancy.

He adds, "Since the first few years of the last decade, beauty salons, and body and foot massage parlours have all transformed into spas." His observation is shared by Lily Tan, Vice President, WTS International Asia Pacific: "Ten years ago, China had a beauty, TCM massage, foot massage and fitness industry. Today, you have lots of very beautifully renovated spas in hotels."

This change might have been driven by the growing demand by Chinese spa-goers, who now, according to Tan, travel more extensively and are able to compare the service standards with what they've experienced overseas, which create higher expectations.

Fellow panelist, Sara Codner, who is Director of Spa at Mandarin Oriental,



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Guangzhou, also points out: "I have noticed the consumer becoming more spa savvy and expecting a higher degree of customer service. Their demands have been focusing more and more on the consistency of luxury service."

The rapidly rising consumer demands and expectations have, however, led to a prominent issue the industry is facing right now – the standard of therapists. "[Therapists] have no idea why their customers have got so demanding, because they believe they are doing their job," Tan comments. "Many therapists are still living

in the 'high touch service' era, whereas customers have already moved onto the 'high touch plus spa culture' era."

Another cause of the problem is the lack of a regulatory body in China that ensures therapists are qualified or "have the training required to perform spa treatments", says Codner. "Whilst many therapists have excellent skills and carry out treatments to an exemplary standard, this area needs to be focused on."

Despite the challenges faced by spa owners and operators in China, Tan remains positive about the future of the industry. "The Chinese spas will get more regulated, with more well-trained staff," she says before adding that the increasing cost of training and keeping therapists will steer spas towards more equipment aids. But as far as high-end spas are concerned, Codner believes "the spa scene may well go back to less technology with people wanting to escape from the digital world."

However, as the Chinese spa market gradually matures and diversifies, spas wanting to succeed – whether with more or less technology – should note one thing: "The tendency of bypassing spa benefits to simply catch up with so-called trends will ease down rapidly. The spas who know how to offer excellent guest services will be very profitable in the next ten years," says Chang.

Codner concurs: "Listening to your customers and what their needs are, is vital to having your guests loyal to you."

Offering a key platform for global players to exchange ideas and information, Cosmoprof Asia continues to play a crucial role in advancing the industry. Take part in this annual event and join the discussions with industry experts at this year's Spa Conference. More information on the conference's agenda and speakers can be found on the show's website.

[www.cosmoprof-asia.com](http://www.cosmoprof-asia.com)