
Urban Vacationers Motivation in Visiting Spa and Wellness Centre

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DOI: 10.9734/bpi/ieam/v6/1584C

ABSTRACT

Visiting spa and health tourism centers is a new social trend amongst health tourists throughout Malaysia. Facts confirm that the number of spas and health centers is increasing from year to year and practices towards a healthy lifestyle are accepted worldwide. Individual health and well-being concerns are one of the critical factors contributing to the replacement of the spa and health industries. This chapter aims to examine the literature on the factors that influence the motivation of tourists to visit spa and health tourism destinations. Literature reviews indicate that there will be a positive relationship between relaxation and relief, health and beauty, escape and self-development with travel motivation among tourists. The results of this study are expected to fill the gap in the literature by expanding the existing literature knowledge on Spa motivation and to educate the public knowledge and delivery of professional services.

Keywords: Domestic tourist; motivation; visitation; spa and wellness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, statements show that the quantity of spa and health centres is focused on improvement and training towards a more beneficial lifestyle. Concern for the health and Wellness of individuals is one of the important factors that contribute to the success of this industry. This can be seen through current action by the global spa industry, which is actively promoting the spa industry to the next level in the world non-stop with a new era of more confident and more beneficial groups of people. The Global Spa and Wellness Summit (GSWS) has administered the global spa industry to improve the quality of services involving all levels of stakeholders both regionally and globally by discussing current patterns and issues identified with the industry [1]. Wellness in diversity confirms that health tourism and Wellness are among the oldest forms of tourism that are changing into a common routine for some people nowadays.

Moreover, ancient civilizations from 5000 - 10000 BC practised treatments that are abundant in spas and wellness centres today, for example, Ayurveda, Chinese recipes and Thai massage [2]. In line with that, it has now become a social pattern among urban tourists in Malaysia to visit spas and wellness centres to rejuvenate themselves and the replacement is a pledge by the Malaysian Health and Spa Association (MAWSPA) which has been formed to be the voice of the people of the spa industry educating community knowledge and professional service delivery. Therefore, this chapter aims to examine the literature on the factors that influence the motivation of tourists to visit the spa and health as a tourist destination. In addition, this study will determine the relationship between the factors that influence tourist motivation by proposing a research framework for future studies.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relaxation and relief, health and beauty, refugees, self-development and tourist motivation Wellness relates to a lifestyle organized towards ideal health and well-being where the body, mind, and spirit are combined by the person to live fully in humans and the global community [3]. According to Athena & Mak [4] content of factors such as (relaxation and relief, health and beauty, escape) create the intention to visit the Spa and health Center. Although Konu & Laukkanen [5] in the case of Finland prove, that self-development serves as one of the main intentions to create a well-being vacation. Therefore, visualizing the different behaviors among global spa users, this study aims to identify the factors that encourage tourists to visit spa and health centers in the context of Malaysian spa users, especially in Kuala Lumpur.

3. TOURIST MOTIVATION

Motivation is an important perspective that empowers an individual or traveler to perform a particular activity with full commitment. Tourist motivation can be explained as the mental ability to determine longing on the way [6]. Chan, Yap, and Chet, [7] agreed that ASEAN countries for instance Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore have great potential to be the best tourism hub based on the forecast of medical tourist arrivals. Maslow's [8] hierarchy of needs is believed to be an important theory used in studying tourist motivation and includes five levels of explicit physiological, safety, love/belongings, esteem, and self-actualisations. Tourists and spa visitors have a special desire for the experience and results they seek and / or will survive, [9]. SRI International [10] states that goods and services of health and well-being seem to be the main motivation among spa visitors based on past consumer studies.

4. RELAXATION, RELIEF, AND TOURIST MOTIVATION

Relaxation and relief usually relates to seeking peace of mind, seeking physical peace, seeking spiritual refreshment and seeking relief for medical conditions and it serves as a key factor that creates intention to visit spa and health centers [4]. The status of a person who is carrying on with a furious life will look for the need of unwinding and relief due to the pressure of workloads and mental aggravation. Maslow's [8] confirmed that this factor is a basic physiological need that must be met before seeking higher order requirements. People want to feel stressed, decompressed, secured and taken care of [11] and American hotels reshape their facilities by including a Spa to pamper their guests [12].

Preposition 1: Relaxation and relief is positively related to tourist motivation

5. HEALTH AND BEAUTY

Health and beauty relates to spa visitors who consider improving overall health, enhancing physical attractiveness, rejuvenating a person's appearance and losing weight, [4]. Ford [13] argues that the practice of Yoga and Pilates provides exceptional services for weight loss, lowering cholesterol and achieving overall well-being. Individuals also consider it as a basis for reputation between friends and relatives, so rejuvenation needs to be done. Ban, & Olimpia (2007) emphasizes on trends when choosing a holiday chosen by tourists for health and beauty vacations and intellectually active vacations. Similarly, the increasing demand for elective and cosmetic surgeries in the Asian region was reported by Chan, Yap & Chet, [7]. Preposition 2: Health and beauty is positively related to tourist motivation.

6. ESCAPE

Escape can be described as a situation where individuals need to make a trail in the opposite direction from the weight of work, routine, and social life. Athena & Mak, [4] prove that Hong Kong spa workers often try to escape to a quiet environment due to stress and too many absurd stimuli and this is a factor initiated by tourist motivation [14]. Yoon & Uysal, [15] quote that driving motivation such as

running has a direct positive effect on tourist behavior. Holden [16] asserts that tourist motivation lies in the organization of behavior and standards of civilization, which may be related to escapism. Escapism may be related to [17] which describes travel behaviors that regard leisure as a daily distraction.

Preposition 3: Escape is positively related to tourist motivation

7. SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Self-development is known as a factor that creates the intention among European tourists to make a well-being vacation. Konu & Laukkanen, [5] stated that it encompasses several contributing elements such as experiencing different cultures, experiencing contrast and aesthetics of things, cultivating self-understanding, developing skills and abilities. Pearce & Lee, [14] clarify that self-development can be divided into two aspects namely the involvement of the host website and personal development. Involvement of the host website includes learning new things, experiencing different cultures, developing knowledge, meeting and observing locals and following current events. Meanwhile, personal development includes developing personal interests, knowing abilities, gaining a sense of achievement and self-confidence as well as pursuing skills and talents. This basically involves the reconciliation and development of the body, mind, and spirit [18], while also being aligned with spiritual understanding that aims to grow beyond self and ego.

Preposition 4: Self-development is positively related to tourist motivation

8. PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on past literature, this chapter recommends a comprehensive approach to address the relationship among relaxation and relief, health and beauty, escape and self-development as factors that motivate tourists to choose their tourist destination. It is suggested that there is a positive relationship between these variables. Moreover, previous studies show that the number of spas and health centers is increasing and practices towards a healthy lifestyle are accepted worldwide. Although many studies have been conducted in this area, research has been found to be fragmented in their approach. The overall proposed framework for tourist motivation is presented in Fig. 1.

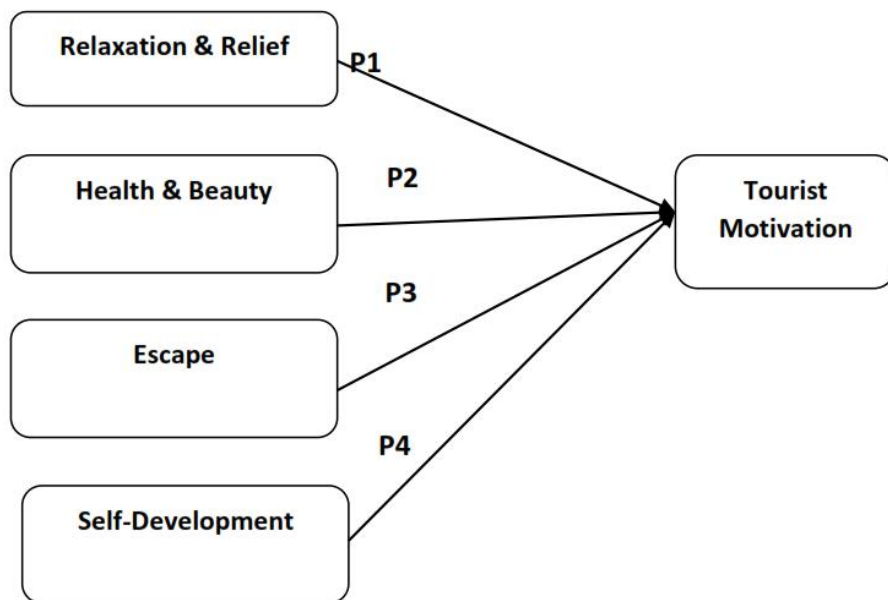


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

9. CONCLUSION

It is believed that this study will be able to fill the gap in the literature by concentrating on the motivation of tourists to visit the Spa and health center. Furthermore, there is a necessity for researchers in tourism studies to extend their understanding of the nature of tourist motivation needed as a new market strategy and market segmentation in the tourism and hospitality industry in the future. From a practical view, this study will be a supporting document for the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia in promoting the Spa industry in Malaysia. Moreover, this study is expected to help SPA industry players such as the Malaysian health and spa association (MAWSPA), Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS), and the hotel industry to produce an appropriate marketing strategies and improve their services to meet the tourist needs and wants. It will also give an advantage to the SPA center itself and help them to be competitive and grow based on the expectations of tourists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our appreciation to all experts who willing to spend time publish this chapter in book. Particularly to the Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism & Wellness and Sekolah Kebangsaan Tudan Tuaran Sabah.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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This chapter is an extended version of the article published by the same author(s) in the following journal. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 9(5), 2019.