

INTEREST IN WELLNESS & SPA AS A WAY OF SPENDING FREE TIME

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Abstract

Wellness & SPA is now experiencing one of the most interesting paths forward and this fact can be observed by a surge in the interest of Romanian consumers for this specific way of spending their time outside of work. The advantages of participating in the well-being movement have been known for over decades and the expansion of the sector has led to the emergence of new interesting discoveries. Therefore, the analysis of the direct link between the consumption of SPA services and the enhancement it brings to the quality of life is an innovative element that brings more originality and opens new possibilities for analyzing the lifestyle of the population. The main objectives of this research are the observation of the phenomenon that led to the boost of curiosity in wellness and its correlation with the need to improve the lifestyle, illustrating the respondents' preferences and outlining a profile of the typical guest for SPA visits. The results obtained through the interview technique emphasized the existence of a direct relationship between the use of wellness services during free time and the development of the living standards, as well as the boost in people's desire to embrace habits that lead to an active and harmonious life. The importance of the research consists in shaping an image on the ways in which the community can rely on lifelong prosperity from the use of SPA techniques in their free time.

Keywords: Wellness, SPA, Free time, Motivation, Quality of life

JEL Classification: Z30.

Introduction

Wellness & SPA is a field that includes two vital characteristics. Wellness is a term that represents a general state in which the mind and body are perfectly aligned, with the main purpose being relaxation and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, while the SPA concept is closely related to the wellness area, being the physical part through which well-being can be obtained by participating in a series of activities and using some specific facilities such as swimming pools, jacuzzis, saunas or fitness rooms. (Global Wellness Institute, 2024)

Free time is a social phenomenon, represented by a period of time that does not fit into professional or domestic activities and that each person uses according to their own motivation, with the main purpose of rest. (Zarotis & Tokarski, 2020, p. 140)

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The adoption of wellness and SPA practices during free time has become an interesting choice among the population and this fact can be emphasized by the surge in the demand for body treatments, which implicitly influences the number of locations offering such services.

Excitement for relaxing in SPA centers and improving health had a boost with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has completely transformed the way people relate to wellness or their perception of achieving effective results for health in a short period of time. In Romania, this phenomenon led to a significant increase of 25% in 2022, reaching a revenue value of 39 million euros. (Aredeleanu, 2023)

Currently, studies on the industry focus on the immediate health benefits of people practicing such activities and on their use as a way to relax and socialize during their free time. The novelty of the research is represented by the consideration of the SPA field as a way to achieve complete rest and a harmonious lifestyle, as well as observing the use of wellness services as one of the methods of spending free time with direct benefits on the physical and mental state of people, considerably remodeling life satisfaction.

The focal point of this scientific piece is the consideration of the elements that have induced the rise in curiosity for wellness as a way of spending free time, with particular importance in analyzing how the population perceives this area as a trigger for the adoption and promotion of a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Hence, this study has as main objectives:

- observing the factors that lead people to choose SPA services
- identification of dominant services and consumer preferences
- outlining the profile of the typical SPA guest

It is of great importance to assess how the majority of people see the use of SPA services as a manner of gaining advantages for their body and mind, but also to observe the way in which these actions can have positive effects on their daily activities.

The research approach is grounded, focused on the idea of knowledge of the field, and the research method is qualitative, aiming to describe the phenomenon by documenting existing approaches in the area and carrying out an interview-type study.

The work has a fixed structure that is outlined in six parts. In addition to the abstract and introduction, the article includes the current state of knowledge where a series of opinions on the phenomenon are presented, the research methods and the results obtained through interviews, the conclusions and bibliographic references.

Approaches in the field

The range of Wellness & SPA is a vast one, with a history spanning centuries of specific activities. Visits to SPA centers have therapeutic properties on the body and mind, with immediate results such as lowering blood pressure, reducing pain, increasing energy levels, hydrating the skin, releasing serotonin or reducing stress levels. (Thipbharos & Sangpikul, 2023, p. 149)

In recent years, a multitude of studies have changed the way people relate to wellness and recent discoveries suggest new ways to use SPA services for therapeutic purposes. In this case, a newly implemented strategy is the treatment of conditions such as depression or anxiety in a holistic style, which greatly contributes to the medicinal treatment of these health problems. (Saeed, et al., 2019, p. 624)

Nowadays, most people choose wellness services during vacations as an additional method of relaxation and disconnection, but the number of people choosing to spend their free time from a normal work week in a SPA center is constantly increasing, becoming a industry trend and a method of promoting a healthy lifestyle. (Business Wire, 2021)

One of the most significant approaches in the well-being sector is represented by the examination of different elements that depict in what way the use of SPA services can have beneficial effects on the health status of individuals. This article was the foundation upon which current research is built due to its implications for how SPA and wellness can have beneficial effects on people's lifestyles when used appropriately and consistently.

In the study of the models, it can be observed that there are six areas that the wellness part continuously influences: the part related to emotions and feelings, the part related to physical well-being, the part related to convictions and beliefs, the part related to socialization, the part related to creativity and intelligence and the part related to occupations and hobbies. (Wickramaratne, et al., 2020, p. 186)

The novelty of the relationship between wellness and leisure time, as well as the interest in performing such activities as a method of relaxation and mood improvement is the reason why studies on these phenomena are currently limited. Recent work on leisure methods suggests an upward trend in interest in physical activity and sports recreation, the main reason being the population's desire for good health and a positive general state. (Mikalauskas & Kaspariene, 2016, p. 728)

Research methods and results

This scientific article adopts a qualitative research with the aim of observing the motivations of the population for choosing SPA centers as a way of spending time and recognizing the circumstances that lead to an improved level of well-being brought by the use of health club facilities. For the purpose

of the research, the interview method was chosen, which involves conducting face-to-face conversations to find out information about certain processes.

The choice of this method was based on the advantages such as the possibility of observing non-verbal behavior, the spontaneity of the technique, the flexibility and the ability to adapt the questions to the answer or develop some opinions.

Thus, the research was carried out over a period of 2 months and was assigned to a sample of 30 people aged between 25 and 40, consumers of SPA products, and the interviews were carried out in a SPA center through one-on-one discussions with guests of the complex.

The interview consisted of a series of 10 open questions aimed at establishing the reasons for choosing wellness services, identifying the needs and expectations of the population regarding the spa activities, observing the attitude towards the connection between spare time and level of welfare and establishing the profile of the SPA consumer .

Regarding the analysis of the data resulting from the interviews, the strategy of data reduction through the coding method was used. Therefore, the information obtained was divided into categories based on a similarity of the answers and transposed into a table. A quantitative analysis was added to this method by establishing the frequency of certain terms and ordering the items according to the number of responses.

The results obtained from the 30 interviews are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the interviews

Category	Code	Number of answers
Motivation	Relaxation	10
	Healthy lifestyle	7
	Back pain	5
	Socializing	3
	Attractive appearance	3
	Detoxification	1
	Anti-Aging	1
Other ways of spending free time	Going out with friends	12
	Excursions	5
	Shopping	6
	Watching movies	3
	Walks in nature	2
	Reading	1
	Rest	1
Frequency of using SPA services	Twice a month	14
	Once a month	8
	Once a week	3
	Daily	3
	Once a year	2

Preferences	Fitness room	11
	Pool & Jacuzzi	7
	Massage	6
	Classes	4
	Cosmetic treatments	2
Needs	Relaxation	10
	Better health	6
	Mindfulness	5
	Reduction of pain	4
	Socializing	4
The moment of use	Week-end	18
	During the week after work	7
	During the week before work	5
Choosing SPA over other activities	Good for the health	13
	Relaxation assured	9
	Quiet	5
	Solving physical problems	2
Perception on the quality of life	Calmer	14
	Healthier body	10
	Better nutrition	4
	Reduction of health problems	2
Demographics (job)	Corporate worker	17
	Manager	6
	Entrepreneur	5
	Doctor	2
Demographics (gender)	Female	20
	Male	10
Demographics (age)	25-30	15
	30-35	9
	40-45	3
	35-40	2
Demographics (education)	Bachelor Degree	21
	Masters Degree	7
	High-school graduate	2

Source: realized by the authors depending on the transcripts from the interviews

Therefore, it can be noticed that most of the respondents fall into the 25-30 age group, have a higher education, high hierarchical positions, practice office work and are women.

It can also be emphasized that among the respondents, the main motivation is the possibility of relaxation, followed by the desire to adopt a healthy lifestyle, which is also evident from the frequency with which they choose to spend their free time in SPA centers.

The motivation to have a healthy body and mind are some of the key components that convince people to resort to self-care services, as well as the

long-lasting value they bring to the well-being status, especially on the general state of health.

Conclusions

The connection between welfare and recreation is one of the primary theoretical approaches today and how the population relates to these two elements shapes real movements and transformations in society.

Although the benefits of SPA services on health have been known since Ancient history, the study of the link between the registration in recreational hubs during spare time and the improvement of living standards is an updated theme that does not list substantial results for the moment.

With reference to the inquiry made in the article, it can be noticed that the greater part of the subjects believe that the usage of SPA services can provide a superior level of living through better nutrition, a calmer mind and a healthier body and this fact has long-term effects on everyday activities.

Moreover, it can be observed that the interest in SPA has grown considerably and the guests of these centers choose weekly or monthly wellness services as a way of spending their free time, these being some of the activities with great potential for relaxation and disconnection.

One of the most important objectives of the study was the presentation of the phenomenon underlying the increase in interest in SPA services and the discovery of the motivation for such choices. In this sense, it can be illustrated that among the most important factors are the desire to have good health, the need to relax, the need to socialize by participating in exercise classes, as well as the aim to enhance the physical features.

Another goal was the observation of the psychology of the consumers and the correlation between their behaviour and their level of comfort. In this case it can be emphasized that the respondents of the study prefer the facilities of the fitness rooms and swimming pools due to the visible results on the physical appearance, followed by massages and mindfulness classes with benefits on the mood and mental state.

Also, the objective of profiling the SPA consumer highlighted that most guests are aged between 25-35, are businessmen or people with static jobs and office work, higher education and an interest in the increased way in which wellness services positively affect their daily lives.

By using the interview method, the sample was relatively small, which does not provide an overview of how the population sees the relationship between wellness and leisure as a way to improve the quality of life, so an extensive study on a large number of respondents could provide details on the current state of the market.

Also, a future comparative study between the interests of the population of Romania and the population of other European Union states regarding the

benefits that the practice of wellness activities in free time has on work productivity could have a high importance in terms of the possibilities of implementing such of actions by companies for an improved state of health and morale of employees.

Therefore, the article highlighted the existence of a conscious link among the SPA consumer between wellness and leisure as a way of adopting short, medium and long term overall health benefits that have a favourable influence on the value of daily life.

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