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IMPLEMENTATION OF EU DIRECTIVES FOR CERTIFICATION OF THE STAFF IN THE SPA BUSINESS IN BULGARIA

INTRODUCTION

Modern SPA tourism market is focused mainly to customers who are living at high speed and they need for an efficient and fast recovery without any cost that is associated with curative water. Primarily they needed comfort, relaxation, recreation, manual therapies, beauty treatments and a balanced diet.

Significantly grows the proportion of healthy active holidays in 2011/2012. The Health / Wellness tourism is the more practiced with 4 million people worldwide and “...which makes the global spa and wellness industry in business for around € 300 billion per year...” (2, 6). Unfortunately, there is no statistical information on revenues from “...the free time industry on the entire Balkans region...” and apparently there is also an acute need for “...new marketing&management strategy in SPA&Wellness business...” (5).

Bulgaria has a rich tradition in balneology, and “...according to various informational sources is among the top five countries, not only in Europe but in the world...” by “...flow rate and diversity of the mineral springs with a different physicochemical composition...” (2). To this moment the SPA and Wellness business is still developing spontaneously, without clear vision, without to be “...confused SPA&Wellness tourism with Balneology...” (2). Standards for the services in this sector have not been implemented even though out of the west of Bulgaria the world is SPA and Wellness.

The specified personnel for the SPA business are extremely insufficient because the majority of the learning programs are to far from the European standards. They must be continuously evolve and professionally optimized in harmony with the dynamics of the development in the tourist industry and spa services. Is necessary to implement “...educational policies that are aligned with current trends in European and worldwide...” (2, 3) and recognized educational and training programs for the personnel in the field of management the spa and wellness centers, and the services in their menu. It should be noted that not only in Bulgaria but also in Europe the finding of a highly qualified staff for Spa & Wellness centers is a major problem. (1, 6).

In certain of the established associations in the country, 5-6 is Balneology, SPA and Wellness shall be working to create regulatory instruments and criteria for the development of SPA and Wellness business. The results are partial and do not contribute to a significant improvement in the industry's personnel policy and adjustment activities of the SPA and Wellness facilities. Lack of their own or borrowed from other countries in the EU norms, standards and requirements recognized an

authorized licensor government body / Ministry of Health / those services available in spa and wellness facilities is an issue and of the education system itself. The national register of occupation is not complete in terms of the profiles of the specialists who can work and the personnel compile this type of centers.

European SPA Association has drafted and submitted to the Parliament of the European Union a proposal for the harmonization of legislative changes concerning common European policy for SPA centers, SPA resorts and medical SPA centers. For the needs of the Bulgarian normative regulation of SPA & wellness industry should be examined European models and standards which to introduce by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, and be included in the new project Law on Tourism. (4, 6)

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In view the problems identified, the **purpose** of the study is to determine the criteria motivated / in accordance with EC / Procedure on regulation of Spa & wellness establishments and of staff potential.

An **object** of the survey was 56 recognized specialists from different types of SPA centers (employers, executives, investors, entrepreneurs, managers, company managers, and representatives of professional organizations and of the executive power). The expert research is conducted during the first international conference a SPA & wellness (2011), and of III-rd National Conference of beauty salons and SPA centers (2012). To analyze of the collected opinions of experts we determined 6 indicators for classification of SPA centers and 6 indicators for certification of SPA staff that they ranked by their significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

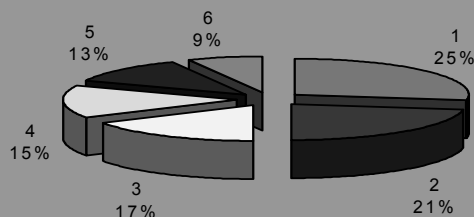
The results of the psychometric experiment are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 and Figure 1 ranged according to their ranks weights - basic criteria for assessing the quality and competitiveness of the spa facilities on the basis expert opinions.

Table 1. Matrix of the opinions of experts surveyed the basic requirements for quality assessment of the SPA centers

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	Sum	Rang
	/6	/5	/4	/3	/2	/1		
	un./	un./	un./	un./	un./	un./		
1. High image and competitiveness	45 253	8 31	3 8	–	–	–	56 people 292 units (R. weighth)	I
2. Modern facilities and equipment	9 36	38 182	–	3 12	4 4	2 2	56 236	II

3. Highly qualified personnel, selected according to specific criteria: education, skills and experience	2 14	—	38 134	6 10	4 8	6 6	56 172	III
4. Investment projects in the areas of business development at Spa centers	—	4 22	8 8	40 122	4 8	—	56 160	IV
5. Effective management structure at several levels: strategic, tactical and operational	—	3 10	8 24	5 14	40 76	—	56 124	V
6. Standardization of services in the Spa centers	—	2 10	4 16	2 —	2 4	46 43	56 73	VI

Figure 1: Percentage ratios for the most frequently used SPA services



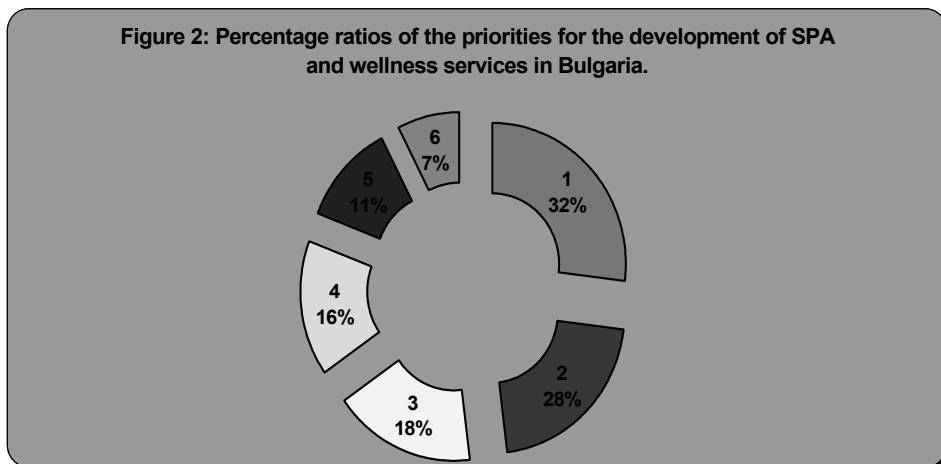
The main factors for the high quality of the SPA center, according to experts are the “high image and the competitiveness” (rank weight 292 units - 25%) and “modern facilities and equipment” (weight ranks 236 units - 21%). Third and fourth are ranked highly trained staff (Ranks 172 weight units - 17%) and investment projects to develop sphere of activities in the SPA centers (ed. rang. weight 160 - 15%). Indicators: “effective management structure and standardization of services in spas” have received 13% and 9%. The ranking of the other indicators / 7 to 10 place / is: a “wide range of SPA and Wellness services”, “optimal pricing strategy”, “flexible marketing policies”, “favorable conditions and incentives to employees”.

The analysis of the data in Table 2 we find out that the first and second place are based on “professional qualification of the personnel” (rang. weighing 289-unit 32%) and “high quality performance of services” (rang. Weight 237 units - 28%).

Drawn up by experts in the priority indicators survey carried out and their ranking must be taken into account in establishing uniform standards (in accordance with European standards) by the state authorities for the categorization of SPA center and the certification of personnel in SPA&Wellness sector.

Table 2. Matrix of the opinions of surveyed experts for evaluation of the professional training of staff and the quality of applied SPA and wellness services

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	Sum	Rang
	/6 un./	/5 un./	/4 un./	/3 un./	/2 un./	/1 un./		
1. Required level of qualification and competence	44 243	7 26	4 17	1 3	–	–	56 people 289 units (R. weight)	I
2. High quality performance of the proposed SPA and Wellness Services	8 50	33 161	8	6 12	3 5	1 1	56 237	II
3. Individual approach to each user's needs	5 20	3 35	33 110	3 16	5 8	7 5	56 194	III
4. Good language culture and use of foreign languages	4 15	2 15	3 70	42 51	5 6	– 3	56 160	IV
5. High level of motivation	4	18	6	10	36	–	56 129	V
6. Positive attitude to customers	1	5	4	4	12	30	56 79	VI

Figure 2: Percentage ratios of the priorities for the development of SPA and wellness services in Bulgaria.

The preparation of the professional trained staff for management of the SPA facilities is a complicated and dynamic process, which determines the future growth rates for the enlargement in the SPA market services. Future specialists in the SPA industry need stable knowledge and competencies for effective organizational and methodological management and marketing, under a high level of motivation to offer and implement high quality of the services, consistent with the needs of the SPA customers and promote their interests (Appendix 1). In this relationship is necessary to

activate the professional contacts between the academic institutions - Higher School (theoretical knowledge) and SPA&Wellness business (practice).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the conducted research, in conclusion, we believe that action is needed to develop and adopt a state regulatory instrument:

- Benchmarking for the categorization of SPA & Wellness centers in hotels, to evaluate the quality procedures and services;
- Introduction of the requirements for the qualification of the personnel;
- Increasing the competitiveness of spas in the domestic and international market by expanding the range of activities and services, balanced pricing policy, investment projects, promotional packages and strategic guidance for the development
- Ensuring specialized staff training for good transfer of medium to higher education (in a professional school degree "Bachelor", "Master" and the NSA "Doctor");
- Entering the normative documents harmonized with the European requirements for the activities on SPA & Wellness centers and a national strategy for the development of this business in Bulgaria.

The implementation of these priorities, together with the extremely favorable natural conditions will contribute to make Bulgaria the preferred SPA destination.

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Appendix 1: Professionals in the field of culture SPA

➤ Knowledge:

- Promote and disseminate knowledge in the field of culture and SPA positive effect of hydro aqua procedures and practices;
- Deepening their knowledge about the theory of modern SPA culture and the methodology for individual diagnosis, depending on the health status of clients;
- Carried out research on the monitoring and control SPA factors, the duration and intensity of the applied influences;
- Implement specialized knowledge aimed at studying the best practices for prevention health and functional;
- Possess good language skills and use language;
- Available use of the specialized terminology in the fields of SPA culture.

➤ Skills:

- Apply appropriate tools and methods of impact at various SPA treatments;
- Conduct individual diagnosis and implement effective methods and SPA treatments in accordance with functional status;
- Develop and implement individual and group SPA programs;
- Planning and implementation specific actions to improve the technology of customer service;
- Exercise effective control over the organization and implementation of specific SPA activities.

- Competencies:
 - Conduct individual interviews with consumers, their families or in groups, to determine the appropriate SPA services;
 - Professional guide customers for the selection of appropriate procedures and to assess the quality of the SPA services;
 - Possessing the skills to work in a team;
 - Business ethics Standard in communication with customers.

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Implemented was a psychometric experiment for survey the opinion of the leading experts from the 4 and 5 stars hotels and the first SPA certified MSc - SPA managers. The summarized results from the study highlight that the priorities are related to improve the quality of the services in the SPA business. We establish the acute need for increasing professional qualification of the personnel and harmonize the Bulgarian legislation with the EU directives. In this regard it is important to implement the national classificatory with new professions and unified for this purpose the theoretical categories: "Results of advanced training", "knowledge", "practical skills" and "competencies" in educational and qualification degree: "Bachelor", "MasterSc" and "PhD".

Key words: *Sport and politics, SPA Business, new professions, certification, unification with the EU Directives.*