



SIM 2017 / 14th International Symposium in Management

The influence of the complexity of wellness services upon different aspects of the management of wellness tourism organizations in Romania

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Abstract

The need of wellbeing is felt by an increasing number of individuals. This stimulates the demand for healthy products and services. All services represent nowadays an important part of the economy. This applies to wellness services as well. Still, the concept of wellness is quite new, especially in Romania. Nevertheless, the managers from the tourism industry in Romania started to use this concept more and more frequently. Wellness tourism started to develop only a few years ago in Romania. The management of tourism services in general, and of wellness services in particular, represents an extremely important aspect for the managers in the hospitality and tourism industry. This article's main purpose is to establish whether the complexity of the wellness services directly influences some aspects regarding the managements of the wellness tourism organizations that provide them. The managers have to take into account and to pay attention to all the aspects regarding services culture if they want to be able to provide high quality wellness products and services. Moreover, they have to consider an entire and complex package of services, including extra services, if they want to provide top wellness packages.

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Peer-review under responsibility of SIM 2017 / 14th International Symposium in Management.

Keywords: management; wellness; services; tourism;

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1. Introduction

With the development of tourist traffic, the increase of the number of trips, but also the increase of customer expectations, have changed traditional hospitality into a commercial hospitality. This type of commercial hospitality, besides satisfying the basic needs, namely accommodation and catering, also offers other services such as recreation, sports, relaxation, and so on. All of these services come together in what we call the hospitality and tourism industry today.

Healthy lifestyle has become increasingly important for many individuals. A good look, a good overall health, a lifestyle that encompasses sport are some of the people's wishes that have led to specific behaviors. This healthy behavioral pattern is more and more present in developed societies and reflects balance and personal harmony.

Wellness is becoming increasingly popular and developed worldwide every day. However, it is quite difficult to find a single approach to this concept.

A combination of health, wellness and tourism naturally leads to relaxation, exploration, socialization, self-esteem, or otherwise to a general state of well-being. All of this and not only have contributed to the development of wellness tourism. The wellness industry has grown in recent years throughout the world. It provides services and products for both local and international tourists. Services are provided, among others, by spas, gymnasiums, sports organizations, wellness centers and so on.

The management of the demand for wellness products and services is a real challenge for business people and managers. The wellness tourism industry needs to identify the characteristics of these demands. For performance calculations, managers must consider costs, earnings, and profit. Managers need to be able to adapt to fluctuations in demand and to constantly changing needs and expectations. They have to meet the requirements of the market and come up with products and packages of varied wellness services according to the wishes of the clients.

The purpose of this scientific research is to determine the influence that the complexity of wellness services has on the management of the wellness tourism organizations that supply them. In the first part the article presents some theoretical considerations regarding the tourism services in general but also for the wellness tourism and the wellness tourism organizations. In the second part are presented the research methodology and the results. Thus, it was attempted to establish the influence that the complexity of wellness services has on several aspects of the management of wellness tourism organizations.

2. Theoretical background

Worldwide, wellness tourism is beginning to grow and develop more and more.

The tourism industry is, in essence, a service industry based on the combination of the five basic services (accommodation, food, transport, treatment, leisure / entertainment). These services, combined with the tangible elements lead to the formation of tourist packages intended for consumption by tourists. (Ispas, 2012, p.24).

According to the American Marketing Association, 'services are activities, benefits or utilities that are offered on the market or provided in conjunction with the sale of good.'

According to Gronroos, 'a service is a more or less tangible activity or group of activities that usually takes place at the time of the buyer and provider interaction' (Gronroos, 2007, p.20). This definition is more comprehensive than the one provided by the American Marketing Association.

From the definition above results not only the fact that the services are not material, but also the fundamental importance of the relationship between the buyer and the service provider, which is most often decisive in providing the service. The concept of wellness is more and more common in Europe and globally. According to *Travel to Wellness Magazine*, at European level and not only the vast majority of organizations offer different tourist products such as: therapies, massage and its derivatives, cosmetic treatments, spa treatments and so on. There are organizations that include fitness activities (eg. yoga, Pilates, etc.) or various outdoor sports (for example in mountain resorts).

Nowadays, many authors claim that the whole world is in a crisis of services. Kaufman believes that two of the reasons why this happens are: services are considered servile and the service world is too little mapped. He claims that nowadays it is necessary to talk about and produce only "superior services". He also proposes seven rules of leadership in services (Kaufman R., 2013, p.93):

- Declare services a top priority;
- Be a model to follow;
- Promote a common service language;
- Measure what really matters;
- Give strength to the team;
- Remove bottlenecks from superior services;
- Keep your concentration and enthusiasm;

Regarding the specialized scientific literature, wellness tourism is often associated with medical tourism, or even a more ambiguous concept, of health tourism. Wellness tourism is a concept much newer than medical tourism. This is one reason why it is quite difficult to indicate the exact sources that define the concept of wellness without associating it with other concepts. Scientific literature shows that the definitions cover a wide range of meanings: from almost exclusively linking wellness tourism to the spa sector to associating wellness tourism with a variety of other tourist products.

The American National Wellness Institute, founded in 1977, considers that “wellness refers to the active process that helps people become aware of, and make choices toward a more successful existence.”

“The tourism industry needs a segmentation of the wellness market, a differentiation of products into several sub-segments of the wellness tourism: spa tourism, thalasso tourism, holistic tourism, yoga and meditation tourism, spiritual tourism.” (Smith M., Puczko L., 2009)

“Wellness tourism sums up the relationships and phenomena that result from a trip taken by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health. They stay in a specialized hotel which provides the appropriate professional knowhow and individual care. They require a comprehensive service package comprising physical fitness/beauty care, healthy nutrition/diet, relaxation/meditation and mental activity/education.” (Mueller H., Kaufmann E.L., 2001)

“Wellness tourism involves people traveling to another place to actively seek out activities to keep them or improve their state of health and well-being and looking for unique and/or authentic experiences / therapies, that are not available at home. A wellness tourist generally seeks integrated wellness and prevention approaches in order to improve their health / quality of life.” (Global Spa Summit, 2011)

The common features of most wellness tourism organizations are presented in Fig. 1.

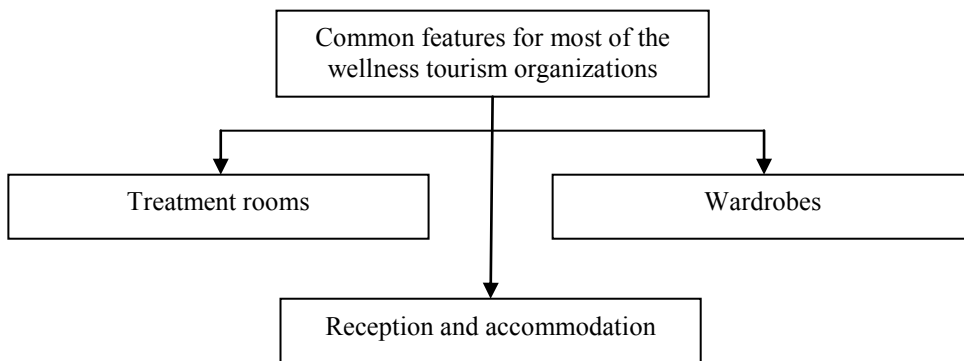


Fig.1 Common features for most of the wellness tourism organizations
 (Source: Personal approach, 2017; Cohen M., Bodeker G., 2011)

There are also more luxurious wellness organizations that can also offer various sports activities (eg. yoga, Pilates and so on), relaxation, sauna, and so on.

In order for a spa or wellness hotel to become modern and state-of-the-art, its management, based on a decision-making process, must offer customers, in addition to the above, other facilities such as:

- Thermal baths;
- Sauna of various types;

- Cameras for meditation;
- Rooms for specific activities (physical therapy, yoga, acupuncture, aromatherapy and so on.);
- Gardens;
- Retail stores;
- Waiting halls, and so on. (Cohen M., Bodeker G., 2011, p. 78)

However, the main difference between a common and a modern wellness organization lies not only in the facilities offered but also in the whole concept of wellness / spa, therefore implicitly in the management of the respective organization. A spa or hotel that has a clear vision of wellness and has identified the profile of its customers has great chances to turn into a modern and successful spa or hotel.

According to Wellness Tourism Worldwide, in a Report from 2014 (Smith, M., Puczko, L., 2014), a number of ten wellness tourism trends have been identified:

- Tourists are willing to learn different relaxation methods that they can apply at home as well;
- Wellness tourism developed a new niche for travel agents to expend their business and also offer a personally and professionally rewarding career specialty;
- Tourists are also interested in the locally relevant and authentic experiences with emphasis on living the local life;
- Tourists are willing to take food tours, cooking classes, agriculture and farm-to-table experiences as part of their journey;
- Physicians actually prescribe these days vacations as an antidote from stress;
- Tourists choose either trips that only focus on personal enrichment or at least consider it as being part of their journey;
- Another aspect that tourists are attracted by is the so called "slow travel", in order to savor all the experiences that the journey offers;
- Volunteering is another trend that many tourists are keen to experience during their vacations;
- One more aspect that wellness providers consider in their attempt to attract a larger market is the business and leisure travelers that want to maintain a healthy lifestyle in their trips;
- Spas are rebranding themselves as wellness providers in order to attract a larger market.

3. Research methodology

The characteristics of the wellness services are also related to the local specificities. Thus, in Romania, starting from the rigorous study of the international literature, it can be noticed that the wellness services are complex. The complexity of wellness services refers to the fact that the provision of this kind of services requires functional equipment, qualified staff. Also, services are complex in terms of both the procedures used and the various packages in which they can be distributed.

Regarding the management of wellness tourism organizations, four attributes are to be analyzed: turnover, mission, control procedures, employee training.

The main element of novelty is offered by the approach of different characteristics of management functions (turnover, mission, control procedures, employee training) in terms of a characteristic of wellness services (complexity).

The objective of this article is to establish the influence that the complexity of wellness services has on the four above mentioned attributes of the management of wellness tourism organizations in Romania. Thus, it has been analyzed whether the complexity of wellness services directly influences the turnover, the mission, the control procedures and the employee training of the accommodation units that provide them. The four research hypotheses that were formulated are presented in Fig.2.

The validity of the research hypotheses was verified by using the T - Student test for independent samples in the case of qualitative variables or by calculating the Pearson correlation indicator for the quantitative variables.

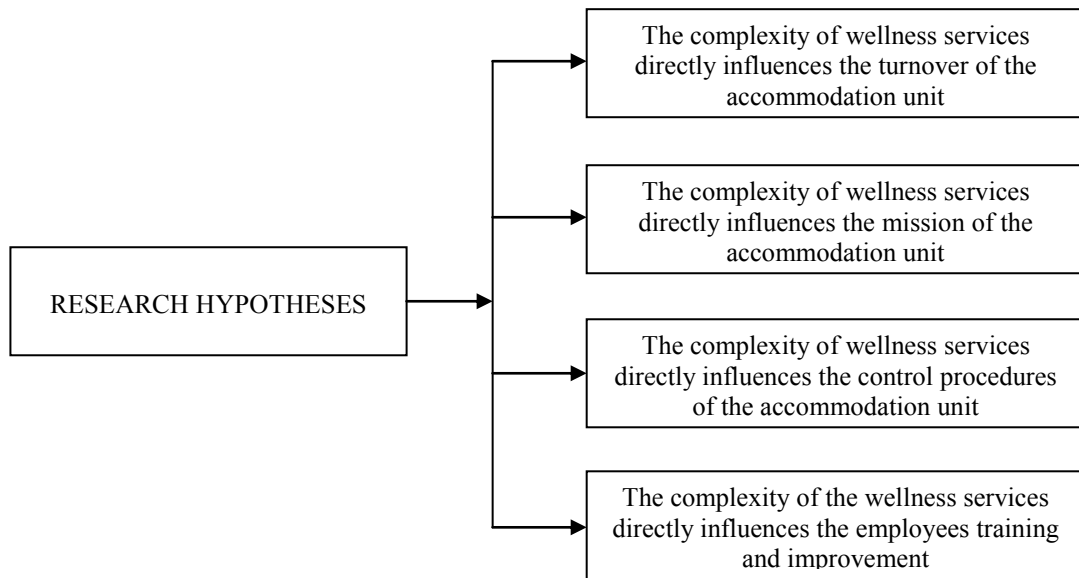


Fig.2 Research hypotheses
(Source: Personal Approach, 2017)

The research method used is the quantitative one - the survey based on the questionnaire. The sample consisted of managers of 149, 4 and 5 star accommodation units in Romania providing wellness products and services. The data were collected between February and March 2017. It was decided to use the Likert measurement scale, but also dichotomic questions. The items were validated using the Alpha Crombach coefficient. The values of the Alpha Crombach coefficient, for all the used items, were higher than 0.72. Among the items used, we mention:

- Turnover is significantly influenced (at least 5%) by the revenues from wellness services.
- The services offered are complex in terms of the procedures used.
- The mission of the accommodation unit also includes the wellness component.
- There are control procedures specific to each wellness service provided.
- Employees are encouraged to attend wellness training courses.

4. Research results

The first hypothesis - *the complexity of wellness services directly influences the turnover of the accommodation unit* was tested by using the T-Student test for independent samples to capture the existence of possible significant differences between the variables' averages and the complexity of services for the two independent samples constituted as distinct subgroups for the dichotomous variable *The turnover is significantly influenced (minimum 5%) by the revenues from the wellness services*.

Observing the values of the average for the complexity variable, in relation to the two subgroups (respondents who consider that *the Turnover is not significantly influenced (minimum 5%) by the complexity of the wellness services* (0 - No), respectively *the Turnover is significantly influenced (minimum 5%) by the complexity of wellness services* (1 - Yes), we appreciate that there are significant differences between the two averages. This fact is also confirmed by the value of the T - Student test ($t = 4.872$, $p < 0.000$).

Thus, we can see that when the respondents appreciate that the turnover is not influenced by the complexity of the services offered, the average of the variable services complexity is smaller (average = 12,36, standard deviation = 4,297), respectively when the average of the variable services complexity is higher (average = 15.99, standard deviation = 2.186) respondents share the view that turnover is influenced by the complexity of wellness services. By calculating the magnitude of the effect after Cohen, we get a value of $r = 0.60$, which highlights the existence of strong wellness influence on turnover.

Thus, we can appreciate that, according to respondents, the complexity of wellness services influences the company's turnover and validates the stated hypothesis.

The second hypothesis - *the complexity of wellness services directly influences the mission of the accommodation unit* was also tested by using the T-Student test.

Observing the values of the average for the complexity variable in relation to the two subgroups (respondents who consider that *the mission of the accommodation unit is not directly influenced by the complexity of the wellness services* (0 - No), respectively *the mission of the unit is directly influenced by the complexity of the wellness services*), we appreciate that there are significant differences between the two averages. This fact is also confirmed by the value of the T - Student test ($t = 13.333, p < 0.000$). Thus, we can see that when the respondents appreciate that the mission of the accommodation unit is not influenced by the complexity of the services offered, the average of the variable services complexity is smaller (average = 5.13, standard deviation = 2.1), respectively when the average of the variable services complexity is higher (average = 15.68, standard deviation = 2.182), respondents share the view that the mission of the accommodation unit is influenced by the complexity of wellness services.

Thus, we can appreciate that in the opinion of the respondents the complexity of wellness services influences the mission of the accommodation unit and validates the stated hypothesis.

The third hypothesis is the following: *the complexity of wellness services directly influences the control procedures of the accommodation unit*. The existence of a possible relationship of statistical influence between services complexity and control procedures was highlighted by the use of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The value of the Pearson coefficient is $r = 0.455$ ($p < 0.000$) and highlights the existence of a significant statistical relationship between the two variables analyzed.

This situation shows us that in the view of the participants in this study, if the complexity of wellness services has an ascending trend, the control procedures follow the same trend and become more and more complex and varied. Thus, the stated hypothesis is validated.

The fourth hypothesis is the following: *the complexity of the wellness services directly influences the employees training and improvement*.

Since a numerical level measurement was used for both variables, we used the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient to test this hypothesis. The value of the Pearson coefficient, $r = 0.561$ ($p < 0.000$) highlights the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the two variables that were analyzed.

This situation shows that in the view of the participants in this study, if the complexity of the services has an ascending trend, the interest for the training and improvement of the employees in the wellness field follow the same trend. Thus, the stated hypothesis is validated.

The overview of the hypotheses validation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of hypotheses validation

No.	Hypotheses	Valid	Not Valid
1	The complexity of wellness services directly influences the turnover of the accommodation unit	X	
2	The complexity of wellness services directly influences the mission of the accommodation unit;	X	
3	The complexity of wellness services directly influences the control procedures of the accommodation unit;	X	
4	The complexity of wellness services directly influences the employees training and improvement;	X	

(Source: Personal approach, 2017)

Following the statistical analysis of the sample of 149 top managers of the 4 and 5 star accommodation units in Romania, the four hypotheses of scientific research were validated. Thus, it can be observed that the complexity of the wellness services directly affects the turnover, the mission, the control procedures of the accommodation units and the training and improvement of their employees.

5. Conclusion

Studying the relationship between the complexity of wellness services and the management of wellness tourism organizations (namely, turnover, mission, control procedures and employee training and improvement), direct influence relationships have been established. Thus, it has been observed that this feature of wellness services directly influences the four aspects of organizational management. This is an important aspect that the managers should take into account when running their business. These results represent an element of novelty in this research area. The limits of this research are related to the characteristic of the wellness services and the aspects regarding the management of wellness tourism organizations. Namely, I studied only one characteristic of the wellness services (the complexity) and only four aspects of the management of the wellness tourism organizations. For further research it would be interesting to find out how other characteristics of these services influence different aspects of the management of the wellness tourism organizations that provide them.

Although wellness tourism is a fairly new concept both around the world and implicitly in Romania, this does not prevent it from becoming more and more important in the hospitality industry and from becoming an increasingly important branch of the tourism industry.

When talking about wellness tourism, we need to consider a full and complete package of services, including additional services such as consulting before, during and after, transportation, meal, beauty, relaxation, sporting activities and so on. The whole service branch should aim to satisfy the tourists so that they can further recommend the accommodation unit and even return on another occasion. Wellness products need to be tailored to the needs of the clients as well as local specificities. Here also comes the role of marketing which, in this context, must harmonize and improve the performance of each element that contributes to the comfort and satisfaction of the client. The success of an accommodation unit depends mostly on the top management's ability to predict the direction the market is evolving.

Because the concept of wellness is a relatively new concept, its approach and the implementation of wellness products and services are quite difficult for managers of wellness tourism organizations in Romania but not only. This process can be considered an innovation in itself for managers of organizations in this branch of tourism. Thus, in order to offer premium, complex and personalized wellness products and services or, in other words, high quality, it is necessary to understand the whole concept of wellness, but also the notion of wellness tourism, which naturally is in close contact with the management of wellness tourism organizations.

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