

WELLBEING TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN BULGARIA

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INTRODUCTION

Wellbeing tourism is a new approach for recreation. The main prerequisites for sustainability development of this tourism product are green environment, thermal springs, clean mountain and recreation potential of landscape. On the other hand, the high qualified personnel is a big advantage in the managing process. Bulgaria is situated in very attractive part of Balkan region- there are suitable conditions for development and promotion of successful tourism products in the area of soft health tourism: thermal, medical SPA, SPA and Wellbeing. In addition, the well-developed tourism infrastructures can become a main factor for successful Wellbeing destinations management. International experts and/or scientists on the field confirm the high potential of the water influences mixed with Wellness food in support of the human health prevention (Dimitrova, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014; Trendafilov, 2013; Nesheva, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2016a, Polimenov, 2014; Staneva, 2016).

DESIGN OF INVESTIGATION

The aim of investigation was to test different geomedical indicators that are successfully applied by the World Tourism Organization for measurement of Sustainable Tourism Development and to find applicable ones for Bulgarian Wellbeing tourism.

Some established SPA destinations were situated in places with different environmental characteristics and conditions for development of Wellbeing tourism.

- **Research network: well-developed SPA and thalassic tourism destinations**

- ✓ Bulgarian-Serbian Cross Border region: Dolna banja, Belchin, Varshetz, Sofia, Kjustendil-thermal SPA resorts;

- ✓ Devin, Bansko and Velingrad – mountain thermal SPA resorts;

- ✓ Sunny Beach and Pomorie - Black Sea tourism and thermal SPA resorts.

- **Study objects:**

20 SPA /Wellness hotels, located in regions with different environmental characteristics were examined. The objects were divided into four examined group: EG1- hotels in urban area, EG2- mountain environment area, EG3- Black Sea area, EG4 (Control group): mountain areas in Austria (Vorarlberg land) and Black forest (Germany).

METHODOLOGY

The main indicators are: indoor and outdoor environment audit including quality of air, water, soil and mineral waters; implementation and management of environmental technology – green energy, waste management, HSSR (Healthy Safety Security Risk Assessment) for clients/personnel; ergonomic audit of professional equipment, implementation of Quality Management System (QMS); electromagnetic pollution screening.

- **Laboratory tests**

The chemical investigation of underground water and soils included analysis of contents of Cu, Zn, Pb, Cd, Mn, SO₄, BTEX and TPH. The analysis was done at Certificated Laboratory INTERGEO Umwelttechnologie und Abfallwirtschaft GmbH, Salzburg.

- **Delphi Study (joined to Balkan Delphi Study-Balkan Wellbeing Project)**

The questionnaire's screening joined 32 Medical SPA Managers, 18 members of Medical SPA Associations and 40 clients (2012-2014).

RESULTS

The main laboratory results showed good quality of underground water, soils and mineral waters in mountain objects. The quality of using mineral resources for tourism is quite good. All of mineral springs managed by local Municipalities: Dolna banja, Kjustendil, Sofia, Bansko, Velingrad and Pomorie. Their responsibility for the quality and quantity of mineral springs are very helpful for creation of sustainability SPA destinations.

The electromagnetic pollution was no detected also. Some environmental problems and high values of non-ionized electromagnetic field were obtained in urban hotels in Sofia, Sunni beach and Kjustendil.

Comparing the chemical composition and healing effect of mineral waters from Belchin, Devin, Pomorie and Velingrad since 2007 to 2014 year, can conclude there is a sustainability of quantity and quality characteristics of mineral springs (1, 2).

The Ergonomic Audit obtained deficiency of main ergonomic standards for healthy and safety workplace.

The Managers opinion about impact of environmental status on quality of Wellbeing including SPA services were too different and depended on geographical situation of examined object and professional expertise of employees. A very hot idea was marked about landscape recreation potential in mountain objects (3). Some of responds declared their enthusiasm about development of new tourism landscape trials in Stara Planina Mountain and Rhodopes Mountain also.

All clients need of specific environmental information, data of healthy risk assessment and ergonomic audit of building and equipment also.

All Delphi Study results for Bulgaria are corresponding to final Balkan Wellbeing projects results (fig. 1)

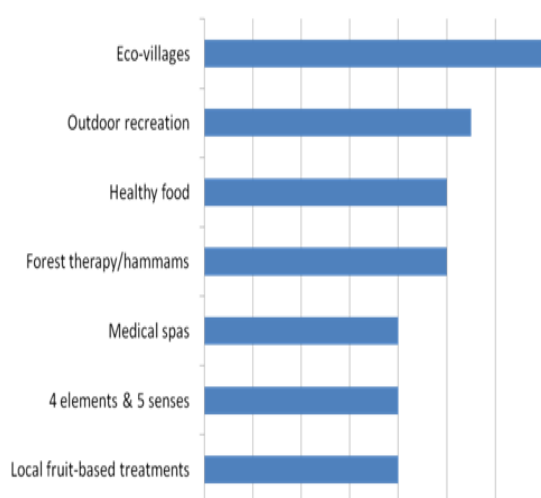


Figure 1 Customers selling tourism products propositions

Source: Project KTIA_AIK_12-1-2013-004, 2013

Some trends for sustainability Wellbeing destinations management

In accordance with obtained research results and an economical estimate of situation in Bulgaria we can present a very new concept idea for implementation of some environmental characteristics as sustainability development indicators. They can describe as local indicators which impact on main planning process, Risk Analysis and development of Wellbeing destinations.

The core of presented idea is suitable combination of Black Sea, green mountains and well-developed SPA resorts which should be the focus of our new recreation tourism products. Their contents should be developed like gastro-heritage, traditional cuisine, authentic wellness programs (geo-wellness) and geomedical tourism. The very attractive product can be forest recreation tourism with forest out door bathing. Obviously, Wellbeing does not have to be costly. It is very simply to offer recreation in fresh nature and healthy home-made food. But it is not enough for develop a successful and sustainability tourism product. We need realize our vision: Healthy from the Nature, but with respect to environment and human health.

In line with Balkan Wellbeing concept, Bulgaria is very hot place for manage of Wellbeing tourism products (fig. 2).

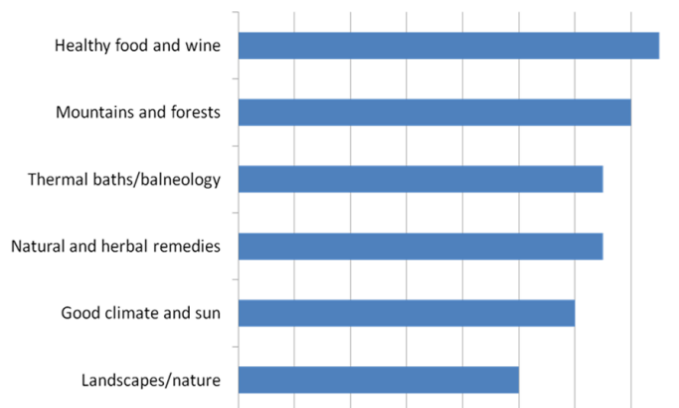


Figure 2 Suggested Main Sources for Wellbeing Product Development

Source: Project KTIA_AIK_12-1-2013-004, 2013 with author's changes

Comparing the main touristic sources in our country with the resources for creation of Alpine Wellbeing and Nordic Wellbeing (4, 5), we can describe the **architectonics of presented Wellbeing model:**

- **Preliminary development stage**

- Identification of Wellbeing and SPA resources;
- Indoor and outdoor Assessment of environment;
- Electromagnetic pollution (EMP) screening ;

- **Main development stage:**

- Development, marketing and branding ideas creation

- **Post development stage**

- Monitoring and Evaluation of Geomedical indicators: ♦ Data collection and analysis; ♦ Screening of geomedical indicators benefits for sustainability development of SPA and Wellbeing tourism.

CONCLUSION

We obtained the some advances of geomedical indicators in Bulgaria: all management plans which were applied the indicators corresponded to European Environmental Agency rules and Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water also. The collected and analysed geomedical information can apply for social-economic assessment and for improving of quality of life and Health prevention of population. Some of tested geomedical indicators are corresponding to risk assessment data in SPA and Wellbeing tourism today.

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