

Kiril Postolov

Faculty of Economics,
University Ss. "Cyril and Methodius" Skopje,
North Macedonia

✉ kirilp@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Boris Postolov

Master Candidate at Faculty of Economics,
University Ss. "Cyril and Methodius" Skopje,
North Macedonia

✉ borispostolov@gmail.com

SPA AND WELLNESS TOURISM - THE EXAMPLE OF THE CITY OF SKOPJE

SPA I WELLNESS TURIZAM – SLUČAJ GRADA SKOPLJA

Summary: *Spa and wellness tourism today is a reality that companies engaged in the hotel industry must be aware of when setting up their facilities. It was considered before that this type of tourism is related only to the clientele that uses it for health reasons. It is no longer the case. Other people are potential consumers of this type of tourism. It stems from the fact that consumers who use such services have greater and more sophisticated requirements and want to meet other types of needs. The main thing is that in this process, the additional value must be obtained in which both parties will be satisfied - consumers and providers of these services. This type of tourism, in turn, implies the need for more extensive investment in providing that content, and therefore in that process, there is a need for greater engagement of the community. It means appropriate aid by providing various types of financial assistance - non-repayable funds (grants), loans with lower interest rates and other types of assistance, especially of a logistical nature. Also, there is a need for the proper education of the local tourist workers for providing this type of services, including an appropriate promotion of the broader interested community for the possibility of using spa and wellness tourism in the tourist facilities throughout the calendar year. These were the main reasons for writing this paper, and we focused on assessing the real situation in terms of spa and wellness tourism within the municipality of Skopje. For that purpose, we constructed a survey questionnaire and by analyzing the obtained answers, using appropriate statistical tools and methods, we gained appropriate knowledge regarding the development of this type of tourism to achieve sustainable economic growth.*

Keywords: *spa and wellness tourism, nature, sustainable economic development, tourist's needs*

JEL Classification: *Q01, L83,*

Rezime: *Banjski i velnes turizam danas je realnost o kojoj kompanije koje se bave hotelijerstvom moraju voditi računa prilikom postavljanja svojih objekata. Nekada se smatralo da je ovaj vid turizma vezan samo za klijentelu koja ga koristi iz zdravstvenih razloga. Danas to više nije slučaj. Ostali potrošači su potencijalni potrošači ove vrste turizma. Ovo proizlazi iz činjenice da potrošači koji koriste njihove usluge imaju veće i sofisticiranije zahteve i žele da zadovolje druge vrste potreba. Glavno je da se u ovom procesu mora dobiti dodatna vrednost u kojoj će biti zadovoljne obe strane – i potrošači i pružaoci ovih usluga. Ovaj vid turizma, pak, podrazumeva potrebu za većim ulaganjem u obezbeđivanju tog sadržaja, pa se u tom procesu nameće potreba za većim angažovanjem zajednice. To podrazumeva odgovarajuću pomoć, pružanjem različitih vidova finansijske pomoći – bespovratnih sredstava (grantova), kredita sa nižim kamatnim stopama i drugih vidova pomoći, posebno logističke prirode. Takođe, nameće se obaveza odgovarajuće edukacije domaćih turističkih radnika za pružanje ove vrste usluga, kao i odgovarajuća promocija od strane šire zainteresovane zajednice za mogućnost korišćenja banjskog i velnes turizma u turističkim objektima tokom cele kalendarske godine. Ovo su bili glavni razlozi za pisanje ovog rada, a mi smo se fokusirali na procenu realnog stanja u pogledu banjskog i velnes turizma u opštini Skoplje. U tu svrhu konstruisali smo anketni upitnik, a zatim analizom dobijenih odgovora, koristeći odgovarajuće statističke alate i metode, došli do odgovarajućih saznanja o razvoju ove vrste turizma u cilju postizanja održljivog ekonomskog razvoja.*

Ključne riječi: *banjski i velnes turizam, priroda, održljivi ekonomski razvoj, potrebe turista*

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INTRODUCTION

The new way of functioning of the companies, but also of the social community (especially as a result of the pandemic with Covid 19), basically created great turbulence, which, among other things, affected their physical and mental health. But there are also people who did not feel the negative effects of those changes.

The former feel fatigue and similar disorders in their health, and see one of the possibilities for removing those stresses through the use of various techniques to deal with that condition. One of those opportunities is spa and wellness tourism. Others, who do not have such consequences from stress, want to enrich their tourist content, and again, have the opportunity to use spa and wellness tourism.

That's one side of the coin, the consumer side.

The other side of that coin is the providers of those services. They must be aware that due to the increasing demand for this type of service, this form of tourism will be a significant tourism trend in the future due to the fact that they are revolutionizing the approach to health. And that, spa and wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of tourism and is a great catalyst for ensuring sustainable economic development of the community.

In today's constellation, according to available data, in Skopje, there are 39 such centers, of which only 18 tourist facilities that provide this type of service, which means that the remaining 21 have only a health character. It is a small number of tourist facilities that provide this type of service and usually these are hotels in which the prices of services are the highest and are less accessible to many potential customers.

If you look at the situation with tourism in the Republic of Northern Macedonia for the years 2010, 2015 and 2020. you can see the growth rate of this sector is not satisfactory. In 2010, there were a total of 2.020.217 overnight stays, 2015- 2.394.205, while 2020- 1.697.535 (among other things due to the pandemic with Covid 19). In 2020, the most visitors are hotels - 675.622, while in spa tourism only 49.113¹.

Therefore, there is a need to increase this type of service in other tourist facilities, which will make them more attractive to use, but will also increase the offer. As a result of those activities, the increase in income in this type of activity will be affected.

Spa and wellness tourism must be seen as a new way of doing business. To do this, we must pay special attention to the way it will work, especially in terms of funding, providing the necessary workforce, training staff, and promoting it in order to inform the public about the benefits achieved by using it.

The main goal of this paper is to see the possibility for implementation of this type of tourism in business entities in the city of Skopje, as well as confirmation of the proposed hypotheses that spa and wellness tourism are an opportunity for sustainable economic development.

The theoretical aspects, the research itself, the methodological approach applied in the research, as well as the obtained results are original and imply appropriate impact on the wider scientific community, academia, entrepreneurs in this sector, students, researchers, and other subjects related to spa and wellness tourism.

Based on the empirical data given within this section, we can conclude that this form of tourism is the least developed and is still in the initial stage of its development. The benefits for the local community that are expected from the development of this form of tourism include a high level of responsibility of the tourism enterprises and the employees in this sector, the active role of the small enterprises and the exploitation of the entrepreneurial opportunities.

1. DEFINITION OF SPA AND WELLNESS TOURISM

The term spa and wellness tourism usually goes together, although there are essential differences between the two of them.

In this paper we will introduce different definitions of their content and we are going to present the basic difference between these two terms.

Basically, both terms are related to health, but the meanings themselves are very different. Spa is an abbreviation for "sanus per aquam", which in Latin means "health from water". In practice, this means that in any center that is based on water as its primary content, ideally thermal or healing (which is not a common case), we have a justification to call it a spa center.

The term wellness has nothing to do with water. It originated as a coin of the American terms "Well being" and "Fitness", and signifies a healthy concept of life. If we connect it with the centers, it is practically a healthy center, in which your activities are focused on a healthy life.

¹ From the obtained data it is not possible to see how many of the visitors used the spa and wellness services

This is where the term spa and wellness merge, at a point we call health, which in practice means that both centers strive to maintain healthy living habits.

Smith and Kelly (2006) propose that wellness is a state of being whereas others contend this by saying that wellness is synonymous with a certain lifestyle. Jonas (2005) suggests that health is a state of being, whereas wellness is a process of being. Myers et al. (2005) defines wellness as a way of life oriented towards optimal health and wellbeing, they identify the body, mind and spirit as integral to living more fully within a human and natural community. Cohen&Bodecker (2008) expands on this further by including emotional, spiritual, sexual, occupational, financial and environmental principle components. Porter et al. (2003) describes wellness as a psychological state, stating wellness is what you are and what you feel. Hales (2005) includes environmental as an additional wellness component. Spas as being used for rehabilitation and treatment of illness (Cohen and Bodecker 2008). Lee (2004) suggests that spa concepts are based on four elements – water, earth, fire and air.

The term spa is defined in a variety of ways, often influenced by the content in which it is meant to be used and by geographical location. In many cultures spas are closely linked with water, health and hygiene

The Oxford English Dictionary (2011) defines spa simply as a place where there is a curative mineral spring. The British International Spa Association (BISA 2010) refers to spa as an establishment that provides a minimum of one approved water-based treatment using water of known composition. Australian Spa Association (ASPA 2012) only provides definitions of its four identified clusters: day, destination, natural bathing and related spa without having a general definition. Asensio (2002) defines spa as a place aiming to improve health and physical condition. De Vierville (2003) defines spa as a place whose purpose is facilitating whole human health care, wellness and social wellbeing.

Common definition of spa is: places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit (ISPA 1991).

2. TYPES OF SPA AND WELLNESS TOURISM

In the literature, one can find a number of different classifications to determine the content of this type of tourism. We believe that the most correct classification of the content of wellness and spa tourism is given according to the International SPA Association (2010), according to which, the basic forms are:

- *Day - A day spa offers a variety of spa services, including facial and Body treatments on a day-use-only basis.*
- *Resort/hotel - A resort/hotel spa offers a spa, fitness and wellness services, as well as spa cuisine menu choices and overnight accommodations within a resort or hotel*
- *Destination - A destination spa is not part of another resort or hotel. The destination spa's primary purpose is guiding individual spa-goers to healthy lifestyles. This transformation can be accomplished by a comprehensive program that includes spa services, physical fitness activities, wellness education, healthful cuisine and special interest programming*
- *Medical - A spa in which a full-time, on site licensed health care professionals provide comprehensive medical and wellness care in an environment that integrates spa services, as well as traditional, Complementary and/or alternative therapies and treatments. The facility operates within the scope of practice of its staff, which can include both aesthetic/cosmetic and prevention/wellness procedures and services*
- *Club - A facility whose primary purpose is fitness and that offers a variety of professional administered spa services on a day-use basis. A hotel, gym, or fitness club that has a sauna, steam or whirlpool bath is not a spa unless it explicitly offers spa products and services as an added benefit*
- *Mineral springs - A spa offering an on-site source of natural mineral, thermal or seawater used in hydrotherapy treatments*
- *Cruise ship - A spa aboard a cruise ship providing professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components and spa cuisine menu choices*

- *Cosmetic - A spa that primarily offers aesthetic/cosmetic and prevention/wellness procedures and services such as facials, peels, waxing and other non-invasive procedures that are within the scope of practice of its staff but do not require on-site medical supervision.*

3. ECONOMICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SPA AND WELLNESS TOURISM

Conceptually, spa and wellness tourism businesses and their products are expected to contribute to all dimensions of sustainability in the places visited, for example, promoting local spa and wellness tourism. Generally, spa and wellness tourism is argued to be a foundation for sustainable tourism as it contributes benefits to the economic, social and environmental development of the local areas. Social benefits may also be enhanced through the intercultural appreciation and understanding between the host community and visitors (Hunt et al. 2014). For instance, when tourists visit a spa, they may have a chance to meet and interact with locals. Learning a local language may be an example of social learning. During their visits, foreign tourists might get a chance to speak the local language through simple communication, such as greetings and saying goodbye. Tourists may also learn something from the locals (for example, culture, ways of life, local food), and even buy souvenirs. The economic impact assessment generates an estimate of the spa and economic consequences of a particular project on the local economy. However, this provides only one piece of the puzzle in a broader evaluation process. In some cases a more general cost benefit analysis will attempt to place a monetary value on environmental and social impacts (Stynes 1997). Spa and wellness tourism generates direct and indirect employment opportunities at the community level and enables equitable distribution of economic, social and cultural benefits to the local population. The economic impacts of spa and wellness tourism also causes social changes, which are manifested in the improvement of living conditions in terms of municipal equipment, the development of physical and social infrastructure, and the enrichment of cultural life. The economic importance of spa and wellness tourism is also manifested in the growth and diversification of the overall economy and the opportunity to create new jobs and generate additional income. Furthermore, it has an impact on increasing the well-being, the economic development of the local economic community and the region; impact on the living standard of the local population; impact on social change in the daily lives of locals.

On the other hand, there are adverse effects, such as:

- increasing costs, especially infrastructure costs.
- high rate of return on investment;
- the growth of excessive dependence on tourism, changes in the spa and wellness structure of the local economy;

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In the framework of this paper, an appropriate empirical research was conducted on the readiness for implementation of spa and wellness tourism within the municipality of Skopje. For this purpose, 80 respondents living on the territory of the municipality were randomly selected by telephone. The demographic characteristics of the sample are:

Table 1. Structure of respondents

	Frequency	Structure
Gender		
Male	42	52,50%
Female	38	47,50%
Age		
<30	33	41,25%
31-45 age	17	21,25%
46-60 age	28	35,00%
>60	2	2,50%
Education		
High	15	18,75%
Faculty	62	77,50%
M.A. and Ph.D.	3	3,75%

Source: Own research

In the follow-up study, we used the Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 disinterested, to 4 highly interested. Respondents were asked a total of 17 questions in order for us to receive a strong conclusion.

In the previous part of the paper, we wrote that "implementing spa and wellness tourism creates economic and other benefits in the area concerned", and based on that, we have defined the four basic hypotheses with whom we want to prove the attitude of the respondents in the Municipality of Skopje area.

According to the literature used and consulted, we have tested this claim through the following auxiliary claims:

1. *Institutional support and country's support influenced for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept*
2. *Opportunity and capability provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept*
3. *Additional resources provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept*
4. *Entrepreneurship concept provides for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept*

The following sets out the null hypothesis (H₀) and the alternative hypothesis (H₁), for each claim to be tested.

1. Institutional support and country's support influenced for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

H₀: Institutional support and country's support not influenced for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

H₁: Institutional support and country's support influenced for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

The first hypothesis will be analyzed first.

Table 2. Correlation between respondents and hypothesis variables 1

			Question 5	Question 8	Question 10
Spearman's rs	Question 5	Correlacion Coefficient	1.000	-0,317	0,322
		N	80	80	80
	Question 8	Correlacion Coefficient	-0,317	1.000	0,147
		N	80	80	80
	Question 10	Correlacion Coefficient	0,322	0,147	1.000
		N	80	80	80

Source: Own research

According to the results, question 5 is in negative correlation with question 8 (institutional assistance) and in positive correlation with question 10 (state aid). This means, if the desire to implement spa and wellness tourism is reduced, institutional assistance is reduced. The correlation between question 5 and question 10 (state aid) shows that if the implementation of spa and wellness tourism is increased, state aid will also increase. It can also be noted that question no. 8 is in positive correlation with question no. If those same variables are put into a standard regression model where question 5 is a dependent variable and questions 8 and 10 are independent variables, the following results will be obtained:

Table 3. Standard regression model about 1 hypothesis

	Chi-Square	Sig.
Final	10.388	0,033

Source: Own research

In this case the p-value of the individual parameters is below the set threshold $p < 0.05$ and is 0.033, so there are statistically significant differences between spa and wellness tourism, institutional and state aid.

According to the analysis, the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, H_1 : Institutional and state aid contribute to the increase of spa and wellness tourism.

2. Opportunity and capability provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

H_0 : Opportunity and capability do not provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

H_1 : Opportunity and capability provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

We proceed to the analysis of the spa and wellness hypothesis:

Table 4. Correlation between respondents and hypothesis variables 2.

			Question 5	Question 11	Question 14
Spearman's rs	Question 5	Correlacion Coefficient	1,0000	-0,062	-0,123
		N	80	80	80
	Question 11	Correlacion Coefficient	-0,062	1.000	0,305
		N	80	80	80
	Question 14	Correlacion Coefficient	-0.123	0,305	1.000
		N	80	80	80

Source: Own research

According to the results, question 5 is in negative correlation with questions 11 (ability) and 14 (ability), which means that if the respondents' ability and ability is lower, we will have spa and wellness tourism development and vice versa.

Questions No 11 and 14 are in a positive correlation which means that if the opportunities improve, the ability will increase and vice versa. These two variables do not enhance the development of spa and wellness tourism, as evidenced by the results of the regression model.

Table 5. Standard regression model about 2 hypothesis

	Chi-Square	Sig.
Final	0,433	0,690

Source: Own search

In this case the p-value of the individual parameters is above the set threshold $p < 0.05$ and is 0.690, so there are no statistically significant differences between spa and wellness tourism implementation and capability and opportunities.

According to the analysis, the null hypothesis H_0 : Opportunity and capability is not provided for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

3. Additional resources provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

H_0 : Additional resources do not provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

H_1 : Additional resources provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

Analysis of the third hypothesis:

Table 6. Correlation between respondents and hypothesis variables 3

			Question 5	Question 16	Question 17
Spearman's rs	Question 5	Correlacion Coefficient	1,000	0,066	-0,518*
		N	80	80	80
	Question 11	Correlacion Coefficient	0,066	1,000	-0,062
		N	52	52	52
	Question 14	Correlacion Coefficient	-0,518*	-0,062	1,000
		N	80	80	80

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: Own research

According to the results, question 5 is in positive correlation with question 16 (friends' funds) and in negative correlation with question 17 (bank loans). This means that if received from friends, the desire for spa and wellness tourism will increase. If you look for bank loans as a source, the desire for spa and wellness tourism is reduced.

The Ordinary Regression Model of Claim no.3 shows the following:

Table 7. Standard regression model about 3 hypothesis

	Chi-Square	Sig.
Final	6.123	0,259

Source: Own research

In this case, the p-value of the individual parameters is above the set threshold $p < 0.05$ and is 0.259, so there are no statistically significant differences between Spa and wellness tourism implementation and additional resources of financing.

According to the analysis, the null hypothesis H_0 : Additional resources not provided for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept is accepted.

4. Entrepreneurship concept provides for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

H_0 : Entrepreneurship concept does not provide for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

H_1 : Entrepreneurship concept provides for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept

Analysis of the fourth hypothesis

Table 8. Correlation between respondents and hypothesis variables 4

			Question 5	Question 18	Question 19
Spearman`s r_s	Question 5	Correlacion Coefficient	1.000	-0,373	-0,027
		N	80	80	80
	Question 11	Correlacion Coefficient	-0,373	1.000	0,382
		N	80	80	80
	Question 14	Correlacion Coefficient	-0,027	0,382	1.000
		N	80	80	80

Source: Own research

According to the results, question no. 5 is in negative correlation with question no. 18 (entrepreneurial spirit) and question no.19 (family support), which means that the implementation of spa and wellness tourism is in negative correlation with the entrepreneurial spirit and support from the family.

Table 9. Standard regression model about 4 hypothesis

	Chi-Square	Sig.
Final	6.218	0,278

Source: Own research

In this case the p-value of the individual parameters is above the set threshold $p < 0.05$ and is 0.278, so there are no statistically significant differences between work motivation and teamwork and team rewards.

According to the analysis, the null hypothesis - H_0 : Entrepreneurship concept is not adopted for the implementation of the spa and wellness tourism concept.

CONCLUSION

In preparing the paper that is in front of you at the moment, we must emphasize that we have encountered a number of limitations. These limitations are reflected in the fact that although the survey questionnaire was distributed to a much larger number of employees engaged in this activity, valid answers that were then processed were 80 respondents. Also, the next limitation can be noted in terms of age and level of education of the respondents, where the answers received reflect those demographic characteristics. However, we believe that the answers received largely reflect the real situation regarding this issue.

Spa and wellness tourism is a specific form of tourism and should be viewed from a multidisciplinary perspective, including spa and wellness, environmental and socio-cultural analysis. The introduction of spa and wellness tourism must be an ongoing process. Today, people want to pay more attention to their health, but also to the enjoyment of using services of this type. At the same time, it must be noted that the satisfaction of their specific needs imposes the need for spa and wellness in the way of organizing activities in this segment of tourism.

Based on the answers received, a number of conclusions can be drawn, in relation to the real situation and what needs to be done in order to promote and develop this form of obtaining tourism services.

Through empirical research it has been proven that institutional support is needed by the state and state bodies in order to develop spa and wellness tourism. The research has shown that in our country the state and state bodies are interested in the development of this type of tourism.

Regarding the possibility and ability to implement the concept of spa and wellness tourism, it was found that they have a negative sign. This means that they do not affect the development and implementation of spa and wellness tourism

It is obvious that there is no interest in using funds, both own and from other sources for the purpose of financing in this form of tourism. And that's not good, given that there needs to be an entrepreneurial spirit in order to develop this type of tourism. However, it is a fact that the research shows that there is no entrepreneurial spirit among people employed in the tourism sector in order to develop and implement the concept of spa and wellness tourism.

To be a sound development policy, the process must involve entrepreneurs, the state and state bodies through public administration and local self-government, as well as financial institutions as providers of additional capital.

It is very important in that process to define an appropriate strategy, the implementation of which will bring benefits to all stakeholders. On the one hand, satisfied customers, on the other hand, effective and efficient providers of this type of services.

The appropriate strategy for the development of this type of tourism must incorporate the potential opportunity of our companies to obtain adequate quality of this type of services. It is not an easy process due to the fact that consumers have their own specific and more sophisticated requirements arising from the use of this type of service in more developed destinations around the world.

We must emphasize institutional support, as a catalyst in the development and implementation of the concept of spa and wellness tourism. Special attention must be paid to the development of appropriate legislation that will institutionalize this type of tourism. Thus, we emphasize the role that the legislation has, in order to define the issues for performing this type of activities.

Then, although it is a matter of private facilities, the state must, through appropriate mechanisms, enable adequate development and investment in equipment, infrastructure and human resources of this type of tourism. Here as an idea for institutional support we can mention the possibility of concluding agreements through the Chamber of Commerce with similar institutions in other countries that would benefit the development of spa and wellness tourism in our country. Finally, but also in its importance, appropriate participation in the development of strategies, programs and action plans for the development of spa and wellness tourism, in cooperation with international and other institutions that have the appropriate knowledge and expertise in this area.

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