

Recreation, relaxation or something else? Exploring the motives for visiting the wellness hotels in Serbia

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Abstract — Nowadays, the various forms of health tourism are gaining popularity in the world tourism. In the last decade, health tourism is featuring a growing development primarily in the area of wellness tourism. Wellness services are today a very important criterion for guests when deciding which hotel to choose. For this reason it is necessary to pay great attention to planning and design of this part of the hotel product but also to explore the motives for visiting wellness hotels in order to adjust the hotel offer to the most dominant consumers. In order to follow the trends, wellness hotels should specialize in providing health information and a wide range of recreation and relaxation programs. Therefore, in order to keep up with good quality, hotel managers should examine the expectations, motives of the visit and the needs of their customers. Based on this, the main objectives of this research are to examine the characteristics of the motivational behavior of the tourists visiting the wellness hotels, explore the role of need for recreation in visiting wellness hotels. In addition, the study explores the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and their motivational behavior in relation to the wellness facilities in Serbian hotels.

Keywords— *motivation factors, wellness hotels, Serbia*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term “wellness” was first used by American doctor Halbert L. Dunn who introduced the model of “high-level wellness” stating that this term means balancing body, mind, and spirit with the social environment, culture, and spirituality [1]. The term was developed by combining the words “well-being” and “fitness”. Dunn defined it as “an integrated method of functioning which is oriented to maximizing the potential of which an individual is capable, within the environment where he is functioning” [2]. Wellness concepts are becoming a defining feature of a sustainable future and are proving necessary for those individuals who want to stay healthy [3], [4]. Wellness tourism has become important topic in tourism research and tourism business and the concept of wellness have established its standing in tourism terminology [5]. Wellness tourism can be seen as a result of travel, motivated by preserving or promoting the health. Those travellers need a complex services encompassing physical fitness/beauty care, healthy nutrition/diet, relaxation/meditation and mental activity/education [6].

The wellness centres have become an inseparable part of the hotel facilities, attracting the users who come to these centres because of different motives [7]. However, hotel managers realized that they can no longer satisfy their guests with the standard fitness amenities as guests already have various modern fitness equipment at home and when they travel, they expect at least the same standard of quality [8], [3]. Guests’ expectations in wellness hotels increase through time. However, trying to reach the high level of the quality of hotel services, hotel managers very often meet with problems of an adequate measuring of the service quality. Firstly, hotel managers do not know what their guests consider as important when evaluating the quality of hotel products and very often do not have reliable methods for determining their expectations [9] and motives for visiting. This paper attempts to identify the key motives for visiting the wellness hotels and to explain how the motives depend on the socio-demographic characteristics of the users. This could assist managers in managing the guests’ satisfaction and related quality of the wellness service.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of motivation is being widely used in understanding of the human behaviour and has an important topic in tourism research [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [7], [16]. One of the most popular model is the Crompton’s push and pull model which emphasizes that tourist’s choice of a travel destination is influenced by two forces - push factors that push individuals from home, and pull factors that pull individuals toward a destination [10]. According to Gnoth tourist motivation is conceptualized as an antecedent of expectation and considered an essential part of the dynamic process of travel planning [17].

Motivation models and studies are mainly focused on understanding tourist behaviour in relation to many aspects of tourism, such as the escape-seeking [18], the destination choice [13], and travel career ladder [19] models.

When it comes to wellness and spa tourism motivation, many authors revealed various motives that drive tourist to engage in this type of tourism. Chen, Prebensen and Huan developed a multi-attribute scale that entails 16 motivational indicators: health consciousness, physical therapy, social activity, recreation, enhancement of quality of life, effortless activity, affordable activity, pursuing multi-activities,

relaxation, business engagement, word of mouth, curiosity, mental therapy, attractiveness, experiencing nature, and meditation. The study found that the relaxation, pursuing multiple activities, the recreation, and the experiencing nature are the top four motivations [20]. Mak, Wong and Chang found five motivation factors of spa-goers, namely friendship and kinship, health and beauty, self-reward and indulgence, relaxation and relief, and escape [12]. Moreover, Koh, Jung-Eun Yoo and Boger have suggested that tourists visit wellness tourism destinations primarily because of their intrinsic desires [21]. Furthermore, Ažman Momirski and Chan concluded that the motivation of wellness tourists largely depends on the personal needs and the lifestyle, and then on the price and quality of services [22]. Lim, Kim and Lee explored the motives of first-time and repeated wellness tourists in Korea. Their results indicate several motives such as: for the first-time travellers - relaxation and rest, novelty, self-exploration, and accessibility. The return visitor motivations were sightseeing and experience, convenience for touring, self-exploration, and accessibility [23]. An important study of visitors' motivation in wellness centres in Slovenia was conducted in 2013 [7]. The study revealed that the most important motivation for respondents was effortless activity followed by enhancement of quality of life and relaxation. Dimitrovski and Todorovic conducted research in Serbia, with intention to explore motives of wellness tourists using the services at Vrnjacka Banja Spa, Serbia. They extracted several motives, namely rejuvenation, socialization, hedonism, obsession with health and beauty, relaxation and escape from routine [24]. On balance, it can be noticed that motives for wellness tourism are very diverse indicating different profiles of guests that visit wellness centres.

Based on research conducted at wellness centres of hotels in Bangkok, Kim and Batra suggest a model that examines a relationship between the healthy lifestyle of wellness tourists and their motivations in the wellness centres. This model consists of the two parts. The first part relates to a healthy lifestyle and it consists of six factors (exercise, diet, alcohol and drugs, smoking, stress, safety) contained in 18 questions. The second part examines the motivation behaviour and contains thirteen questions. It maintains that recreation, relaxation, and enhancement of the quality of life are the motivational factors when visiting wellness hotels [25]. This model was found as particularly suitable for the current study, as the study intends to explore motivation of wellness visitors with a special emphasis on relaxation and recreation which are largely related to respondents' lifestyle.

III. METHODOLOGY

Study sample

The sample consists of 103 guests in 11 Serbian hotels with wellness centers. There are 14.6 % women more than men in the sample. Kadieva states although women traveling for spa and wellness tourism purposes are still the predominant market, the relative share of men is clearly rising [26]. There is the highest number of guests in the age group of 36 to 50 years (43.7%) while in the second place (26.2% less) is the age category 21 to 35. This category is the typical age group of people who

visit the wellness centres [7]. According to a study involving 4,081 respondents from Switzerland, the profile of the health travelers is: woman, middle-aged (35-50 years), secondary to well-educated (mostly higher education) and predominantly employed [27], which is in line with the structure of the sample obtained. Guests that visited hotels from 4* hotels are predominant in the sample (66%). More than 60% of respondents have average monthly income from 501 to 1000 euros. The detailed socio-demographic characteristics are shown in table 1.

TABLE I. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS (N=103)

Gender (%)		Hotel category (%)	
Male	42.7	****	66
Female	57.3	*****	34
Age		Monthly income (in €) (%)	
Up to 20	16.5	Up to 500	17.5
21 - 35	22.3	501-1000	63.1
36 - 50	43.7	1001-1500	13.6
51 - 65	17.5	Over 1500	5.8
Education (%)		Occupation (%)	
Secondary school	31.4	Student	31.1
College	20.1	Employed	53.4
Faculty	43.1	Unemployed	15.5

Instruments

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two parts. The first part measured socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (gender, age, education, occupation, the amount of monthly income).

The second part of the questionnaire refers to the importance of the guest's motives for visiting wellness centres. This part is taken from aforesaid model by Kim and Batra and consists of 13 motivational factors [25]. In this section a five-point Likert scale is used, in which the respondents had to declare how important each stated motive for coming to the wellness centre is: 1 – not important at all, 2 – not important, 3 – neither or nor important, 4 - fairly important, 5 - very important.

Procedure

The research was carried out from Jun to December, 2018. Standard paper and pen survey was used in order to collect data from visitors of wellness centres in hotels. The 200 questionnaires were distributed, but in the end there were 103 valid questionnaires (51.5%). The questionnaires were distributed with the help of the front desk staff, which kindly asked the guests to fill in the survey. The guests were introduced with the main aims of the study and with the fact that their participation is voluntarily and anonymous.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

The table 2 shows the descriptive statistic of the motivational behaviour of the respondents. The motivational factor of the **Recreation** had the **highest** mean score of 4.39 while the **Shopping health products** had the **lowest** mean

score of 2.14. **The relaxation** had the **second highest** mean score of 4.36. The results are expected given that the recreation and relaxation involving various services of massage, hydrotherapy, aromatherapy and the like are essential services in wellness canterers while the purchase of healthy products is also available elsewhere. Also, the factors that have high marks (above 4) are: Mental therapy, Enhancement of quality of life, and Effortless activity. Health consciousness is in sixth place, and Experiencing nature was similarly rated. One of the lowest mean score had the Learning new things and Curiosity.

When we outline data on the importance of motives of the wellness users in Serbian hotels, we conclude that the three most important motives are: **Recreation** (be refreshed in body or mind), **Relaxation** (tranquillity enjoyment and body pampering) and **Mental therapy**. If we compare the results obtained in this study with the study of the motivational behaviour in Thailand wellness centre [25], where the first three motives were recreation, relaxation and quality of life, we conclude that visitors had similar motives for visiting wellness centres. Chen, Prebensen and Huan also identified that relaxation is one of the most important motivating factor for tourists' visiting wellness centres [20]. The fourth and fifth motive are **Enhancement of quality of life** and **Effortless activity** which were also confirmed as very important motives of wellness tourist visitors in Slovenia in the study by Rančić, Blešić, Đorđević and Bole [7].

TABLE II. THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL BEHAVIOR.

Motivational factors	Mean	Std.dev	Rank
Recreation	4.3981	.9634	1
Relaxation	4.3689	.7408	2
Mental therapy	4.3495	.8824	3
Enhancement of quality of life	4.1650	.7933	4
Effortless activity	4.1262	1.0542	5
Health consciousness	3.8738	1.0726	6
Experiencing nature	3.7573	1.1586	7
Physical therapy	3.0583	1.3123	8
Social activity	3.0388	1.0090	9
Meditation	3.0194	1.3356	10
Learning new things	2.5922	1.042	11
Curiosity (finding thrills and excitement)	2.3786	1.0301	12
Shopping health products	2.1456	1.0702	13

Sociodemographic characteristics and wellness tourism motivation

In order to explore the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and wellness tourism motivation the t-test of independent samples and ANOVA test were conducted.

The t-test of independent samples was applied with the aim of comparing the motivational behaviour of males and females (Table 3). The analysis showed that female respondents gave statistically significantly higher ratings to the Shopping health products factor than males. This is in line with the research conducted by Coley and Burgess that revealed that women are more likely to experience positive buying emotions compared with men. Women were more likely than men to report feeling excitement when making a purchase [28].

TABLE III. T-TEST ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS' GENDER

Motivational factor	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t
Shopping health products	male	1.6364	.57429	- 4.557*
	female	2.5254	1.19418	

*p<0,01

By applying the one-factor analysis of variables ANOVA, we explored whether there was statistically significant connection between the motivational factors and guests' age. The results are shown in Table 4.

TABLE IV. THE RESULTS OF ANOVA COMPARED TO THE AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Motivational factors	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	LSD post hoc test	
Recreation	Group 1 (up to 20)	4.35	.8618	11.064* *	4<1, 2, 3
	Group 2 (21-35)	4.73	.6887		
	Group 3 (36-50)	4.64	.7733		
	Group 4 (51-65)	3.38	1.1447		
Mental therapy	Group 1 (up to 20)	4.70	.6860	4.843**	4<1, 2, 3
	Group 2 (21-35)	4.30	.6349		
	Group 3 (36-50)	4.48	.8692		
	Group 4 (51-65)	3.72	1.0741		
Health consciousness	Group 1 (up to 20)	3.51	1.0792	3.566*	3, 4>1, 2
	Group 2 (21-35)	4.00	.9045		
	Group 3 (36-50)	4.23	1.1472		
	Group 4 (51-65)	4.27	.9583		
Physical therapy	Group 1 (up to 20)	3.17	1.2862	2.701**	3, 4>2
	Group 2 (21-35)	2.39	1.0761		
	Group 3 (36-50)	3.26	1.3212		
	Group 4 (51-65)	3.27	1.4061		
Curiosity	Group 1 (up to 20)	1.76	.7524	4.456**	3>1, 2, 4
	Group 2 (21-35)	2.13	.8149		
	Group 3 (36-50)	2.71	1.1406		
	Group 4 (51-65)	2.44	.9218		
Shopping health products	Group 1 (up to 20)	1.76	1.1472 5	5.011**	3>1, 2, 4
	Group 2 (21-35)	1.73	.6192		
	Group 3 (36-50)	2.57	1.1380		
	Group 4 (51-65)	1.94	.93760		

*p<0,01; **p<0,05

The results of a one-factor analysis of the ANOVA showed that respondents belonging to the age group over 50 statistically significantly gave lower marks to the motive Recreation and Mental therapy compared to younger guests. This can be connected with the findings of Anderson and Langmeyer who studied travel behaviour and reported that the age group under 50 engages more in physical activity [29].

Moreover, the results show that visitors over the age of 35 have significantly higher health awareness and are more motivated to use physical therapy compared to younger ones. Physical therapy provides services that develop, maintain and restore people's functional ability and help people maximise their quality of life. The 36-50 age group is significantly more motivated to buy healthy products at wellness hotels and to find thrills and excitement in them than other respondents. The similar results can be found from a study by Hallab which identified excitement and thrills as important motives for health travel [30].

In the other seven motivational factors, there are no statistically significant differences in terms of the age of respondents. Other studies reported a similar result to this study, that all age groups are likely to take pleasure trips for relaxation [29], [31].

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to identify different motivational factors of tourists and to determine whether and what type of relationship exist among the motivation factors and their socio-demographic characteristics. This study makes some contributions to the wellness tourism theory. It was confirmed that wellness tourists are not homogenous and that there are differ in terms of their socio-demographic profile and travel behaviour.

Hotel managers could build marketing strategies and develop detailed services based on the findings of this study. Recreation, Relaxation and Mental therapy were the three key motivations among guests in Serbian wellness hotels. This finding should serve as important information for adjusting the offer of wellness hotels to such motivated tourists, putting emphasis on the experience of revitalization of the body, mind and spirit.

Moreover, the results confirmed that gender and age play important role in segmenting tourists according to their motivation for visiting wellness centres. Especially important finding is that Recreation and Mental therapy are more important motives for younger respondents, so the hotel managers should focus their marketing activities on this age group.

The results provide information for assessing wellness tourism management. It is important that wellness service providers understand the motivations of their target markets and then design their product and service offerings in accordance with the motivations. Being aware of current customer profiles helps to predict behaviour of future customers who share similar socio-demographic characteristics and expectations [14]. Depending on what is the target group of wellness hotels, different benefits should be emphasized in the communication material and different

service offerings designed which facilitate that are in line with main motivation of visiting wellness hotels.

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