

Effective Manual Practices and Wellness Industry

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Abstract: Ancient in origin, manual practices remain one of the most preferred and enjoyable procedures today. They are effectively involved in recovery, prevention, and even the treatment of various bodily imbalances. This article focuses on the systematization of heritage in the field of manual practices, as well as the possibilities for their application in various recreational procedures. This creates a foundation for developing educational programs in Wellness culture. An analysis is conducted on wellness innovations and good massage practices presented in the digital platforms of SPA and Wellness centres listed in the National Tourism Register.

Key words: SPA and Wellness venues, certification, digital presentation, wellness education and trainings

Ключови думи: СПА и уелнес процедури, сертифициране, дигитално представяне, обучение в уелнес



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INTRODUCTION

I. EFFECTIVE MANUAL PRACTICES AND WELLNESS INDUSTRY

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and European Travel Commission report (ETC) (2018), health tourism is the general term for the sub types: wellness tourism and medical tourism.¹

Wellness tourism is a type of tourism activity that is aiming to improve and balance all major areas of human life including physical, mental, emotional, professional, intellectual and spiritual. The main motivation for the wellness tourist is to participate in preventive, proactive lifestyle-enhancing activities such as fitness, healthy eating, relaxation, restorative and healing treatments.

Medical tourism is a type of tourism activity that involves the use of evidence-based medical treatment resources and services (both invasive and non-invasive). This can include diagnosis, treatment, prevention and rehabilitation.

¹ UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2018: 20.

Health tourism is an emerging, global, complex and rapidly changing segment that must be handled with modern management tools in the current era. Increasing the share of health tourism in general tourism can reduce the seasonality of this type of activity, improve the sustainability and quality of performance, and contribute to reducing healthcare costs through preventive measures and reducing the use of medicines.

The major positives aspects, with which Bulgaria is associated as a tourist destination, can be summarized in the following: 'A complexity and a diversity of favourable factors for development of tourist activity on a relatively small territory'. Others mentioned are: EU membership; good location/favourable geographical situation; easy access to the country; natural resources – sea access, flat lands, mountains, lakes, etc.; cultural and historical attractions; favourable climate; good food; traditions; standard of living that generally allows to maintain acceptable prices for the tourist product; possibility to practice various types of tourism in a relatively compact area and small distances; favourable tourist offers/packages; good accommodation conditions.²

In the last two decades, there has been an increased interest in massage therapy for SPA and Wellness prevention of various diseases.³

Scientific research shows that this therapy is becoming increasingly popular and more and more studies support its benefits in improving not only the physical but also the mental state of the individual. Scientific research in Bulgaria in this area is mainly focused on exploring clients' preferences for certain SPA and Wellness manual practices, applied alone or in combined rituals.

Research in our country regarding the effects on health and well-being through various manual interventions with natural products - honey, chocolate, wine, coffee, algae, essential oils, volcanic stones – has been extremely rare over the past two decades.

II. DIGITAL PRESENTATION OF EFFECTIVE MANUAL PRACTICES

II. 1. PURPOSE:

To study and analyse Wellness innovations and good massage practices presented in the digital applications of the SPA and Wellness centres listed in the National Tourism Register..

OBJECT: The digital applications of 103 SPAs and 30 Wellness centres listed in the National Tourism Register.

II. 2 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

From the information presented in the digital applications of the certified and currently operating (2024) Wellness and SPA centers in the country, regarding the offering of restorative procedures with manual effects, it is found that:

1. In 45 % of the digitally represented SPAs and in 53 % of the digitally represented Wellness centers, *different types of restorative treatments with manual influences are offered.*
2. 22 % of SPAs and 10 % of Wellness centres *do not offer manual recovery treatments.*
3. 33 % of SPAs and 37 % of Wellness centres *do not have enough information in their digital applications.*

The analysis of the survey results allows us to classify the offered restorative procedures into the following main groups.: *Massage treatments*-alone or included in different rituals; *Water healing treatments* – self-applied or included in a ritual; *Treatments with chocolate, honey, wine products and herbs*; *Spa rituals*; *Treatments with healing mud and lye.*

Although ancient in origin, massage treatments are still in great demand today. This gives them the leading place in terms of supply as a means of recovery in SPAs (65 %) and the third place in terms of supply in Wellness centres (20 %) (**Fig. 1, Fig. 2**). Perhaps these preferences are dictated not only by the subjective sensations of pleasant warmth and relaxation of the whole body during and after the massage, but also by

² Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in RB 'Horizont 2030' 2014: 25-26.

³ American Massage Therapy Association 2015.

the accumulated scientific research in the last two decades proving the positive impact of

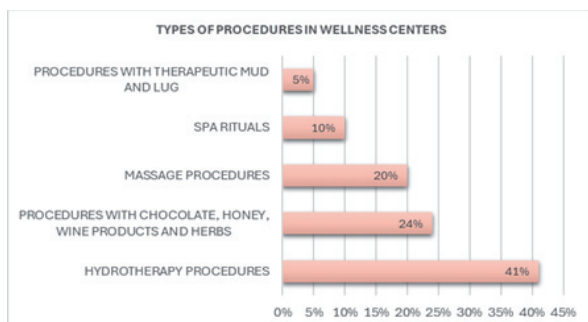


Figure 1. Types of restorative procedures in Wellness centres.

Growing interest and increasing offering in wellness centres is observed in treatments with chocolate, honey, wine products and herbs (24 %) (**Fig. 1**). Aromatherapy treatments represent 22 % of the massage treatments offered. Offering treatments with healing mud and lye is understandably little represented (2 % for SPAs and 5 % for Wellness centres), probably due to the reason for their leading offer in medical SPA centers as a healing, rather than a preventive and restorative procedure. Although less offered, Spa Rituals are more attractive as a complex recovery procedure,



Picture 1. Stone massage.

Bulgarian products are wisely included in the combined therapies – Therapy ‘Wine Temptation’, Therapy ‘Bulgarian Rose’, Therapy ‘Orange and Cinnamon’, Therapy ‘Divine Elixir’, etc.. Of particular interest are the offered

massage treatments on stress^{4, 5, 6, 7}, anxiety⁸, pain⁹ and improving the quality of life.¹⁰

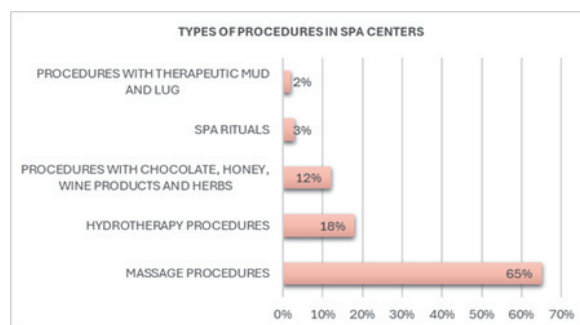


Figure 2. Types of restorative procedures in SPA centres.

which determines their leading place as an offer in Wellness centres -10 % compared to Spa centres -3 % (**Fig. 1, Fig. 2**). Some of the manual treatments offered are classical, but more and more treatments are being offered that are adopted from Eastern practices (stone massage, polti ayurvedic massage, Himalayan salt massage, Thai massage), in combination with the use of Bulgarian products of wine, honey and milk, essential oil of Bulgarian rose. Remarkable is the wide variety of manual treatments – 14 types for the Wellness Centres and 22 types for the Spa Centres.



Picture 2. Potli massage.

combined treatments such as – Special Cleopatra Bath, Relax Spa Package (silk peeling and body mask, relaxing anti-stress massage, Vichy Shower) and Jala – Royal Massage, Mini Facial Therapy (exfoliation, massage, hydration), four-hand massage, wellness massage, etc.

⁴ Lindgren et al. 2010:105-110.

⁵ Pavlova, Paskaleva, Ivanova 2016: 336-341.

⁶ Andonova 2014b: 69-75.

⁷ Angelcheva, Petkova 2019: 348-352.

⁸ Andonova 2014c: 103-107.

⁹ Marinova 2019: 581-585.

¹⁰ Marinova 2018: 205-213.



Picture 3. Massage with four hands.



Picture 4. Wellness massage.

There has been an increased uptake of chocolate therapies on offer, particularly in Wellness Centres. This is probably due to the increased interest in these treatments as an alternative therapy against cellulite.¹¹

The rituals in the Wellness centres, although more plentiful, show less variety in type – half involve the use of Bulgarian rose oil, followed by Coconut Ritual and Spa Ritual with gemstones.

II. 3. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the information exported in the digital applications of the certified centers shows that the procedures with manual effects take a significant place in the Bulgarian spas and are less present in the wellness centers.

II. 4. OUTCOMES

The offered Spa and Wellness – combined rituals with honey and essential oils, wine, milk and herbs for relaxation, health and beauty are a good alternative for recovering from the effects of everyday stress and an opportunity to build a healthy lifestyle.^{12, 13}

II. 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to carry out the treatments properly and effectively, the SPA and Wellness therapists must be professionally qualified.
2. Increasing their knowledge, skills and specialised scientific training through participation in international educational programmes.
3. The existing scientific research on the

effects of the proposed natural products on the physical and emotional well-being of clients needs to be enriched and updated with new studies.

4. A tailored approach, as well as the development of standards regarding the optimal amount of natural products used, would ensure a higher quality and safety of Wellness tourism practitioners.

III. CONCLUSION

The successful direction for Bulgaria as a country offering a wealth of natural balneological and climatic resources is the establishment of scientifically proven SPA and Wellness programs and products for recovery and prevention of health risks from the diseases of modern lifestyle. The application of modern tools for marketing communication, combined with the high professionalism of the specialists in the certified SPA and Wellness centers are an important condition for the establishment of Bulgaria as part of the preferred European destinations for health tourism.

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¹¹ Gancheva, Kraidzhikova, Nikolova. 2011: 13-16.

¹² Dimitrova, Tomova 2025: 51-56.

¹³ Dimitrova, Nesheva 2021: 684-690.

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Ефективни масажни практики и уелнес индустрия

Мариана Ангелчева, Татяна Томова

Направен е анализ на уелнес иновациите и добрите масажни практики, представени в дигиталните приложения на 107 SPA и 30 Wellness обекта, вписани в Националния туристически регистър. Анализът показва тенденция за развитие и прилагане както на индивидуални, така и на комбинирани масажи, ритуали за две и четири ръце, концепции с български натурални продукти. Добрата професионална квалификация и продължаващото обучение на персонала, зает в СПА и уелнес индустрията, са условие за утвърждаване на страната ни като предпочитана дестинация за уелнес туризъм.

