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Spa Tourism in Serbia and Experiences of Other Countries



**THEMATIC
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AND TOURISM IN VRNJAČKA BANJA**



WELLNESS AS A SEGMENT OF SPA TOURISM IN SERBIA

Jelena Vićentijević¹

Abstract

Spa tourism implies the use of healing thermal and mineral water. In the past the main was health-cure function, while in the 21st century it represents complex type of tourism integrating series of tourism subtypes. Wellness is new lifestyle that emphasizes nurturing spirit and body, putting accent on prevention rather than treatment. Spas as ecological places with preserved nature and healing characteristics are ideal wellness destinations. The aim of the paper is to analyze the concept of wellness, highlight its importance in spa tourism and point out effects and possibilities of wellness tourism development in Serbian spas. In the future due to stress and faster lifestyle tourist demand for products based on relaxation and establishment of psycho-physical balance will increase, therefore it is necessary that spas in Serbia recognize their potential in wellness industry, build their offer modeled on developed European spa centers and improve their position on the international tourism market.

Keywords: *wellness, spa, tourism, Serbia*

Introduction

Modern lifestyle has brought technical, technological, social and other changes, while a man as a biological entity is under the negative influences which one can not easily overcome, so health issues are increasingly present. Everyday duties accompanied by stress, improper diet and physical inactivity have created the need for mental and physical body relief (Milačić, 2011). Tourism as a comprehensive concept is increasingly gaining importance and has a strong reverse effect on society in general. The tourist market puts the spotlight on service whose number is constantly increasing, so there are a lot of new thematically different and modified forms of tourism, which are the result of individual human

¹ Jelena Vićentijević; MSc in Tourism, PhD student; University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, Studentski trg 3/3, Belgrade, Serbia; +381611476272; jelenavicentijevic@hotmail.com

desire for authentic experience. It could be said that there are many different tourist destinations because there are so many people with varied interests. This is why certain types of tourism do not have adequate name in Serbian language (Jovanović, 2013). One of these specific forms of tourism is the segment of health and spa tourism, known as wellness tourism, which emerged as a result of changes in the traditional spas caused by the increase in demand for destinations that offer a holistic experience based on well-being.

Wellness tourism in spas contributes to improvement of their tourism functions and is a combination of medicine and tourism. In recent years, wellness tourism has been expanding due to numerous factors, and modern spas, by providing therapeutic and other professional services, are increasingly promoting wellness (Spasojević & Šušić, 2010; Šušić & Dimitrijević, 2015).

Spas in Serbia have long ago attracted the attention of tourists, due to the number of thermal springs, traditions and general recognizability and some of them have eventually become multifunctional centers of tourism (Stanković & Pavlović, 2005). The richness and diversity and also distribution and chemical composition of thermal and mineral water in Serbia are related to the complex tectonic relations and various geological compositions of terrain including the wide distribution of igneous rocks. Thanks to their health function it was created a tradition of spa treatment and were formed specific ambients (Jovičić, 2008). Spas around the world guided by experiences of successful wellness destinations are improving infrastructure to attract wellness tourists in order to achieve multiple benefits (Sheldon & Park, 2008). Spas have always been places with an offer based on the use of thermal and mineral water and the services of qualified medical personnel in equipped facilities in a pleasant relaxing atmosphere (Cohen & Bodeker, 2008). In modern spa tourism in addition to health programs, tourist facilities need to also complete each other to represent a unique health tourism product (Belij et al., 2014). The competitiveness of the tourism market implies prediction, adaptation and change management. The human needs are submissive to continuous changes so the task of destinations is to closely monitor these changes in order to utilized in time the chances for advancement. Wellness was created precisely as a result of management changes in the tourism market and has become imperative for the successful development of spa resorts (Milićević et al., 2012).

The aim of the study is to analyze the concept of wellness, to emphasize its importance in the context of spa tourism and to point out the current offer and perspective of wellness tourism in Serbian spas.

Spa tourism in Serbia

Spas are resorts with a number of specificities that came from the existence of thermal and mineral resources and efforts to exploit value of sources for treatment and recreation. Functionally spas are directed primarily towards health and wellness tourism, but they are also significant for the prevention and recreation of healthy people.

Going to the regions and centers abundant in thermal and mineral springs, is one of the oldest type of tourist movement, so often is pointed out that the spa tourism in general has a long and rich tradition (Stanković, 2008). It is one way of returning the natural healing factors which increased interest is manifested in our country and also in the world. Balneotherapy on which the spa tourism captures is a complex therapeutic discipline that includes factors such as change of environment, dietary regimen, active and passive psychophysical rest, and if necessary, medication and physiotherapy into a single continent. Its basis is made by natural factors such as mineral water, peloid and climate (Stanković, 2009).

Often can be heard that Serbia is called „the land of spas“. The number and variety of mineral and thermal springs in Serbia is the result of complex geological and petrographic relief structure and there is also the fact that the Serbian spas in the total spa tourist arrivals of the former SFR Yugoslavia participated with more than 60%. Among the ten most popular spas of the former Yugoslavia, seven were from Serbia (Stanković, 2009; Štetić, 2007). The first data of tourist arrivals were registered in Serbia in 1869 in Vrnjačka Banja when it was founded „Osnovatelno fundatorsko društvo lekovite kiselo vruće vode“ in Vrnjci and with the establishment of „Društvo za unapređenje i ulepšanje Sokobanje“ in 1893 the Sokobanja also becomes recognized (Jovičić, 2008; Stanković and Pavlović, 2005). The first law of spas was enacted in 1914 and in 1960 spas in Serbia obtained the status of natural health resorts (Stanković, 2009). The number of spas that have provided medical and tourist services was increasing and poor material base of hotel and tourist facilities was compensated with accommodation in private households that had been participated with share up to 75% in total spa facilities (Belij et al., 2014; Jovičić, 2008). Prosperity of spa tourism was

interrupted by war events in the former Yugoslavia since 1991 and decline in tourist arrivals lasted until 2002, when there can be noticed some improvements (Belij et al., 2014). Although Serbia has a large number of thermal and mineral springs, today, official statistics records tourist traffic only in the about 30 spas, which account for about 95% of tourist traffic of spas in Serbia and among those 30 spas are presented huge differences in the volume of tourist traffic because the five most developed spas absorb even 2/3 of the total tourist arrivals in the Serbian spas (Jovičić, 2009).

Two basic characteristics of Serbian spa tourism are seasonal concentration of tourist traffic and the domination of domestic tourists. Theoretically spa tourism in Serbia can be developed throughout the year, which so far hasn't largely been achieved. Because of recreational, especially health function spa tourism can be performed throughout the year and should not have marked seasonal characteristic. However, in our spas seasonal character of tourist traffic is very apparent and high season refers to the period from June to September, when a 55% tourist overnight and 45% of tourist arrivals is realized. Overwhelming dominance of domestic tourists is observed during the second half of the 20th century and in the first decade of the 21st century. Participation of foreign clientele is marginal character and slightly more noticeable at the end of the 1980s, when tourism in general noted the best results (Jovičić, 2009). The fact that in so far structure of Serbian spa guests with 99% dominated domestic tourists can be explained by a rich and varied spa, health and wellness tourism offer of countries in the region, which offer is compared to Serbia better known in Europe (Stanković, 2009).

Apart from rare exceptions, most spas in Serbia has a negligible circulation of tourists and tourist nights and consequently the poor economic and social effects, so it can be said that the current level of tourist valorization of our spas is not at a satisfactory level. The causes of this situation are numerous and various and related to insufficiently explored natural resources, organization of health and tourism operations, but also to difficult business conditions during the 1990s, when war, political and economic events have a negative impact on tourism in general and therefore on Serbian spa tourism. The consequences of all stated are negative trends in tourism development and negative image of the tourist market (Stanković, 2009; Stanković & Pavlović 2005; Vuković et al., 2015).

Great opportunities that Serbian spas have, due to the balneo-therapeutic value of healing water, need to be far more used, so the potential of the spa tourism in Serbian could become a reality (Štetić, 2007). Tourist offer of Serbian spas should more significantly follow the requirements of the market, because spas have long ago stopped to be just a health resort, increasingly struggling to animate tourists in the true sense of the word (Jovičić, 2009). The chance of achieving this goal is in wellness programs that can enrich the offer in spas, but also can be the main objective of tourist movements.

The concept of wellness

Modern trends in spa and health tourism in the world attach a key role in wellness. The rapid rhythm of life in the 21st century is resulting in stress, exhaustion, chronic anxiety and often with compromised immune system. In order to establish a balance between the physical and spiritual, it was formed a new concept, a new philosophy which is called wellness. Around the world in progressive tempo a large number of wellness centers in the cities, spas, hotels, beauty salons, etc. are opening up. Wellness is a modern word with ancient roots. It can be said that the principles of wellness have their origin in the ancient practice of treatment and medical traditions that date back thousands of years. The ancient culture of China, India, Greece and Rome tended to emphasize the „whole person“ in order to feel good. Today, the concept of wellness reaches its maximum in the modern application of ancient practices (acupuncture, yoga, meditation). The modern concept of wellness was first developed by an American doctor Halbert Dunn in 1959, when he first wrote about the special health condition that involves the unity of body, soul and mind. Wellness means feeling good, not only to be healthy but also to be happy and healthy. The main role of wellness is health care, maintaining a healthy body and spirit through the condition trainings, physical and mental relaxation and preservation of inner peace. Precisely for this reason and due to a stressful lifestyle, the need for programs that creatively and effectively implement the sense of wellness has increased all over the world and with it also increased the importance of wellness programs within the health and spa tourism (Milićević et al., 2012).

Wellness is an English word that is composed of two words well-being (feel good) and fitness (to be fit). Today, wellness is linked to many areas of human activity, including tourism, medicine, sport. Wellness is, in the strictest sense, a program that is designed to guide the individual back

into good physical shape and to let him feel good. However, when it comes to wellness, one generally avoids the narrower definition because identifying, understanding and knowing what wellness actually is requires a multidimensional and contemplative approach (Milačić, 2011). The concept of wellness is different in different parts of the world. In most European countries wellness is observed through healing thermal and mineral water and spas; in Asia wellness is seen through spiritual activities such as yoga, meditation and various types of massages; in America, Canada, England and Australia wellness focuses on beauty treatments, care and relaxation (Milićević et al, 2012). Wellness in most cases means a healthy balance between mind and body, which leads to widespread feelings of well-being (Smith & Kelly, 2006; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; Myers, Sweeney & Witmer, 2000; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Smith & Puckzo, 2008). National Wellness Institute defines wellness as an active process through which people become aware of the decision-making to the successful existence (Belij et al., 2014).

Five basic elements of wellness are physical activity, spiritual activities, healthy and natural nutrition, relaxation and face and body care. The term spa is often equated with the term wellness. However, the term spa means the place which offer services that contribute to the overall well-being and can be based on only one of the elements of wellness, while the term wellness is used primarily in tagging lifestyle, philosophy, ideas on achieving a balance of body, mind and spirit and can not work if one of these elements is missing (Milićević et al., 2012).

Basic principles of wellness are multidimensionality, orientation towards identifying causes of wellness rather than the causes of disease, balance, relativity, subjective perception. Wellness is more psychological than physical condition and tendency to look and feel good and to live healthy (Adams, 2003).

National Wellness Institute has developed a model of the six dimensions that focuses on the physical, spiritual, social, professional, intellectual and emotional aspects of life (http://www.nationalwellness.org/?page=Six_Dimensions).

Table 1: Dimensions of wellness

Dimension	Explanation	Basic principles
Physical	Optimal wellness is achieved through physical activity and healthy diet. Discourages smoking and use of drugs and alcohol.	Consume food and drinks that promote health and be fit.
Spiritual	Recognizes the wake of the meaning and purpose of human existence, respect for life itself and the forces in the universe. It is pointed out that on the road to wellness, the man tempts many emotions like doubt, despair, fear, frustration, but also feelings of satisfaction, joy, happiness.	Think about the meaning of life, be tolerant, do not close your mind, live according to your beliefs and values, be honest with yourself.
Social	Emphasizes the interdependence between the environment and society. Encourages actions to improve and preserve the world, a healthier life and a more beautiful and more pleasant communication with people around you.	Contribute to the overall good of the community and live in harmony with the natural environment and others.
Professional	Gives importance of personal satisfaction that a person experiences on the job.	Choose a job that is compatible with the interests and development of functional, useful skills and be involved in the creation of opportunities.
Intellectual	Recognizes the creative and stimulating mental activity. A person needs to expand his/her knowledge and skills while discovering ways to share them with others.	Expand your mind and cause creative mark, identify their potential problems and choose appropriate solutions.
Emotional	Management of feelings, including a realistic assessment of the borders, the development of autonomy and stress management skills.	It's healthier to be aware of feelings and accept them with an optimistic approach.

Source: http://www.nationalwellness.org/?page=Six_Dimensions

Awareness of healthy lifestyles and the need to escape from everyday stress affects the increase in tourist demand for wellness tourism. Since wellness is not a static but a relative and subjective concept needs of wellness tourists are in many ways specific so we can talk about a new form of thematic tourism - wellness tourism.

Wellness tourism as one of the oldest forms of tourism

Wellness tourism with multiple aspects can be seen as one of the oldest forms of tourism, keeping in mind the commitment to the overall well-being of man with the ancient Greeks and Romans, the search for spiritual enlightenment with the medieval pilgrims and with spa visits of European elite for health reasons during the 18th and 19th century. In the 21st century, the progress of science and medicine has led to better preservation of body and physical health and fitness, while in the field of mental, emotional and psychological health the progress is not so obvious, so in the past few years there has been a large increase in demand for wellness in tourism. According to the level of health services within the health tourism, it can be distinguished traditional spa tourism, spa and wellness tourism.

In modern spas health tourism product is divided into medical and wellness, except that in the modern spa tourism demand for wellness programs is increasingly growing and the intertwining of traditional spa with wellness tourism is more and more expressed (Jovanović, 2013). It is quite expected, due to the fact that the spas are resorts and places for recovery, but also places for prevention and preservation of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health (Vuković et al., 2015). Wellness is one of the new trends, not only in health but also in the modern tourism (Šušić and Dimitrijević 2015). Wellness tourism has the most dynamic and fastest growth in the European tourist industry (Tomka and Romanov, 2011).

Considering that there is no one generally accepted definition of wellness, neither one generally accepted definition of tourism, it can be said that there is no universal definition of wellness tourism. Wellness tourism is the sum of relationships and phenomena arising from the travel and stay of people whose main motive is the preservation and improvement of health. They stay in special hotels that provide expertise and individual care, and require a thorough package of services that includes care, healthful eating, diet, relaxation, meditation, mental activity, education (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). Wellness tourism is a journey whose main goal is achieving harmony and balance of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual value of man (Milićević et al, 2012). Wellness is a way, not a destination so wellness tourism is the way to wellness that is much more important than a destination itself. Destination is often only an alternative

space where people can engage in self-analysis without stress and distractions at home (Smith & Kelly, 2006).

Often it can be read that the wellness tourism is a subcategory of health tourism, so the question is whether the wellness tourism is part of health tourism or vice versa. Starting from the fact that one can not talk about health tourism without the natural healing factors and medical facilities, and for wellness tourism it does not have to be the case, it could be concluded that the wellness tourism is a wider area. However, the wellness does not include curative and rehabilitation in contrast to health tourism. So it can be noted that health tourism and wellness tourism are two different but also complementary forms of tourism whose contents are intertwining.

Definitions both health tourism and wellness tourism, include clues that describe their function where the components of health and wellness tourism are divided into wellness with thermal springs and wellness without thermal springs, health and wellness spa tourism (Erfurt-Cooper P. & M. Cooper, 2009). When it comes to tourism, we can talk about the concept of wellness at the destinations that have so far been known as spa centers and the wellness concept at the level of individual objects (mostly hotels).

The target group of wellness tourism are people in good health condition who seek the preservation and promotion of health in the physical, mental and spiritual sense (Tomka and Romanov, 2011). Wellness tourists are usually very motivated to play an active role in their own health, they often choose alternative medicine and they are not afraid to experiment. Most wellness tourists are already active at home in some form of wellness activities (Smith & Kelly, 2006).

In Table 2, it was given the classification of wellness tourists. The main clients of wellness tourism are mostly women between 36 and 55 years and couples whose children have already grown up. In recent years wellness journeys are increasingly attractive to younger tourists. Wellness tourists are educated, powerful in payment and usually live in urban areas. When they choose the destination, they mostly rely on recommendations of friends and relatives, taking into account the recommendations of travel agencies, but also use the Internet for additional information about attractions and destination offer (Milićević et al, 2012).

Table 2: *Users of tourism services in wellness tourism*

Superficial users	Users who have not adopted the philosophy of wellness as a way of life, so rather use wellness to achieve good looks. Using cosmetic treatments to look good and feel good. They can be classified in beginners and those who aspire to be more involved in health and wellness, but their intentions are not applied in everyday life.
Moderate users	Moderate involved in wellness „lifestyle“ interested to learn and find out more about wellness, but they lack the commitment and passion of active spa users, they have certain limitations regarding willingness to pay for the services they have not been tried, because their wider aim is to escape from everyday commitments. The greatest number of wellness tourists.
Active users	Fully involved in wellness „lifestyle“, they consider cosmetic treatments superficial, luxury facilities are not the primary for them, they appreciate experience and professional approach, training of staff as well as general ambient atmosphere, quality of service is ahead of price, sustainability, authenticity and local resources are also important. This group of wellness tourists belongs a relatively small number of people and often they are famous personalities, athletes, actors whose professional lives are dependent on physical appearance.

Source: *Spas and the Global Wellness Market: Synergies and Opportunities, 2010.*

Destinations can develop many forms of wellness but experiences should arise from the competitive advantages of the destination (local knowledge of wellness, the unique natural characteristics and indigenous plants, etc.), that should be innovated and adapted in order to meet contemporary needs of wellness tourists. Destination must develop its special features of wellness, with its infrastructure, investments and human resources that the market demands (Sheldon & Park, 2008).

Activities and wellness tourism services given in Table 3 are not exhausted, and destinations themselves should adapt and choose activities and services they want to provide (Sheldon & Park, 2008). The wellness center with its concept of local features of the amount of investment determines the kinds of programs and services that will offer.

Table 3: *Activities and services in wellness tourism*

Activity	Explanation	Required resources of destination
Fitness and Sports	Sports activities, training, consultation with a personal trainer, cycling, walking...	Sports fields and facilities, the racetrack.
Complementary treatments	Alternative or complementary treatments, acupuncture, chiropractic, kinesiology, naturopathy, healing herbs, homeopathy, traditional Chinese medicine ...	Licensed professionals and health resort centers.
Indigenous culture	Spiritual and health resort and the quality of indigenous cultures and spaces, sauna, traditional food, native plants...	Culture of knowledge about treatment, practitioners and appropriate natural environment.
Health resort and accommodation facilities	The accommodation facilities which offer the option of healthy food, medical treatment and the soothing atmosphere of the environment and are more suitable for wellness experiences of other capacities.	Hotels, pensions, accommodation in nature, nutritionists.
Lifestyle change	Changes in habits and behaviors that are continuing when the tourists return home.	Trainers, practitioners, diagnostics.
The experience of nature	Self-awareness, relaxation and satisfaction through meditation in nature, eco-tours and agriculturally tours, use of natural and organic herbs, mud and flowers...	Natural places accessible to tourists and provided infrastructure.
Relaxation and rejuvenation	Nurturing and resting the body, yoga, pilates, massage, skin care, reflexology, acupressure...	Practitioners and treatment centers.
Interior pilgrimage	The journey to self-realization, looking for the meaning of life, the expansion of spiritual awareness, meditation, vision quest, visiting holy places, spiritual treatment, art therapy, dance...	Holy places, spiritual leaders, spiritual centers and the natural environment.
Travelling for the purpose of helping others	Passengers philanthropy, helping destination and the possibility of helping tourists get a sense of well-being through helping.	The willingness of the community to work with tourists.

Source: *Sheldon & Park, 2008.*

As the key segment of wellness tourism services are hotels and spas, which are intended to make a offer unique on the tourist market (Tomka

and Romanov, 2011), the International Spa Association has defined seven types of spa/wellness facilities listed in Table 4.

Table 4: *Types of spa/wellness facilities according to the International Spa Association*

Type of wellness capacity	Explanation
Club Spa	The primary purpose is fitness, but in the offer there is a wide range of spa services on a daily basis.
Cruise ship Spa	Spa center on a cruise ship that has spa services in offer, fitness and wellness components, with a menu based on healthy and proper nutrition.
Day Spa	Spa center that has professional spa services on a daily basis in offer, the most developed in Western Europe.
Destination Spa	The main role is to provide customers a choice of lifestyle and improve the health status of the spa services, fitness, educational programs, accommodation and food.
Medical Spa	The main role is to provide complete health and wellness services in an environment that integrates spa services with conventional and special treatments and therapies. It is predicted the largest growth, because there is the increasing demand for holistic medical treatments and therapies.
Mineral Springs Spa	The use of natural mineral, thermal and other sources for the purpose of hydro therapeutic treatment. The most typical for the European spa/wellness sector.
Resort/hotel Spa	Spa in the hotel or resort. Due to increasing demand of guests and due to the increase in profitability, this is the second largest type of wellness facility.

Source: *Vuković et al., 2015.*

Complementarity of tourist-recreational and health functions of spa is best confirmed in wellness programs, which are offered in many developed European spas whose examples should follow the spas in Serbia (Obradović Arsic & Gledović, 2012; Jovičić 2008). The introduction of new services and wellness programs certainly improves the tourist offer, attracts a new user profile and promotes the market position of spas (Tomka & Romanov, 2011). It should also be mention the absence of pronounced seasonal character of wellness tourism and the possibility of using wellness services by the local population (Milićević et al, 2012).

Wellness tourism in Serbian spas - actual offer and perspectives

Spa tourism is a sector in which wellness tourism had the fastest development, thanks to the natural factors and healing waters. Bearing in mind that Serbia has a large number of spas and climate places, which are rich in natural medicinal resources, it is logical that wellness tourism as part of health tourism in Serbia stands out as one of the tourism types which, according to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia in 2005, has great potential for development. Since the nineties, there was a significant ownership transformation in the whole tourism industry. As a result of these changes, there have been major innovations in the field of tourism. Before the start of this transitional period wellness tourism segment was slightly less developed and mainly structured into public property. In the first decade of the 21st century, there appeared private forms of individual or packet spa-wellness arrangements: health clinics, massage salons and the like. These private forms are newly established and a part of private capital was invested in the purchase-acquisition of developed tourist companies (Jovičić, 2009).

Development trend of spa tourism at wellness model is slowly being used in some spas in Serbia, primarily in their specialized hospitals (eg. „Merkur“ Vrnjačka Banja), but also in hotels and other types of accommodation and facilities (eg. the transformation of the hotel „Izvor“ in Bukovička Banja in the first wellness hotel in Serbia). In May 2005 specialized hospital „Merkur“ in Vrnjačka Banja opened the first spa wellness center in Serbia called „Fons Romanus“ located in the building of thermomineral bath, with a number of services that are available for wellness tourists. „Merkur“ is a positive example of separation of medical and wellness services, which has contributed to increased number of service users in the short term, thereby it is very important that it has managed to attract more foreign tourists (<http://www.rimskiizvor.rs/spa/>). Hotel „Izvor“ is a wellness hotel complex, opened in November 2010, situated in Aranđelovac, Bukovička Banja. This hotel-tourist complex emphasizes wellness center with ten swimming pools with natural, healing, mineral water and with its rich wellness offer brings back Bukovička Banja on the tourist map of Serbia (<http://www.a-hotel-izvor.com/article/navigation/spa--wellness.html>). Today, some forms of wellness offer can also be found in other spas in Serbia, such as: Atomska Banja in Gornja Trepča, Sokobanja, Vrdnik, Banja Junaković, Prolom Banja, Niška Banja, Kanjiža etc. (<http://www.wellness-spa.rs/>).

Although the global trend towards wellness tourism has been recognized in the world and Europe, where wellness services are actively innovated and introduced, Serbia still slowly accompanies these currents. Globally speaking, it can be said that the wellness offer is modestly represented in most spas in Serbia, which are known for their skilled techniques of treatment, but on the other hand spa offer is outdated, health-tourism product is insufficiently developed and awareness of wellness products as the modern trend is insufficient. All that doesn't go in favour of the competitiveness of Serbian spas in the international touristic market. In further development of spa tourism it is necessary to maintain the traditional and medical treatments, but with the supplement offer of wellness programs for health visitors that should be represented as much as possible (Milićević et al., 2012).

Situation in the spa tourism in Serbia is not at the satisfactory level, but perspectives of spa tourism developed on the model of wellness applications in Serbia can be evaluated positively, bearing in mind that spa tourism for decades took leader place in tourism industry of Serbia (Jovičić, 2009). It should cite the fact that even during the recession when all destinations in Serbia recorded a drop in tourist arrivals and overnights, spa centers, which have invested resources and innovated and built new facilities and introduced modern wellness services are centers that have experienced growth or at least had a lower rate of decline in the number of tourists comparing to other spas (Tomka & Romanov, 2011).

Benefits that Serbian spas can achieve with the development of wellness offer are encouragement of entrepreneurship, increase in employment of experts, strengthening of local communities, the economic revenues of high paying wellness tourists, environmental protection, diversification and improving the quality of the product and the destination market, renovation and modernization of infrastructure, competitiveness in the off-season etc. In fact, in the process of developing wellness spa tourism, tourist values of spas must be kept with the establishment of a balance between the interests of all interested parts. In this process, priorities must be defined on the basis of a detailed comparative conducted analysis.

Conclusion

Spas in Serbia have a significant tourist value and for further development of spa tourism Serbia should use the positive experiences of some neighboring countries. The phase of stagnation of spa tourism by the end

of the 20th century has not been overcome while in the meantime the role and importance of spas in the world have been significantly changed. Serbian spas from the standpoint of offer and the level of development have so far generally been seen as structures that were left in the past. They are mainly observed as objects for treatment and rehabilitation of elderly people, although they should be recognized as places that offer wellness tourism amenities. This leads to the conclusion that there is a clear need for spas in Serbia to show themselves as a reconstructed, modern and adequately equipped facilities. In some spas that is the actual fact. Focus of Serbian spas in marketing must be in their differentiation from earlier perceptions with the emphasis on quality and modern facilities. It is necessary to promote spas in Serbia as traditional facilities for treatment, but also as modern wellness destinations.

Important characteristic of modern development of spa tourism in Europe relates to the integration of traditional spa with other forms of tourism, among which an important place takes wellness. The concept of strictly specialized spa sanatoriums is mostly obsolete and visiting spa in order to improve overall health is increasingly replacing the traditional medical treatments. The exceptional growth rate of wellness market in recent years in the world initiated the growing and diverse offer in this segment.

Modern spas have now become industry for products and services for mental and physical health and general welfare of people. With traditional therapies, wellness activity, beauty spa treatments and psychophysical relaxation have been developed and prevailed. Travel demand for activities that contribute to the wellness of the mind, body, emotions and spirit is high. Given the competition for wellness tourists, destinations can no longer be passive, but must develop strategic plans, identify resources and wellness products. This is essential for success.

Possibilities for diversification of spa and wellness services are practically inexhaustible, and because of that this type of tourism attracts a lot of attention. In the future due to stress and faster lifestyle tourist demand for products based on relaxation and establishment of psycho-physical balance will increase, therefore it is necessary that spas in Serbia recognize their potential in wellness industry, build their offer modeled on developed European spa centers and improve their position on the international tourism market.

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