

SPA AND WELLNESS SERVICES AS A FACTOR OF GROWTH IN COMPETITIVENESS OF HOTEL OBJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Goal of the paper is determination of essence of the SPA & wellness services in increase in competitiveness of the hotel objects in Poland. This paper is based on analysis of the bibliography, observations of transformation of tourism-treatment functions taking place in health resorts as well as results of surveys conducted in SPA & wellness objects.

Because of wide range of business classified as a SPA & wellness, scientific field was limited only to services rendered by hotel objects situated in a Lower Silesia Region located in health resorts (spas).

In the most frequently referenced model of competitiveness in a tourism, found 23 factors, which affect level and growth in the competitiveness, including quality and type of services. Conducted surveys aimed to determine essence of the SPA & wellness in the field of growth in the competitiveness rates in Poland.

Introduction

Competition among touristic entities in tourism is common and it is related to, among others, competition at the market. Effective competition ability, which is process of achieving of market goals, must characterize every entity.

Fashion for SPA & wellness services concerns tourism itself but also other sectors of the economy such as: SPA cosmetics manufacture, equipment based on new technologies for SPA & wellness treatments, literature,

or music etc., which, on the basis of SPA & wellness philosophy, constitute widely recognized biological recovery market.

Goal of the paper is determination of essence of the SPA & wellness services in increase in competitiveness of the hotel objects in Poland. Such a specific purpose follows the research hypothesis that SPA & wellness services in hotel objects contributes to increase their competitiveness on the market.

This paper is based on analysis of the bibliography, observations of transformation of tourism-treatment functions taking place in health resorts (Januszewska, Nawrocka, 2012; Januszewska, Nawrocka, Oparka, 2010) as well as results of surveys conducted in SPA & wellness objects.

Because of wide range of business classified as a SPA & wellness, scientific field was limited only to services rendered by hotel objects situated in a Lower Silesia Region located in health resorts. Conducted surveys aimed to determine essence of the SPA & wellness in the field of growth in the competitiveness rates in Poland. Choice of the Lower Silesia health resorts as a place of functioning SPA & wellness hotels was not a coincidence. Process of establishing/erection of SPA & wellness hotels in Poland started in Lower Silesia region and presently, they are the most concentrated objects in Poland; Territorial Index of Hotels confirms the highest quality of such hotels in the region while Index of Hotel Services Demand confirms high level of a demand for them (Dziedzic, 2013). Surveys, determinates the importance of SPA & wellness services in hotels business in the Lower Silesian health resorts from the point of view of increasing competitiveness. It involved 20 objects (41% of the general population) in 2013 and 15 other objects in 2014. Surveys regarded two research samples that is 607 clients of SPA & wellness centers in the Lower Silesia and approx. 35 managers of such objects. The surveys used purposeful selection, which takes into account: the size of the object, the time of operation of the facility on the market and the share of revenues from sales of services SPA & wellness in total sales.

Competitiveness of tourist entities

Competitiveness of tourist entities is a subject-matter of researches presented in foreign literature since 80's of twentieth century, and in Polish literature, since beginning of twenty-first century. Recently it has become one of the most significant research issues. Hence, giving up quotation of many definitions of the competitiveness term available in papers dealing with economics, one should emphasize that the most frequently quoted one is OECD's definition, which calls it ability to produce goods and services, which, under conditions of free and reliable trade, are accepted at a world market, at simultaneous increase of real revenues of inhabitants in a long-term period (Stankiewicz, 2005; Gorynia, 1998; WTO, 2000). It enumerates macroeconomic aspects and it is related to the economy. In the literature on the subject-matter there are demonstrated varied scientific perspectives related to the competitiveness, which causes the issue is not clear. The first issue is that the competitiveness is referenced to varied levels since there is surveyed competitiveness of economies which belong to varied groups e.g. European Union, national economies, sectors of economies, regions, communes and cities in particular countries, enterprises and products, also in the international context (Porter, 1990; Świtalski, 2005). The second aspect of surveys is nature of the competitiveness. One can distinguish static competitiveness and a dynamic one, as well factor and resultant competitiveness, among which there occur varied relations. During researches regarding the competitiveness there are emphasized its instrumental aspects as well factor, functional, process and institutional aspects (Buckley, Passo, Prescott, 1988). In opinion of many researchers dealing with the competitiveness of enterprises, an important issue

is necessity to adjust to altering conditions of functioning (Skawińska, 2002). Frequently, essence of endogenic factors is emphasized such as generally recognized financial, material human and information resources.

In this paper competitiveness of a tourist entity is referenced to a client. In this meaning the competitiveness is considered to be ability to implement an offer which is more attractive for a receiver in relation to offer of other entities, which means better tailored offer satisfying expectations and needs of a client in a better way compared to competitive offers. Researches regarding competitiveness resulted in basis to construct models of the competitiveness. In the most frequently referenced model of competitiveness in a tourism, authors – J.R.B. Ritchie and G.I. Crouch (2005), found 23 factors, which affect level and growth in the competitiveness, including quality and type of services.

Circumstances for implementation and essence of services of SPA & wellness in business of hotel objects

In the recent decade, in the market of tourist services one may observe series of new phenomena and trends. One of them is, having been observed for a few years, development of health tourism, in particular, services rendered by SPA & wellness (resorts).

Tourism and Employment Group of the European Commission found that the tourism of SPA & wellness type shall be one of the most quickly growing segment of tourism by 2015 (Institute Für Freizeitwirtschaft, 2004).

According to the International SPA Association SPA & wellness market contains growing tendency – from 50% to 70% each year. Consumer spending there more than 70 billion euros a year.(Gobelna, Marciszewska, 2013).

According to surveys conducted by the Polish Tourism Organization, among entities dealing with incoming touristic traffic into Poland, SPA & wellness services are characterized by more than average growth potential and they are important from point of view of the GDP.

On the grounds of the literature on the subject-matter, among the most important changes regarding health tourism, medical and health resorts tourism as well as SPA & wellness there must be enumerated (Todd, 2011; Smith, Puczkó, 2011; Voigt, Pforr, 2014):

- a) generated by the demand:
 - health lifestyle fashion,
 - process of quickly aging of the society,
 - popularity of elite resorts offering intimacy,
 - shortening of time necessary for regeneration of an organism by means of diversity and intensification of purchased treatments,
 - looking for a clean natural environment;
- b) by the supply:
 - intensification of competition, necessity of enhancement of competitiveness, including innovativeness,
 - varied offers, in terms of quality and quantity,
 - will to increase incomes, by means of, among others, elongation of touristic season.

Acc. to International SPA Association objects of SPA nature are “objects intended for enhancement of a general good mood of their visitors due to wide variety of rendered services encouraging them to refresh mind, body and spirit” (Wojewnik, 2007). SPA definition usually is associated with element of hotel infrastructure and treatment infrastructure. It can be deemed to be a service or a set of services. Wellness in turn means good sense of well-being and smooth co-existence of a body and a spirit. It is a set of integrated services intended to increase

in potential of a human. Fields and services of wellness nature require, each time, good mood atmosphere. In case of the wellness a consumer requires education and advisory and educational services which are not included in the range of SPA services (Sallman, 2010). SPA & wellness tourism can be defined as a modern form of health tourism which consists in a travel to a specialized objects offering professional services, mainly based on water and tradition of Asian cultures as well as professional equipment for biologic recovery, resulting in a rest, regeneration, relax and spiritual & mental development.

Surveys regarding essence of SPA & wellness services in business of hotel objects were also conducted among managers and purchasers of offer of the entities in question.

Managers of night accommodation objects, who follow contemporary trends, respond to a need of a temporary tourist by extending their offers by SPA & wellness services. Entities surveyed offer varied services which are demonstrated in the Figure 1.

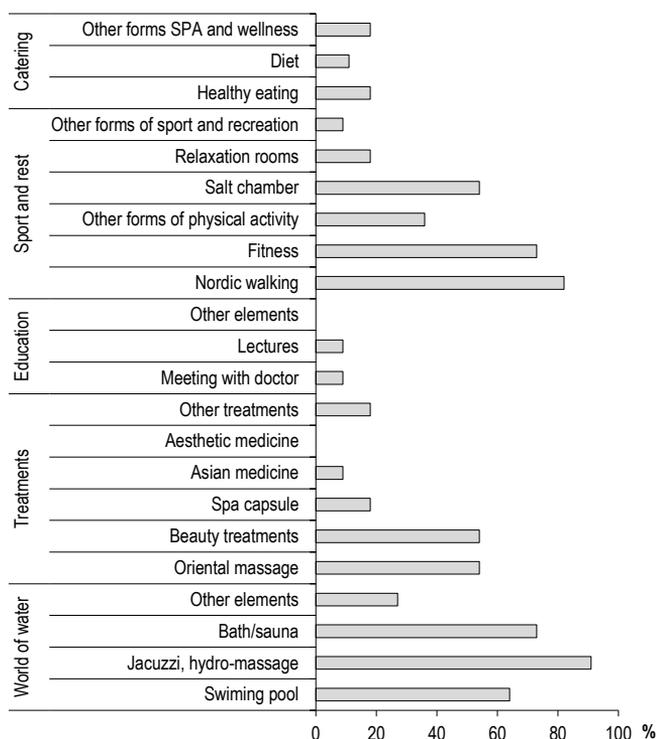


Figure 1. SPA & wellness services offered by Lower Silesia entrepreneurs

Source: own work.

It is observed that surveyed hotel enterprises have no a full SPA & wellness pack, the least number of elements regards education, leisure and aesthetic medicine. From surveys it results that not all of offered elements are implemented at the same time. Managers of hotel objects, who initiate SPA & wellness packs, start with basic elements of infrastructure, which enable them to render treatments and services in the field of world of water and sport, and then, they extend the catalog of services by elements of leisure, catering and education.

The second issue discussed with managers was issue of advantages resulting from SPA & wellness services in the catalog of services rendered by a hotel object. The managers emphasized that investment in the biological recovery infrastructure is a long-term process. They assessed that implementation of such services into their catalogs of services rendered by hotel objects enables achievement of better turnover per 1 m². Profits from implementation of SPA & wellness services into the offer were estimated to equal 30% of the entire investment. Remaining profits result from increase in an occupancy rate averagely by 3–4% and increase in a price for a room – approx. 5%. Acc. to conducted surveys touristic season for the objects rendering SPA & wellness services lasts nearly the entire year which is confirmed by 60% of managers taking part in the survey. They mention the fact that clients use the biologic recovery more frequently and not only during holidays. Due to promotions such as free-stay vouchers, free treatments or price cuts depending on length of stay, managers of SPA & wellness objects encourage clients to visit the hotels: beyond season and many new clients. It is also significant that for 40% of surveyed managers, having SPA & wellness services in their pack does not liquidate the seasonality effect. Such opinions were expressed mostly by managers of small objects with modest SPA & wellness infrastructure.

The second group of surveyed persons were purchasers of SPA & wellness services. Visitors were asked on what persuaded them to purchase such services. Surveyed visitors could choose maximally three answers. The largest number of persons showed a need for relax and rest as well as a care for health as main reasons of purchase of the SPA&wellness services. Much less percentage of answers regarded weight loosing and body modeling. Clients, who purchase SPA&wellness services mentioned also such reasons as encouragement by colleagues or a contest prize but such answers are insignificant. Visitors of resorts with SPA&wellness services were asked on what they follow when choosing leisure place. The highest number of persons mentioned massages and rituals as the most important reason for choosing of an object. Nearly half of surveyed visitors less mentioned hydro-therapy services, swimming pool, saunas and baths. The rarest elements were: oriental treatments, cosmetic services, sport services, catering services and educational ones. Such responses constitute a tiny percentage of answers of the surveyed persons and they are the least significant factors taken into account when selecting a particular hotel object.

The next issue in the survey was services which surveyed visitors used when staying in particular hotel object. Structure of answers is demonstrated in the Table 1.

On the grounds of structure of client's answers one may conclude that the most frequently clients take into account services related to massages and rituals and the most frequently chosen element is massages. Clients more and more often use the SPA area while wellness field is just an additive to their stay. Most SPA & wellness services in the Lower Silesia benefit women aged 40–55 years.

Table 1. Structure of (purchased) SPA & wellness services in the territory of Lower Silesia

Area/zone	Type of treatment	% of visitors purchasing the services
SPA area/Treatments	Acupuncture	7
	Aromatherapy	22
	Balneo-therapy (baths in healing waters)	28
	Biotron (light therapy)	29
	Thermo-therapy	46
	Cryo-therapy	15
	Laser-therapy	31
	Mud treatments	62
	Thalasso-therapy (therapy based on marine climate and water, algae, mud and other substances originating from a sea)	10
	Ultrasound-therapy	42
	Massages	78
	Depilation	22
	Manicure/Pedicure	53
	Body peeling	43
SPA area/World of water	Needle bath	8
	Gymnastics in water	17
	Hydro-massage	28
	Aerosol-therapy	41
	Bath	54
SPA area/Saunas	Bath/sauna	75
SPA area/rest	Salt chamber	35
Wellness area/Sport	Fitness, aerobic	22
	Badminton	2
	Golf/Mini Golf	1
	Horse riding	3
	Cycling	19
	Basketball	2
	Skiing/Snowboard	5
	Nordic Walking	7
	Pilates/Yoga	4
	Swimming	25
	Volleyball	2
Tennis	2	
I did not do any sports	46	
Wellness area/Catering	Diet	8
	Diet for diabetics	3
Wellness area/Education	Educational sessions on sleeping hygiene, rules of good nutrition and stress overcoming	2
	Personal development workshops, self-development e.g. relaxing, meditation visualization, breath therapy	2

Source: own work.

Conclusions

Investments of owners of hotel objects in SPA & wellness infrastructure effect from four factors: more attractive standard of services offered by an object, increase in an average occupancy rate, increase in an average price of stay and gaining of a competitive advantage at the market. Moreover, setting up of a biological recovery zone may also compensate negative effects of seasonality in the tourism and increase revenues from catering as well as to encourage new clients to visit a hotel. Hence, more and more traditional hotel objects in resorts invests in entertainment centers, beauty centers, health and recreation centers. Generally, classic therapeutic services are extended by preventive services in the field of biological recovery. A tendency in health resorts is development of medical SPA.

Results of the survey confirm a statement that for a typical client of SPA & wellness objects in the Lower Silesia the most crucial there are standard services such as massages, relax in sauna and mud treatments. Cryotherapy, aroma-therapy or laser-therapy are chosen much more rarely. The most rarely chosen are sports.

The most influence on the SPA & wellness in Poland has a fact that number of men using SPA & wellness treatments has been growing up regularly in the world. Men take rest in objects with biological recovery offer more than once. It results from the fact that men look for a rest and relax in such objects as well as a way to reduce stress, while sportsmen can count on better results in a particular discipline after the biological recovery. This tendency must be faced by hotel objects which presently specialize in women and families with children (presently approx. 70% of visitors of SPA & wellness centers in Lower Silesia are women and families approx. 25%).

On the basis of presented results of surveys it can be concluded that implementation of SPA & wellness services into catalog of services rendered by hotel objects results in growth in competitiveness at the market, however, packs of services must be integrated and constitute complex leisure programs, programs of relax, recovery and vitality addressed to women, families and soon – men.

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