

Health and Wellness Tourism as Source of Happiness and Quality of Life

Joana Quintela, Carlos Costa and Anabela Correia

Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Portucalense University, Porto, Portugal

Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Business School, Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal, Portugal

jquintela@upt.pt

ccosta@ua.pt

anabela.correia@esce.ips.pt

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Abstract: Health and wellness tourism as always been in the tourism history of Portugal and Hungary. Nowadays, it still figures as one of the strategic products for development of tourism in both countries. The constant and solid growth of this type of tourism is due to the large range of modern life circumstances and constraints. The stress levels and the working hours and the improvement of the life hope, are factors that converge and obey to a bigger concern with the quality of life levels and also the sense of happiness. Consequently, Health and Wellness activities, specifically the ones that are rewarded with the therapeutic qualities and characteristics of thermal waters, are particularly valorised by different segments of demand. The literature review allowed the comprehension of the concepts of quality of life and happiness in the tourism context and reflected the reality and the potential nature of health and wellness tourism as a global touristic product for the contemporary world, mainly in the developed societies. The purpose of the present paper is to analyse the relation of health and wellness tourism and the improvement of quality of life and the levels of happiness, in a comparative study between Portuguese and Hungarian realities. The analysis was made by the supply side. The empirical study was developed in a four months period and the empirical data were collected through the administration of a questionnaire as a data collection tool in some of the most important Thermal Baths, Hot Springs and SPAs of those countries. The study sample is made up of 753 Portuguese and Hungary users of those SPAs and thermal baths. The results of the empirical research are analysed and both cases are compared. The obtained conclusions are presented and the implications to the development of health and wellness tourism are demonstrated in a marketing and consumer behaviour perspective.

Keywords: tourism, health and wellness, happiness, quality of life

1. Introduction

Along the last decades, tourism has continued to grow and there has also been a diversification of it to become one of the sectors fastest-growing economic economies in the world (UNWTO, 2014).

In this context of accelerate growth, the demand for health and wellness services has made this type of tourism, one of the most promising subsectors of tourism. Currently there is a greater desire to travel for the purpose of improving personal health and well-being (Pechlaner and Fischer, 2006).

This paper analyses the potential of Health and Wellness Tourism to improve the levels of happiness and of quality of life of the ones who experience and use this kind of services, demonstrating how these two dimensions may influence the consumer behaviour and the marketing innovation approaches, contributing to the development of this kind of tourism in countries as Portugal and Hungary that have a long tradition in this area and as well as a great potential of growth and increase in the near future.

The basis and the justification of this approach is based on statistical data that demonstrate the importance of tourism in the worldwide economy and also in the economy of both countries. Specifically on the role of health and wellness as a strategic tourist product for the development of tourism in those destinations. This approach was also inevitability based on the literature review about the concepts of happiness and quality of life, applied in different areas of knowledge, as it will be demonstrated along the Part I of this research, but more and more can be used as an important tool for the development of marketing in tourism sector.

Although Health and wellness tourism is a promising area of research, because it links with many aspects and big questions of contemporary life, theoretical and empirical studies in the area are still restrained and mainly