

Chapter 6

Hotel Spa and Wellness Services in Crete: A Marketing Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this contribution is on the analysis of main components and characteristics of Spa & Wellness Services provided by hotel businesses in Crete, Greece. A brief definition of the concept and a typology are presented in the first section. A business environment analysis with the main trends and developments in this field is the topic of the second section. This is followed by the main section reporting on a field research conducted in 2012 in Crete, Greece. This research has been carried out by applying the method of a personal interview to hotel & spa managers offering these types of services. In particular, the following issues have been investigated: Services, Products and equipment, Consulting services, Human resources, Financial issues, Market, and Business performance conditions. This means that a marketing analysis requires an integrated approach to all related business managerial issues. The main conclusions of this research lead in shaping and defining a framework of factors for successful Spa and Wellness services in a well-established holiday destination.

INTRODUCTION

Core values of society, health and wellbeing impact today on all aspects of our lives, and have also increasingly influenced patterns of tourism consumption and production. In this context, wellness has developed into a significant dimension of tourism in a number of new and long established destinations (Smith & Puczko, 2009). It is consistently referred to as the most rapidly growing segment of the tourism and leisure industries with revenues exceeding those of amusement parks and vacation ownership gross sales (Bodeker & Cohen, 2008). According to ATLAS (Spa and Wellness Research Group, 2011) wellness tourism is, in many ways, one of the most ancient forms of tourism if one considers the

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scrupulous attention paid to wellbeing by Romans and Greeks, the quests for spiritual enlightenment of Mediaeval Pilgrims, or the medical seaside and spa tourism of the 18th and 19th Century European aristocracy. Arguably, however, there has been an intensification in the pursuit of wellness in the history of tourism in recent years. The proliferation of wellness centres, holistic retreats, spas, complementary and alternative therapies is unprecedented.

Theories abound as to the reasons for this exponential growth, many of which cite the anomie of Western societies, and the fragmentation of communities (ATLAS, 2011). Concomitant progress in science and medicine has led to better preservation of the body and increasing absence of physical disease aided by an ever increasing wellness leisure and tourism industry (ATLAS, 2011; Sotiriadis 2007). Williams (2006: 173) estimates that ‘the increasing focus on fitness and wellness has fueled the re-emergence of the spa industry.’ The aim of this contribution is to report on a marketing analysis of spa and wellness services (SWS) offered by the hotel industry in Crete, Greece. The chapter is completed by suggesting a framework of factors for the successful offering of SWS.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW: CONCEPTS AND TYPOLOGY

This section deals with concept and typology of spa and wellness tourism. International Spa Association (2010) defines spas as ‘places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit.’ The term spa is associated with water treatment, also known as balneotherapy (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2009). Spas typically offer various health treatments, and the main types are shown in Table 1.

The modern era for the SPA industry began around 1960 in USA and in 1970 in Central Europe. During these decades the SWS have witnessed significant developments (Haden, 2007). The idea of a Day spa came from the hospitality industry. Additionally, beauty salons converted to spas, modifying

Table 1. Typology of Spas

Ayurveda spa	Spa in which all treatments and products are natural. It is often used as alternative medicine.
Club spa	Facility whose primary purpose is fitness and which offers a variety of professionally administered spa services on a daily basis.
Resort/hotel spa	Owned by and located within a resort or hotel providing professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components and spa cuisine menu choices
Day spa	Offering a variety of professionally administered spa services to clients on a daily basis. It is a form of beauty salon. The main differentiation from Resort/hotel spa are the clients (permanent residents) and treatments (result-orientated).
Destination spa	Facility with the primary purpose of guiding individual spa-goers to develop healthy habits; for personal care treatments aimed at the well-being of body and spirit. A lifestyle stay providing a comprehensive program that includes spa services, physical fitness activities, wellness education, and healthy cuisine.
Medical spa	Facility that operates under the full-time, on-site supervision of a licensed health care professional whose primary purpose is to provide comprehensive medical and wellness care in an environment that integrates spa services, as well as traditional, complimentary 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. These spas typically use balneotherapy.
Mineral springs spa	Offering an on-site source of natural mineral, thermal or seawater used in hydrotherapy treatments.

Source: retrieved from ATLAS, 2011; Bodeker & Cohen, 2008; Smith & Puczko, 2009.

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