

## SPA TOURISM - A MAJOR COMPONENT OF TOURISM

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**Abstract:** *History of termalism gets lost in the mists of time, mineral waters, especially thermal being known and exploited since 3-4000 years ago by Egyptians, Etruscans, Greeks and then the Romans. During the Roman Empire, however, the thermal phenomenon known a particular development both from the point of view of the spread in the territory and its role and importance. Modern Era, respectively the nineteenth century, marks the real renaissance and development of European spa resorts, now the universe thermal began to be structured on the defining elements of a modern spa resort: the thermal establishment, casino, thermal park and accommodation structures. The cities of water, as they were called, were designed to fulfill complementary functions: for "health" due to the proceedings/treatments proposed/conducted, for the "leisure" by playful activities, culture and sports, for "social" due to their social relations, they set. Spa resorts have become important destinations for treatment, recreation and vacation but also for meetings and political discussions to which a significant number of travelers coming from the nobility of Europe straighten out, that is why, between 1800-1900, the spa tourism has been considered a termalism of the elites.*

**Key words:** *termalism, mineral waters, spas.*

### INTRODUCTION

The content of health tourism, viewed as a specific form of recreation tourism, which involves the movement of people of different ages, professions and sex in spas resorts or in towns with natural treatment factors for health care, recreation or treatment with natural spa substances, with extracts or herbal medicines for prevention, maintenance or beauty or just for leisure, all these provided some particularities in order to individualize it within the other forms of tourism. So first of all, it should be emphasized that the main motivation which underlying the formation of tourism demand is the health care performed in a global approach: body, heart, spirit.

In order to respond to this motivation, the spa tourist product combines in a specific form the tourist resources: natural treatment factors, detachment from the daily routine, the entire tourist potential of the area with various types of proceedings, diets, playing sports, leisure, spiritual retreat, health education, which is performed every day, according to a fixed schedule which makes it to be characterized by a high degree of complexity that manifests itself both globally and at the level of each component: tourist resources, materials, services / activities.

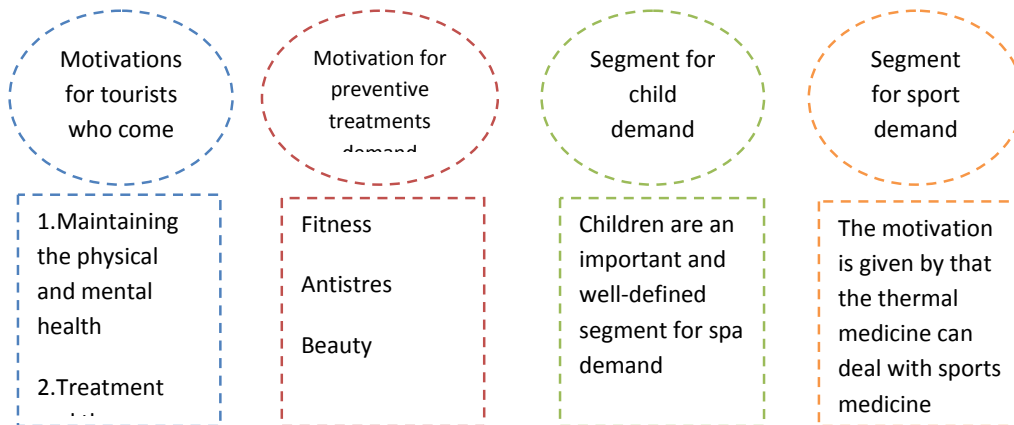
### MATERIALS AND METHODS

It has been defined the issue and formulation of the main hypotheses in order to constitute an explanatory and convincing model, inducing the importance and activity of the researched subject. Then, it has been drawn up and completed by the collected

information. The drafting of this paper was made in laboratory, based on the notes from the ground, the existing material and consulted bibliography.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

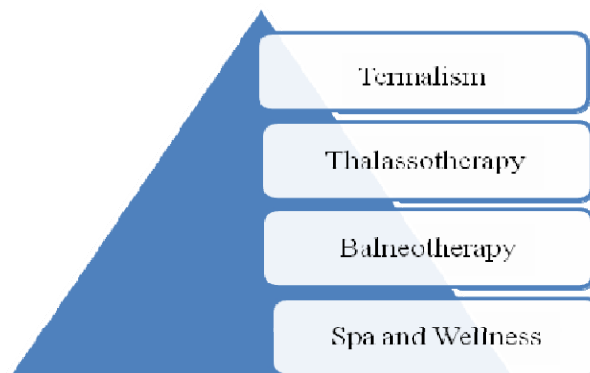
The main reason of spa tourism supply is primarily related to perform the objective need for treatment, happily completed due to the tempting offer.



**Figure 1. The motivations of spa tourism development**

The evolution of spa tourism to health tourism had a wide addressability of its products being equally intended to people suffering from various diseases including therapeutic and healing treatments and to healthy and apparently healthy people with predisposing factors for disease or who wish to maintain a state of health and physical and mental form as possible as good (prophylaxis treatments of re-creating a general form "bien être").

The enrichment of content and addressability area of spa tourism has led to its evolution towards health tourism and has diversified its offer including therapeutic area - medical, prevention and leisure. The products are generally the same, but the environment and type of water used are different: water for recreational activities, sea water for talaludism and thermal water for termoludism.



**Figure 2. Spa tourism forms**

The content, complexity and specificity of spa tourism have practically generated its connexions with all other forms of tourism. This effect is amplified by the establishment of polyvalent resorts designed to satisfy the demands of diversified segments for customers.

The growing demand for "shaping" products (fitness), the desire more strikingly manifested by prescribers to be treated as tourists, their need to get out of the daily routine and leisure role as adjuvant of treatment, highlight the implicit relationship of spa tourism with leisure, recreation, leisure and sport tourism. In this case, tourism is on the border between treatment and leisure.

However, the length stays and the weight pretty high of prescribers older than 60 years, as well as the enlargement of customer segment have led to a higher demand for cultural activities.

The spread of treatment factors across all forms of relief caused the planning of spa resorts both in mountainous areas, hills and depressions and in the plains, seaside and even delta, which involves a combination of spa tourism with specific activities of mountain, seaside, rural or urban tourism, etc.

A consequence of the independence of spa tourism taking into account the weather conditions and constancy of treatment factors value throughout the year is represented by the fact that spa tourism, as the cultural and business one, represent a tourism continuous.

The quality and efficiency of treatment factors, doubled by the quality and diversity of tourist products, prices and charges, and used promotion policies, constitute strong points to attract foreign tourists, providing in this way the development of reception international tourism with positive effects on the volume of foreign currency receipts and on the balance of payment.

The result of prophylactic emphasis function of spa tourism and of tourist products diversification by introducing the slogan "shaping" (fitness), can interfere with the tourism business, in this case the demand being focused on antistress, antitabac, beauty, antimigraine treatments products, and with weekends tourism under the slogan "3 days of treatment to achieve an excellent form" due to the benefit of hydrotherapy, pressopuncture and aesthetics treatments.

Due to the new tendencies in the international tourist market, spa tourism can be included both in the category of social tourism (especially for classical spa treatments), when a part of the medical expenses are covered by health insurance, as well as in luxury tourism category in the case of "shaping" (fitness), when services are personalized and they are of the highest quality, some centers are designed right inside of former castles.

Generated by the interdependence of spa tourism components, the way of benefits marketing takes the form of standard packages which include 2, 3 or 4 types of procedures per day, accommodation, full board or half board, so we have to deal with an organized tourism.

The existence of vineyards or equestrian centers near spa resorts can provide other treatment alternatives. The red wines (Cabernet Sauvignon from vineyards Jidvei) have an effect in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases and the equitation has beneficial effects on musculoskeletal disorders (Parkinson).

The presence of monasteries in the area of spa resorts can also occasionally perform certain pilgrimages which have not only cultural purpose, but also a spiritual one, being able to have positive effects on the healing process.

Based on this, we consider that, between multiple forms of tourism that can be practiced in our country, the spa tourism is perhaps the most valuable because it capitalizes the richness of existing natural therapeutic factors.

## CONCLUSIONS

Spa tourism is one of the few tourism forms that capitalize the technical progress both at the level of modern medical equipment which are a priority for the development of this tourism form and at the level of other equipment categories (accommodation, food, entertainment).

The non-alignment of facilities to new global tendencies can lead to the isolation of a spa area, regardless the quality of existing natural resources. The scientific researches contribute to the growth of treatments efficiency and their recognition in the medical field.

The motivation for health care causes changes in the content of spa tourism which becomes more complex than other tourism forms; it is the result of natural resources combination (therapeutic factors), with tourist services (transport, accommodation, food, entertainment) and spa treatment, becoming an important service.

However, the content and specificity of spa tourism impose the specialization of each tourist service to the requirements of spa tourism, some of them being a continuation of treatment.

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