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Back to the future

Celebrating the industry's history while keeping everyone's attention firmly on what lies ahead, the 2016 Global Wellness Summit, held in the Tyrolean Alps, was a thought-provoking and inspirational gathering

— REPORT BY SARAH TODD AND SARAH CAMILLERI —

The tenth annual Global Wellness Summit (GWS) took place in October against the stunning backdrop of the Tyrolean Alps in Kitzbühel, Austria.

The largest event to date, more than 500 spa, hospitality and wellness decision-makers attended from over 45 nations to shape the future of the \$3.72 trillion wellness economy.

The 2016 theme of 'Back to the Future' sparked an agenda designed to engage and entertain with both examinations of the past and visions for the future of the global spa and wellness industries.

This year's host country of Austria remains a groundbreaking force in the global wellness tourism market, despite being a relatively small nation of around 8.5m people. As one of the first countries to incorporate wellness into its tourism marketing more than 25 years ago, Austria ranks sixth globally for wellness tourism revenues with an annual figure of \$15.4 billion, according to the new Global Wellness Institute (GWI) data, while its 1,354 spas generate \$1.6 billion in revenue per year.

As Susie Ellis, chairman and CEO of the Global Wellness Institute and Global Wellness Summit, explained, this year's theme was very much shaped by the Summit's location: "So much of the spa and wellness industry was born in Austria. Hosting the Summit here allowed us

to analyse the past decade for our industry and forecast what lies ahead in the next ten years."

Sharing expertise

With numerous in-depth keynote sessions, panels, discussion forums and research presentations taking place across the Summit's three days, a wide range of topics were covered, from design, marketing and education, to wellness tourism, architecture, beauty and the emerging sector of wellness lifestyle real estate.

Starting off an insightful and memorable agenda was Louie Schwartzberg, founder of US-based company Moving Art, who greeted delegates with a welcome session that received a standing ovation, before Susie Ellis and Summit co-chairs Susan Harmsworth, MBE, founder of ESPA, and Dr Franz Linser, founder and managing director of Austria's Linser Hospitality provided some brief opening remarks.

The first keynote was from Dr David Bosshart, managing director of the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute in Switzerland. With a session entitled 'Wellness 2030 – from old fashioned industrial romance to data buddhism', Bosshart suggested that the rapid normalisation of digital media meant this was now the defining characteristic of our age. He said that the digital revolution as we understand it was over, as we "move towards an algorithmic humanism", where listening to our data will become more important to optimise our behaviour.

In this post-digital world, Bosshart asserted, "the only scarcity we will have... is the power of imagination". Towards the end of his talk, he revealed that thanks to the prevalence of smart phones and social media, more photographs were taken last year than in the whole of the rest of the history of mankind.

Wellness insights

One of the standout moments of each GWS is the unveiling of the latest research figures from the GWI. This year, Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston, senior research fellows at the GWI, enlisted the help of selected members ▶



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1. Dressed to impress: Nancy Davis, Susie Ellis, Nadja Swarovski, Susan Harmsworth, MBE and Gina Diez Barroso at the glittering gala event at Swarovski Crystal Worlds
2. Dietmar Mueller-Elmau, CEO and owner of Germany's Schloss Elmau Luxury Spa and Cultural Hideaway
3. Louie Schwartzberg, founder of US-based company Moving Art, gave an opening presentation that received a standing ovation
4. David Bosshart, managing director of the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute, discussed the 'post-digital' age
5. Fitness and fun atop Hahnenkamm mountain
6. President and COO of Babor, USA, Mark Wuttke
7. Summit co-chair Dr Franz Linser, managing director of Linser Hospitality, welcomed visitors to the Summit
8. The Tyrolean town of Kitzbühel provided a stunning backdrop for this year's Global Wellness Summit



► of the audience who held up inflatable balls of varying sizes to visually break down the ten different industry sectors that comprise the global wellness economy.

Defining wellness as 'the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyle that lead to a state of holistic health', Yeung and Johnston provided a detailed but accessible summary of the latest research from the *2016 Global Wellness Economy Monitor*, which will be released in early 2017.

Key findings included that the wellness industry grew 10.6% in the last two years; from a \$3.36 trillion market in 2013 to \$3.72 trillion in 2015; and it now represents 5.1% of global economic output.

Among the ten wellness segments studied for the report, the fastest growing during this period were Preventative/Personalised Medicine and Public Health (+23.5%) followed by Fitness and Mind Body (+21.4%) and Wellness Lifestyle Real Estate (+18.6%).

Concluding, Johnston said that the growth trajectory of the global wellness economy was

resilient to short-term economic cycles and geo-political elements. "We predict a major shift in how we think about wellness and how we integrate it into our daily lives," she added.

Dr Franz Linser followed with a short keynote examining wellness 'as it is meant to be'. He predicted a paradigm change would happen soon and that wellness 'as it is meant to be' means active health promotion through lifestyle change. He said it was impossible to 'sell' prevention of the negative aspects of life; rather, the focus should be on selling the best possible life an individual can have. Dr Linser added that we should get rid of 'to do' lists and replace them with 'to be' lists in order to truly embrace life as a whole.

The naked truth

Before lunch, a packed general session on European spa and wellness traditions provided a range of insights. Featuring Aldina Duarte Ramos of Accor Hotels, Adrian Egger from Linser Hospitality, Lasse Eriksen of Nordic Hotels & Resorts, and Alla Sokolova from

Inbalans, the panellists were moderated by Six Senses' vice-president of spas and wellness Anna Bjurstam.

Topics included how bathing traditions provided a great marriage between health and spirituality, helping people to stay 'purified, healthy and strong'. Describing thalassotherapy as "a gift from nature", Aldina Duarte Ramos focused on a brief history of French thalassotherapy and stated that biologist René Quinton's pioneering ocean science work is still used in modern day therapies.

After lunch, journalist and filmmaker Giselle Fernandez interviewed two European spa visionaries. Balthasar Hauser, owner of Austria's world-leading five-star luxury eco-resort, Bio-Hotel Stanglwirt, told how he began his inspirational journey at 17 years old when he inherited a 400-year-old Tyrolean farmhouse. He described how, when he decided to transform the property into a resort, the banks wouldn't lend him any money, so he extended the farm's stables using materials sourced with help from friends and family.



1. Six Senses' vice-president of spas and wellness Anna Bjurstam
2. Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve discussed the economics of happiness and wellbeing
3. Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston presented the latest GWI research
4. Gharieni's Mehmet Er gets active in the Austrian outdoors
5. Irene Forte, brand manager for Rocco Forte Hotels, gave a fascinating talk on the Millennial market
6. Mia Kyricos, chair of the GWI's Wellness Communities Initiative
7. Delegates said a resounding 'Yes' to the prospect of Global Wellness Day 2017



He emphasised how deeply important it was to him, as a farmer, that every part of Stanglwirt's construction was genuine and authentic. His inventive workarounds to avoid debt, he said, eventually came from the belief that "ideas were better than loans".

Next up was Richard Schmitz, CEO of Germany's H/S/M Hotel und Spa Management and also the recipient of this year's Global Wellness Award for Leader in Innovation, who recalled adding '& Spa' to the name of Germany's iconic Brenners Park Hotel in 1983. As he joked, to begin with "people couldn't even spell 'spa'". Subsequently, as the property became world famous, Schmitz said his philosophy that "people were the most important factor in any business" remained paramount during his tenure.

Following these instructive and inspirational interviews, a short keynote from neuroscientist Dr Claudia Aguirre explored what neuroscience can teach us about beauty. She asked if there is any such thing as 'universal beauty' as well as whether humans actually need the concept,

before exploring how the brain processes both beauty and sublimity. Concluding with a positive message, Dr Aguirre said that beauty could change a person's self-esteem and that, if we can find beauty in the harshest of places, then there is hope.

President and COO of Babor USA, Mark

Wuttke, then proceeded with an examination of beauty through the ages. He said the beauty industry is now at an interesting crossroads as the consumer's search for more than a personalised experience is leaving the big companies unsure of which direction their business should go in. Consequently they are

The cradle of wellness



Dr. Jürgen Bodenseer, president of the Tyrolean Chamber of Commerce, discussed the future of wellness tourism in Austria

"Wellness is one of the fastest growing markets in the world.

"It is often said that the Tyrolean region created wellness tourism in the 1980s and we certainly revolutionised the concept of a year-round wellness destination. For Austria, and particularly the Tyrol, wellness hotels are our 'pulling horses' in creating a cross-seasonal 365-day offering, and they are a very important market for us, generating more than \$1.5 billion in revenue a year.

"From companies such as Schletterer, which was the first company in the Tyrol to start supplying premium specialist equipment to spas, to pioneering wellness hotels such as the Hotel & Resort Alpenrose, our enduring wellness offering is authentic, fully integrated and always from the heart."

www.wko.at/tirol

Recruitment challenge

Katherine Johnston and Ophelia Yeung from the GWI discuss spa career statistics

"Our projections for spa industry growth over the next five years indicate that there will be an estimated 2.8 million people employed by spas in 2018. An additional 400,000 trained spa therapists and 70,000 experienced spa managers/directors (above the current level) will be needed by the industry in 2020.

"We also looked at spa employment by world region and broke these down into Europe; Asia-Pacific; North America; Latin America and the Caribbean; the Middle East and North Africa; and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Europe, we've seen the total employment in spas rise from 678,920 in 2013 to 745,584 in 2015 and we project that, by 2020, there will be 946,765 people needed in this region alone."



- ▷ rapidly acquiring smaller companies. Wuttke said this presented a great deal of opportunity for the spa industry, as "where else can you find such a truly individualised, bespoke experience?"

Design inspiration

Day two began with a keynote interview focusing on wellness architecture and design. ARUP's associate director Ann Marie Aguilar and sustainable design specialist Vicki Lockhart were joined by Lars Krückeberg, founding partner of Germany's GRAFT Gesellschaft von Architekten, and Neil Jacobs of Six Senses, to cover the latest innovative design solutions and thinking around environmental protection.

Krückeberg detailed some of his practice's pioneering work within healing environments, including the redesign of an intensive care unit at the University Clinic Charité in Berlin, which incorporated more holistic lighting and greatly reduced noise levels. The hospital found that patients in this considered environment healed more quickly; Krückeberg used this as an example of what he called the 'cradle-to-cradle' circular economies concept.

Neil Jacobs then presented a range of ways in which Six Senses was using cutting-edge wellness design in its new properties at Six Senses Gammarth on the northern Tunisia coast and 1 Hotel Marrakech in Morocco. Jacobs spoke of the importance of elements such as biological lighting, which is supportive to the body's natural Circadian rhythms, and biophilic design principles, whereby guests should have a visual connection with nature through the presence of water, natural materials, colour and patterns wherever possible.

This was followed by a short, but powerful, keynote session from Dietmar Mueller-Elmau, CEO and owner of Schloss Elmau Luxury Spa and Cultural Hideaway in Germany. Perhaps best described as a creatively clever disruptor, Mueller-Elmau gave an insight into his spa, which has used little marketing but operates at around 80% occupancy throughout the year, mostly through word-of-mouth publicity.

Having invested more than \$100 million in the property over the past decade, he said the philosophy of Schloss Elmau is to provide a cultural offering that opposes homogeneity and instead celebrates "maximum individuality". Guests include authors and musicians who 'play to stay', and from people choosing the colour of their bathrobes to the active encouragement of children to visit all parts of the hotel and spa, his underlying logic was that freedom of choice leads to the "hope of happiness".

The conference's second day was moved outside thanks to an afternoon spent at the



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1. Fabian Franz of Vitalis Dr Joseph and Maria Hauser from Bio-Hotel Stanglwirt
2. Spa visionary Richard Schmitz was awarded the Global Wellness Award for Leader in Innovation
3. Zappos advisor Maggie Hsu described the company's philosophy of self-organisation
4. Economist Thierry Malleret discussed the concepts of 'fairness' and 'mandatory wellness'
5. Dr Harald Stossler, medical director of Austria's VIVAMAYR clinic
6. Summit co-chair Susan Harmsworth, MBE
7. Delegates unwind in a yoga class
8. The second day of the Summit began with a keynote session exploring wellness architecture and design





- ▷ top of Hahnenkamm mountain – home of the world's fastest downhill ski race and accessed via a state-of-the-art gondola – before delegates enjoyed a gala event at the famous Swarovski Crystal Worlds with a personal welcome from executive board member Nadja Swarovski.

The economics of happiness

The final day began with the first-ever Shark Tank of Wellness Student Competition. A panel of judges from companies including Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, ESPA, KLAFS and Jane Iredale interrogated three finalists in a live event. The top prize of \$5,000 was eventually awarded to Shahrin Ali Raivi from North South University in Bangladesh, for her 'Mukto Sanitary Napkin' concept. Her idea was to make sustainable sanitary towels accessible to the 80% of women throughout Bangladesh who currently rely on unsanitary and ineffective options, by making use of the leftover materials from her country's cotton industry.

Next, Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve's keynote examined the 'economics of happiness and wellbeing'. Presenting parts of Gallup's World Happiness Report, Dr De Neve, from Oxford University, explained that economic development was good for wellbeing but that wellbeing is twice as sensitive to economic loss as it is to gain. To this end, in times of loss, the wellness industry should be at its most active, as this is when people will need it the most.

Fellow Oxford professor Gerry Bodeker then addressed the topic of mental wellbeing and how conceptions of wellness have translated into the mental health arena. He explained how,

as an industry, we should be bringing wellness more into the community to help towards its greater democratisation. He advised that the wellness industry should not look to big companies as drivers of change and growth, but instead find the 'boundary riders', or the wellness equivalent of the Silicon Valley garage start-ups, as it is they that will provide the future billion dollar industries.

Following Professor Bodeker, Irene Forte, brand manager for Rocco Forte Hotels, delivered a dynamic keynote focusing on the Millennial generation. Forte explained how the new Rocco Forte spa concept, which went live in January 2016, focuses on the four 'notions' of 'rituals', 'fitness', 'nourish' and 'health'. This direction was said to be rooted in recent research that showed Millennials are deeply engaged with these aspects of wellness.

Forte also explained how the group has tapped into the increasing trend of staff education via mobile devices with the launch of 'Map My Future', an app which enables Rocco Forte employees to access hospitality training and development via their smart phone.

Back to the future

After lunch, the co-founder of The Monthly Barometer, economist Thierry Malleret delivered a hypothesis on the role of 'fairness', citing it as the best economic proxy. Around the world, Malleret said, healthcare systems are 'reeling' from a combination of ageing populations, funding constraints and rising levels of chronic disease. He believed wellness should now be mandatory in the public and private sectors, and

Above from left: Delegates had great fun at the famous Swarovski Crystal Worlds gala event; The Breakers, Palm Beach, Florida was announced as the host of Global Wellness Summit 2017

that workplace wellness should be a strategic imperative for forward-looking companies.

Mia Kyricos, chair of the Wellness Communities Initiative at the GWI, led the informative final panel presentation of the Summit, with contributions from Samantha Foster, director at Destination Spa Management; Brooke Warrick, president of American LIVES, Inc; and Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston of the GWI. Looking at wellness communities and lifestyle real estate, the session detailed a number of global developments that have either launched, such as Serenbe in Georgia, US, or are in development, including Q'In Wellness in China. It was said that these projects showed the power of 'positive economics' in all areas of the wellness communities design process.

The final keynote belonged to Maggie Hsu, an advisor at online clothing retailer Zappos. With a philosophy of "intentional inefficiency", she described how Zappos headquarters, which is owned by Amazon, has been 'designed for collisions', with water-cooler moments deliberately replicated in order to increase employee trust and collaboration.

Susie Ellis wrapped up a memorable event by announcing that the 2017 Global Wellness Summit is to take place at The Breakers, Palm Beach, Florida, US.

www.globalwellnesssummit.org

