

The Multidimensional Content of Wellness Culture

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Abstract: *The study purpose is to detect the citizens' culture for forest medicine and therapies related to the effect of a healthy lifestyle. Consumers' opinions on innovative services were exploring: forest air and oxygen bath, forest art, forest menu, forest hammam and forest elephant eyes. The activities and publications of the Bulgarian Centre for Excellence 'Heritage BG' disseminate a multidimensional wellness culture. We present an analysis of applied psychometric experiment studying the importance, self-perception and satisfaction in communicating with forests and preserving them as natural heritage.*

Keywords: Interactive Wellness activities, innovative services, Recreation and Wellness industry, forest medicine and therapies

Ключови думи: Интерактивни уелнес програми, иновативни услуги, Рекреативна индустрия и Нишов туризъм, горска медицина и терапия



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INTRODUCTION

The recreational, wellness industry and niche tourism are related to health and working capacity^{1,2,3}. Health affects every citizen personally, and working capacity makes people better or weaker professionals^{4,5,6,7}. These two reasons are fundamental to the knowledge-based economy and do not require arguments other than statistical information. Within the EU alone, more than 200 million people of all ages practice Wellness & Spa practices, aqua programs or Eastern relaxation techniques for health prevention and recreation^{8,9,10}. The number of vacations connected with travelling to a wellness destination (offering health packages) has increased drastically through the period of 2017-2019, but the lack of specialised staff remains a global problem^{11,12,13,14,15}.

Based on scientific data of the global wellness institute, the lack of qualified staff with specific knowledge and skills for Wellness&Spa is around 180,000 people. Grew 8 % annually from 2017 to 2019 (reaching \$ 720 billion) and then took a major hit in 2020. The market shrunk -39.5% to \$ 436 billion, while wellness trips dropped from 936 million to 601 million. The impressive 21 % annual growth rate projected for wellness tourism through 2025 reflects new traveller values (a quest for nature, sustainability, mental wellness) as well as a period of rapid recovery from pent-up demand in 2021 and 2022^{16,17}. From 2007 to 2019,

Bulgaria has turned into the European scientific and educational leader by successfully integrating six new specialised (in niche tourism) programs in two professional categories – Healthcare and Sport^{18,19}. A new European profession – wellness instructor was developed through funding under the Erasmus + KA2-program²⁰. In 2018, February a project is won and contract signed for building and developing a centre of Excellence ‘Heritage BG’. The prioritising field was ‘creative and recreative industries’ under the operational program ‘science and education for intellectual growth’, co-financed by the European structural and investment funds for the program period 2014-2020²¹. Bulgaria is the first country that has accredited and integrated educational programs from bachelor degree to Doctoral level (for wellness, spa and thalasso culture) at the National sport Academy ‘V. Levski’ in Sofia. Simultaneously was built the highest level scientific infrastructure in Europe – the Bulgarian centre for Excellence in Creative and Recreative industry (‘Heritage BG’) and the specialised scientific body inside of it for Social innovations, Recreative human design and Niche tourism.

METHODOLOGY

The research purpose is to establish the quality and significance of the new forest wellness services for the Bulgarian niche tourism by the registering the importance of the studied indicators and defining their range by the attempted weight. The study has been taken by 210 people, all Bulgarians in 2019, aged 22-36 (average =29),

49 men and 161 women, divided into three age segments (22-26 years old; 27-31 years old; 32-36 years old), gender, practical experience (less than three years, from 4-7 years, and above eight years), and job position level (CEO, manager, operational employee/therapist and non-graduates in the wellness and spa area). The examinations were concluded by research team in the most prestigious Bulgarian university for Wellness culture, with accredited and integrated educational programs in wellness&spa&thalasso culture National Sports Academy ‘V. Levski’, Sofia. Declarations for informed consent were signed – the data of the study to be published. Within the period March to June 2021, a psychometric measurement of opinions was conducted. The respondents’ opinions we measure with an adaptive version of the questionnaire for studying through the usage of online tools of google drive and we used a test for the psychometric grade. The level of the psychometric measurement by the opinions of the respondents is a result of the meaning of the numbers (through the order of specific questions A-fixed question by-X of B-number of questions) used for all questions asked (points). They measure the relation of connected items. We arrange the questions according to the number of items that are prioritised based on their indicator. We receive arranged/ranking for classification of the particular meaning of the relative study significance for the quality of Wellness services builded for Forest medicine and therapies: forest and oxygen bath, forest art, forest meal, forest hammam and forest elephants’ eyes.

¹ Trendafilov et al. 2013.

² Chipeva 2019.

³ Nesheva 2020.

⁴ Donev et al. 2019.

⁵ Ignatova et al. 2020.

⁶ Konchev 2019.

⁷ Tomova 2021.

⁸ Chalakov 2020.

⁹ Ivanova 2019.

¹⁰ Nesheva 2019.

¹¹ GWI 2021.

¹² Veselinov 2021.

¹³ Yossifov 2019.

¹⁴ Polimenov 2019.

¹⁵ Ellis 2013.

¹⁶ GWI 2021.

¹⁷ Ellis 2013.

¹⁸ Dimitrova 2020.

¹⁹ Dimitrova et al. 2021.

²⁰ Dimitrova et al. 2018.

²¹ Harizanova 2019.

RESULTS

For the first time in Bulgaria are showcased and analysed scientific accomplishments in the Wellness sector harmonised with the preservation of the nature heritage. In the centre for scientific excellence, the new laboratory for innovations in the Recreational, Wellness industry and Niche tourism is modelled according to the global studies and in support of the knowledge-based economy on water. The accredited Bulgarian educational model for training in Wellness and Spa culture is going to attract young people with their European and interdisciplinary professional realisation through graduating in the specialised bachelor, master and doctoral programs. The social mission of the students is through the Wellness culture to familiarized people to apply the health prevention practices from the nature. The goal is to spread a new culture for the communication with forests, attract citizens for Wellness lifestyle, responsibility for the nature resources and effective usage of the natural heritage: forest, water, peloids, stone and crystal, herbs. The new Centre of Excellence 'Heritage BG' will made possible the organisation of international forums that promote health prevention through social education and scientific innovations and reaching the knowledge-based economy for the transformation of Bulgaria into the Silicon Valley of Nature Heritage. At the same time, the transfer of the new science: Aquaphotomics – global innovation of the Bulgarian Prof. Rumiana Tsenkova, D.Sc. will be done. For the first time in Bulgarian practice scientific innovation standards, creative business products, intellectual instruments that stimulate new polices and strategies have been developed and implemented. The innovations have motivated a clustered international responsibility about the culture of quality in the education of young people and in the usage of Nature heritage for health prevention, longevity and forest practices treatment. Centre for Excellence: Heritage BG is projected to start an inclusive informational campaign for national, regional and international level in support of the citizens through the usage of multiapplication potential of the Nature heritage. Some of the best European practices were analysed and transferred based on analysis and conclusion of the international market studies as well as specialised talent in the recreative industry and niche tourism.

An analysis of the regulations and the criteria for presenting the standards for the effectiveness of

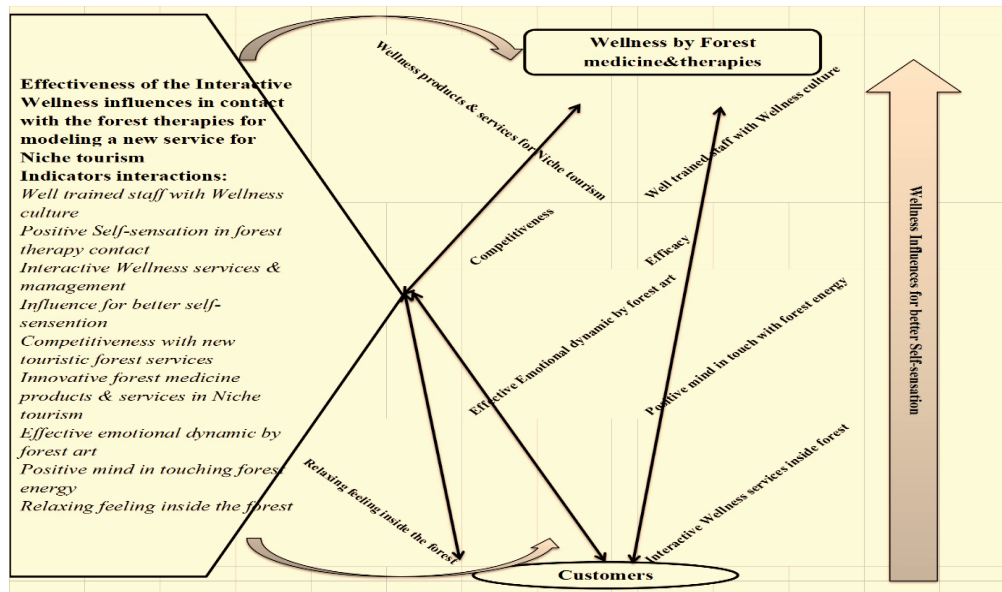
forest medicine and therapies has been performed. The developed documentation related to research and innovation contains the expert analysis of the priorities in the practice of forest air baths, forest art in accordance with European health standards and the scientific field of health care, supporting the leisure industry and wellness. Systematized and analyzed within the Centre for Excellence 'Heritage BG' is a sub-project for establishing and equipment a research laboratory for 'Social Innovation, Recreational Human Design and Niche Tourism'. According to expert analysts from the Global Wellness Institute (GWI 2021), the specific problems in the management of the wellness industry are currently as follows: 1. The challenges connected with the current and future managers in the Spa and Wellness industry;

2. The requirements for high-level skills acquired during the carrier/path of growth;

3. Challenges in accepting manager positions which require interdisciplinary skills and knowledge, coupled with the understanding of the culture of health and peoples' motivation for a healthy lifestyle.

The showcased logistic in **Scheme 1** aims to show the effectiveness of the Forest medicine influences in contact with the forest therapies for modelling a new service for Niche tourism.

The benefits for the development of the centre for high scientific Excellence is to encourage other interested individuals in the sector to use and manage the experimental results in the best way possible. This central role is to inspiring business to finance scientific researches and innovations to maximise the impact of scientific investigations in favour of the citizens. Notable social importance for the development of the direct connection between the business and science is that scientific results can be used directly in practice and/or play an active role with guaranteed effectiveness for the interested parties which can receive high income from the incorporated innovations. The creation and development of the centre for top scientific accomplishments aims to showcase the broader socioeconomic benefits of the investment of the government and EU in the scientific research and innovations. The new scientific models fit cumulative criteria which clearly define the social benefits from the experimental results. The young scientists need to be trained to use results from their scientific studies and innovations and directly benefit the knowledge-based economy or to have played an active role in the perceptions of the



Scheme 1. Effectiveness of the Interactive Wellness influences in contact with the forest therapies for modelling a new service for Niche tourism.

results by third parties for the creation of inclusive intellectual growth. The direct and indirect exploitation of the consequences might be studied through various forms which can show and effect over the change in politics, commercialisation of the service or product, the creation of a start-up/

innovation business, and/or the creation of a new standard etc. The scientific results in the Bulgarian centre for Excellence are expected to be beneficial and to be directed towards the current needs of the recreative industry and niche tourism on a national, regional (Balkan), and European level.

Table 1. Results find by the self-assess for the significance of the applied forest-based health prevention practices as a forest medicine and therapies or services.

Indexes	I /4/ points	II /3/ points	III /2/ points	IV /1/ points	Total Raking weight /points/	Signi- fiance level
I feel more relaxed	26 /104/	25 /75/	25 /50/	15 /15/	91 /244/	I
I feel more energized and positive	33 /132/	10 /30/	28 /56/	20 /20/	91 /238/	II
I'm more confident	33 /132/	10 /30/	20 /40/	28 /28/	91 /230/	III
I didn't feel positive effects	2 /8/	0 -	0 -	89 /89/	91 /97/	IV

Scientists predict a long-term effect over the society, economics, politics and strategies for niche tourism. An essential work criterion for one Centre

of Excellence. is to showcase how to absorb the scientific results, researches help for the solving of the social challenges generating economic, social, health, and political impact.

Table 2. Results find by the self-assess for positive effects as a consequence from the applied forest-based practices – forest medicine and therapies

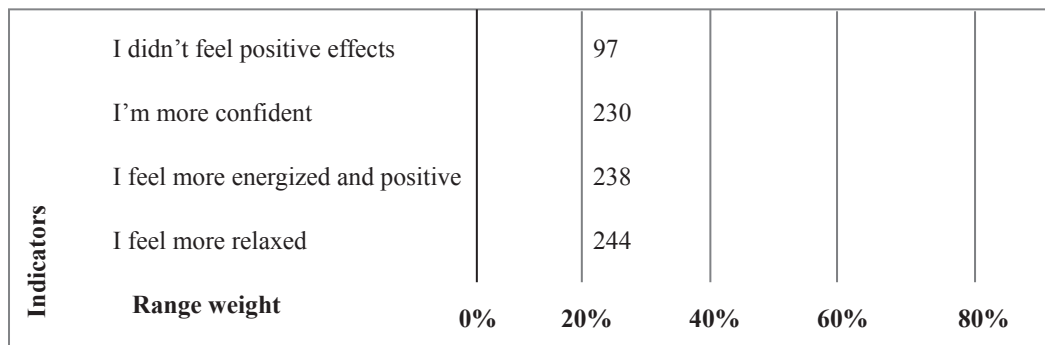
Are you discovering some of the listed forest-based health prevention practices through applied forest medicine and therapies - Natural Heritage?

	T.1 (women)		T.2 (men)		BGmix	
Forest air bath	10	11%	10	11%	6	7%
Forest art	11	12%	10	11%	11	12%
Forest meal	7	8%	9	10%	9	10%
Forest elephant eyes	2	3%	1	1%	2	3%
Forest hammam	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Total (91):	31	100%	31	100%	29	100%

We receive support letter from the highest customer network– United Nations world tourism organisation, which highlights the importance of scientific researches and how their usage creates specific benefits for the quality of the end product and services in the niche tourism. The self-assessed Indicators: ‘ I feel more relaxed ‘ and ‘ I feel more

energized and positive’, received (covered. rank with weight of 244 units– 71.5 %) and (covered. grade with weight of 238 units– 54.5 %). The arrangement of the other indicators/ 3-4,/ is as follows: ‘I’m more confident’ and ‘I didn’t feel positive effects’ are respectively (covered. rank with weight of 230 units – 41.5 %) and (covered. grade with weight of 97 units– 16.5 %)

Figure 1. Expert ranking of indicators considering the positive effects as a consequence from the applied forest-based practices



DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis for the quality of the Forest services/therapies, it was discovered that first and second place are taken by the forest bath and forest art. Respondents determines as priority all forests’ therapies with argument for miss contraindications and health prevention practice for free. Our recommendation consists on the standards implementation by all public institutions, responsible for the National Wellness sector and Nature heritage. The future professionals in the Recreational and wellness industry need stable knowledge, professional and personal competencies about effective organisational and methodological approaches such as: knowledge, intellectual and practical skills for various healthy influences, based on the natural resources and holistic approaches. The high motivation about offering and delivering

quality health services adapted to the needs of the clients and healthy lifestyle for wellness quality of life. The post-pandemic situation, as well need new strategies for encouraging the citizens interest for bettering of the National Wellbeing index are very important for the recreational services in the EU and Balkan region. In this regard, it is necessary to activate all professional relations between academic units, centres for professional education and training, high schools, and professional educational institutions in order to build a bridge between theory, business and nature-based health prevention practices coming from the nature heritage. The issued intellectual products under the Centre of Excellence ‘Heritage BG’ are rated with a high grade for adding value to the educational and labour politics in the EU which are expected to secure intellectual growth. For the

first time, the full architectonic of the educational vertical from the Bulgarian innovative model from high school from bachelor until doctoral programs were accredited two new Wellness & Spa & Thalasso programs from Bachelor in the professional fields: 7.5 Health care and 7.6 Sports. The forest medicine and therapies as an innovative Wellness services and the stable educational and scientific Recreational product is incorporated in the national sports academy 'V. Levski' which proves its position as an educational leader on a National and European level. To preserve the Nature heritage is a noble cause to ensure healthy future generations, capable to create the environment for developing the knowledge-based economy. High creative esprit in healthy body will lead to comprehensive intelligent growth.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, based on the conducted

research, the following implications can be drawn:

1. On Balkan and European levels, the Recreational and Wellness industry needs better-trained staff with professional competencies and research skills acquired in university education;

2. The concept of forest medicine and therapies have the great advantage of being free, for all, for all ages, without contraindications and consists in the use of natural services/therapies and the acquisition of health prevention from the natural heritage;

3. In Europe and the Balkans, to gain health from nature, citizens need to adopt a healthier lifestyle and motivation to upgrade their Wellness knowledge and diets;

4. Europe shall adopt high standards of quality for the conservation of the natural heritage and the dissemination of wellness culture, with a standardisation of professional competencies for specialised personnel.

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Многоизмерното съдържание на уелнес културата

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Според доклада на Global Wellness Institute, Уелнес туризмът ще расте до 2022 г. с впечатляващите 8 % годишно – ръст, който е по-висок от общия ръст на целия световен туризъм (6,4 %). Осъществихме психометричен експеримент за значимостта на иновативни уелнес терапии/услуги за хора в различна възраст. Снехме мненията на потребители относно горската медицина и терапия. Добрата имунна система ще остане фокус за всеки, а съхранението на природното наследство – важен източник за здраве. Научни доказателства се трупат относно холистичните подходи и храната – ключ за уелнес стил на живот. Горската медицина и терапия са ефективни уелнес програми. Важно е институциите да разпространяват многопластова уелнес култура сред гражданите. Отпусни се, храни се балансирано, включвай се в общуване с природата и инвестирай в здраве чрез горски терапии за постигане на уелбийнг.
