

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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**Vandana Deswal,**  
Department of Business  
Administration, Maharaja Surajmal  
Institute, New Delhi  
A1, Ashoka Apartments, Plot 8, Sec 12,  
Dwarka, New Delhi 110075,  
Email : vandanaDeswal08@yahoo.com



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## Barriers on the Road to Development: a Relative Study of Deficiencies of the Spas in India and USA

**Vandana Deswal**  
Department of Business Administration, Maharaja Surajmal  
Institute, New Delhi  
A1, Ashoka Apartments, Plot 8, Sec 12, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075

### ABSTRACT

This research looks into the deficiencies of the spa industry, its products and services and also provides a comparative analysis of these in India and USA. The rationale behind this study is that spa industry has come up as one with robust growth and potentially profitable future in the developed nations. The developing nations too have started realizing their worth. But despite a rich legacy of spas, developing nations have been lagging far behind their counterparts. Hence, a t test was conducted to understand the difference between the level of insufficiencies of the services in USA and India and then a percentage analysis is presented to illustrate the flaws in the present system. It was found that Indian spa industry needs to come up with standardized therapies and services, accredited institutions and associations in order to accelerate its growth. The comparison also shows the chasm between the standards adopted for hygiene, accreditation and types of services and products used by the spas in the two countries. It is hoped that the stakeholders of the Indian spa industry would take up the challenge of overcoming these insufficiencies and work with the government and the allied industries to become the major revenue earners in the economy.

**Keywords:-**comparison, deficiencies, India, percentage analysis, spa industry, standards, t-test, USA.

### INTRODUCTION

Spas, due to their healing and medicinal properties, have long been a big factor in drawing people from near and far off places. Recently too, there has been a revival of interest in them. With all the scientific backing and increased exposure in the media, spas have come up as a promising industry. But, it is at a different stage of development in different countries. In the developed nations like USA, spas have been contributing a lot in the economy and are counted amongst the major revenue earners as part of the hospitality sector. While in the developing nations like India, China and Thailand, despite a rich legacy of spa culture and therapies, they are still at a nascent stage facing the teething problems. A comparison of the status and working of spas in the developed nations can provide a good platform to these countries to bring this industry up and to remove the shortcomings of the existing structure. This research paper aims at understanding the deficiencies of the spa industry in the current scenario through a

comparative analysis in the two countries, USA and India.

### METHOD

This paper uses an exploratory cum descriptive research design. A sample of 200 people was taken (100 each in India and USA), using non purposive probability technique. A questionnaire was designed with the responses taken on a scale that was assigned weights later for calculating percentage analysis. For the comparison of the two groups (USA and India), t -test was also conducted. The data thus analyzed has given a clear picture of the deficiencies of the spa industry and it is expected to act as a guide to the respective spa industries and its various stakeholders.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the gaps between the Indian and the USA spa industry in the context of the prevailing deficiencies:

Variables (Deficiencies)	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Certified therapists	15.284	198	.000	2.44000	.15965	2.12518	2.75482
Standard treatments.	11.261	198	.000	1.95000	.17317	1.60851	2.29149
Standard products.	8.466	198	.000	1.60000	.18898	1.22732	1.97268
Hygienic environment.	11.361	198	.000	2.01000	.17692	1.66111	2.35889
Credibility	9.058	198	.000	1.67000	.18438	1.30640	2.03360
Awareness about their products	5.371	198	.000	1.07000	.19923	.67712	1.46288
Reasonable pricing	1.563	198	.120	.25000	.15993	-.06539	.56539
Proper marketing	.894	198	.372	.13000	.14542	-.15677	.41677
Scientific backing of their claims	2.826	198	.005	.43000	.15214	.12998	.73002
Good location	7.592	198	.000	1.31000	.17255	.96973	1.65027
Lack of government regulations.	13.009	198	.000	1.95000	.14989	1.65441	2.24559
History of being used as a disguise for prostitution.	-2.538	198	.012	-.22000	.08667	-.39091	-.04909
Lack of scientific efficacy of the treatments.	9.850	198	.000	1.40000	.14213	1.11971	1.68029
Their employment is viewed as non-prestigious.	12.243	198	.000	1.81000	.14784	1.51845	2.10155
Spas often make exaggerated claims about their benefits	.758	198	.450	.09000	.11881	-.14430	.32430
Spa services are less affordable to common man.	1.863	198	.064	.17000	.09125	-.00994	.34994

**TABLE 1:- t-test for equality of mean scores of deficiencies of the spa industry in the two countries (Independent sample test) Equal Variance Assumed**

The above statistical results of the t test reveal that there are huge gaps in the deficiencies prevailing in the spa industry of the two countries, provided by the significance value of less than 0.05 across most of the indicators. These results prove that the developing nations are facing more problems than the developed ones. Except for few common areas of concerns like high prices of the services, exaggerated claims about the services and lack of proper marketing; there are huge gaps in the challenges faced by the spa industries in the two nations.

Developing nations are more concerned of the lack of hygiene, credibility, standard treatments and products and certified therapists. Even the label of 'shady business' is more strongly present in India due to the lack of government regulations for the industry and the ugly incidents of spas used as a cover for prostitution at places. So, the analysis brings out the fact that there are visible chasms in the state of the spa industry in the two countries specifically in the context of deficiencies.

S. No	Description of the indicators of deficiencies	Maximum Score N = 500		Percentage Score	
		India	USA	India	USA
<b>1</b>	<b>Spas often lack:</b>				
a	Certified therapist	432	188	86	38
b	Standard treatments	373	178	75	36
c	Standard products	391	231	78	46
d	Hygienic environment	413	212	83	42
e	Credibility	434	267	87	53
f	Awareness about their products	394	287	79	57
g	Reasonable pricing	424	399	85	80
h	Proper marketing	447	434	89	87
i	Scientific backing of their claims	452	409	90	82
j	Good location	399	268	80	54
Total	n = 5000	4159	2873	83	57
<b>2</b>	<b>Spas are still seen as places for shady business:</b>	<b>Obtained Score N = 500</b>		<b>Percentage Score</b>	
		<b>India</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>USA</b>
a	Lack of Government regulations for the industry	431	458	86	92
b	History of spas being used as a disguise for prostitution	458	480	92	96
c	Lack of scientific efficacy of the treatments	430	290	86	58
d	Spa employment being viewed as non-prestigious jobs	406	225	81	45
Total	n = 2000	1725	1453	86	73
<b>3</b>	Spas claims about benefits are exaggerations	423	414	85	83

**TABLE 2:- Comparison of deficiencies of the spa services:**

The above table expresses the concerns of the spa viewed as the place to rejuvenate, revitalize and relax consumers about the deficiencies of spas. The spas are marred with similar deficiencies across the

continents, though the intensity varies. With USA consumers being more concerned about the lack of proper marketing, lack of scientific evidences of the efficacy of the claims of the benefits accruing from the services and the products and reasonable pricing of the services; it is clear that the spa industry needs to see that the clients get value for the money and are not deceived by exaggerated claims. American consumers also stated that there is a lack of awareness about the products, spas need to be located at suitable locations and more efforts are required to improve the credibility of the spas. On the other hand, availability of certified therapists, standard products and treatment and hygienic environment are of major concern to the Indian consumers more than that of the American ones as indicated by the huge variation in the percentage score. For the Indian consumers, apart from the need to market spas properly and provide scientific backing to the claims; reasonable pricing and credibility is the major deficiency of the spas. The spas are also fighting to be a reputed profession as they are viewed as shady places since they lack government support and scientific efficacy of their treatments. Most importantly, since spas were used as a disguise for prostitution, it is still marred with that stigma. This is why it is seen as a place for shady business and not considered a reputable job. These results can act as a guide to the industry to take steps and improve the overall situation.

Considering all the factors that involve Indian spa industry today, this research work makes it clear that it is plagued by most of the issues that an unorganized industry faces like lack of standards or absence of an accredited association. On the other hand this industry in the US is blooming and is a major revenue contributor of the economy. There is a clear need to replicate this success story in our country. Asian countries, like India, need it more so because we boast of a rich ancient background of spas and they can prove to be a big blessing to their economies if marketed well.

### CONCLUSION

To encapsulate, it can be securely acknowledged that despite a happy prevalent situation, there is a large scope of improvement in the spas especially in India and developed nations' spa models may be emulated by the developing nations to erase the apprehensions of the consumers related to the credibility and efficacy of the therapies apart from providing standardized spa operations, so that spas can be repositioned as the major magnet to attract the tourists. This is not to suggest that the developing nations' spas lack selling factor, but it is a guide towards a better and more profitable spa businesses.

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