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## ASSESSMENT OF SPA HOTEL SERVICES' DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN REZEKNE CITY

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**Abstract.** SPA hotel development is an important recreational and accommodation service for which demand is increasing. The article is the result of RTA scientific grant research "Assessment of hotel services development opportunities in Rezekne city". Aim of the study was to investigate and assessment of the SPA hotel service development opportunities in Rezekne. The paper examines the historical development of the SPA and the theoretical aspects of SPA services. Special attention is devoted to development opportunities of SPA hotel in Rezekne. Research examines results of the survey of Latgale inhabitants' attitude to potential use of the services of SPA hotel. The methods applied: scientific induction and deduction, graphic, synthesis and analysis, monographic, survey. According theoretical research Rezekne necessary to organize the division of SPA-SPA hotel.

Keywords: SPA hotel, city development, tourism, SPA product development.

JEL code: M31, L83, O18, R19, Z32

#### Introduction

The SPA industry in Europe has a long tradition, where people usually visited SPA hotels in order to receive medical services.

Topicality of the subject is determined by the fact that hotel owners and managers have dawned it is possible to use the SPA industry opportunities more thus creating additional income. As a result, a number of SPA hotels and resorts, focusing on SPA treatment, have increased significantly. In 2012, the global wellness tourism industry was worth 438.6 billion U.S. dollars (Global market size..., 2016). European SPA traditions have to face fierce competition, because Asian companies constitute a large competition in the SPA hotel and resort market.

The study (VIAA study..., 2015) by the State Education Development Agency confirms that the demand for the SPA services is increasing, which means that competition between the service providers becomes tougher. The study mentions that the SPA industry is largely focused on the physical well-being improvement services, including massage, SPA etc. relaxing and medical treatment procedures. Many researchers, for example, Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N. Alias, Z., (Yaman, R., Ishak, N., 2012), Monteson, P., Singer, J. (Monteson, P., Singer, J., 2002), Spilioti E., Vargiami M., Letsiou S.

(Spilioti E., Vargiami M., Letsiou S. et al., 2016) and others have studied classification, use and motivation of the SPA services and a range of offers in hotels and SPA centres.

Comparing data on the hotels and tourist accommodation between the cities in Latvia, it can be concluded that the smallest number of tourism accommodation (3) was indicated in Rezekne in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2016; a smaller number of rooms was offered in Valmiera, Jelgava and Jekabpils. Rezekne showed one of the lowest indicators also in the terms of an offered number of beds; less number of beds was only in Jelgava and Jekabpils. (Viesnicas un citas turistu mitnes..., 2016). When defining the problem, the authors believe that any entrepreneur, providing services, is looking forward to a service demand. This means that customer's satisfaction with the particular service is very important. The main aim and objective of the entrepreneur is to satisfy the customers' needs and desires. In order to be able to meet those expectations, it needs to be found out what is important to the customer. The task is always faced with a big contradiction, because most people want to receive the services of the maximum high level and the maximum low price. When characterizing the service, one of the most critical aspects is the quality.

A survey of Latgale region inhabitants was carried out within the framework of the project to find out their views on the potential use of SPA services in the four-star hotel which is planned to be built in Rezekne.

**Hypothesis**: Rezekne city needs a new SPA hotel with a variety of the SPA services.

**The methods** applied: scientific induction and deduction, graphic, synthesis and analysis, monographic, survey.

**The aim** of the paper: to study and assess the SPA hotel services' development opportunities in Rezekne city.

The following **tasks** have been set to achieve the aim:

- 1) to study theoretical aspects of SPA services;
- to analyse necessity of SPA hotel services in Rezekne city;
- 3) to draw conclusions and develop proposals.

**Novelty** of the study: market research on the necessity of the SPA hotel services in Rezekne has been carried out.

SPA means "Sanus per aquam" or "Health through water" in Latin (Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N., 2012).

The concept is known from the Ancient Roman times, when hot springs and thermal baths were used for curing illnesses. There is also another explanation of SPA justifying that the term *SPA* has originated from a small and ever famous Belgian village named SPA, where a popular water resort was located, and where Roman soldiers had a rehabilitation treatment course after fights. Apart of a general relaxation, the waters of the village helped to recover quickly and heal injuries

In today's world, this legend has gained recognition from the moment when the term SPA began to be used in the beauty industry. The USA began actively to develop and offer a range of beauty and recovery equipment, operating with water elements (SPA pec noteikumiem, 2016).

For a long time, the SPA concept included resorts with maximum possibilities of treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation via different manipulations based on healing qualities of water (marine and mineral water as well as thermal springs). The most well-known SPAs were built at the French and Italian coastlines. (Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N., 2012)

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The history of the SPA culture lies in Asia where the cult of the unity and well-being of body, spirit, and mind has been honoured for centuries. Massages relax, herbal medicine cures, water treatment soothe and cleanse as well as the SPA philosophy helps to find the clarity of spirit and mind. The SPA characterizes the Oriental culture, is associated with nature, and remains peaceful in its existence (Kas tas ir SPA, 2016).

#### **Research and discussion**

The International SPA Association has defined the SPA as a place to indulge into well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body, and spirit (ISPA's Definition of Spa..., 2016).

The word SPA involves in itself a range of businesses and services whose main purpose is to improve the well-being of people using different professional services (Thorsteinsdottir K., 2005).

Any set of treatment aimed at improvement of the physical and mental state of a human could be characterised as a SPA treatment. The good SPAs have their own idea, philosophy, and an individual concept for solving one and the same task differently.

Hydrotherapy is often the main offer of SPA and health resorts. Water is used both internally (drinking and breathing) and externally (swimming, therapeutic exercises in a pool) (European Spas Association..., 2016).

The International SPA Association (hereinafter - ISPA) has classified SPA in six categories depending on the services offered and locations. In accordance with ISPA classification, SPA are divided (Primary members..., 2016): SPA club – the SPA services are included in the total package of fitness offer; Day SPA - "one-day" lounge, without accommodation; Destination SPA – a resort or a hotel that is mainly attended due to the SPA procedures; Medical SPA; Mineral SPA – centres situated nearby natural mineral water springs; SPA hotel – a resort with a separately established SPA centre.

Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N (Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N., 2012) offer to separate one more type – a holistic SPA – a centre offering alternative medicine services. Parnyakov V. in the article *Innovation and design of cruise ship* (Parnyakov, V., 2014) discusses the term *Cruise SPA*.

The Common European SPA classification system can be reduced in the following three basic groups (SPA pec noteikumiem, 2016).

- DAYSPA (one-day SPA) it includes all the necessary treatments and salons that can be visited at any time convenient for the customer. It is usually located in urban areas.
- MEDISPA a SPA centre with professional medical focus; it includes clinics and rehabilitation centres.
- SPA-hotel it is mostly located in the resort cities. It offers everything a person needs to spend some time there and undergo a certain course of treatment. Those are 4-star (at least) hotels with a SPA complex.

All other options are a combination of the three above mentioned. All three often can be found in one place (SPA pec noteikumiem, 2016).

NACE 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Code 96.04.) has stipulated that the sector of physical well-being improvement services now includes such activities as various SPA massages, namely, healing with water treatment, and other relaxing treatment, body classical cosmetic massage, bath treatment, and other types that are specific to operations of, for example, the hotels' SPA and Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 27-28 April 2017, pp. 55-62 wellness or health improvement establishments (Saimniecisko darbibu statistiska..., 2006).

The study by the State Education Development Agency on the beauty industry in Latvia reveals that the tendency of the so-called youth cult that is connected with people's effort to look as young as possible, often irrelevant to their actual age, will reduce in the beauty industry in Europe and in the world over the next 20 to 30 years. Industry experts interpret it as a result of various factors, such as the increase of a person's life expectancy that will promote public awareness of the fact that beauty is not only the external appearance or youth, but inner harmony and the ability to accept their actual age. The physical well-being services, including massage, SPA and other relaxing and therapeutic procedures are largely focused on this matter (Skaistumkopsanas nozares..., 2012).

Nowadays, a several types of SPA have developed: SPA hotels, SPA clubs, day SPA, destination SPA, medical SPA etc. Understanding of the SPA concept has changed over time. Today, even small beauty salons with jacuzzi and pool are called the SPA.

Latgale inhabitants' survey was carried out during the period from September 2016 to December 2016 to ascertain views on the potential use of the SPA services in the future 4 star hotel in Rezekne. In total, 580 respondents were interviewed; 539 questionnaires were valid for the analysis. The inhabitants of Latgale only were chosen to be surveyed, because they are primarily interested in the SPA centre development and are considered as the potential customers. According to the CSB data, population of Latgale region is 276 358 in 2016. Using a simple random method, the required number of respondents is 384 in order to affirm that the data obtained are reliable with a probability of 95 % and represent the general sample. Since a bigger number of respondents (539) were surveyed, it can be declared that the data obtained with a probability of 95 % represents

the inhabitants' views on the potential use of the SPA services (http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html ).

The respondents represent the two major cities (Rezekne and Daugavpils) and all the districts of Latgale region. Most of the respondents are female (66.79 %). According to the data of the sector entrepreneurs' survey carried out by "Dienas Bizness", the proportion of male customers is between 10 to 50 %, depending on the type of the SPA services (Asere, 2014). Consequently, the number of respondents represents the overall situation in the industry – primarily women are interested in the SPA services.

The income level of most of the respondents is up to 400 EUR (36.36 %), and a little less – 31.73 % of the respondents earn 401-600 EUR. The respondents with income over 601 EUR constitute 31.91 %. Such a division of the respondents by the income level according to CSB data corresponds to the situation in Latvia.

In assessing the potential demand of the SPA services, the respondents were asked a series of questions in order to assess the need for the establishment of the SPA centre.

According to the respondents, all four of these factors affect the choice. The survey data confirm that, when creating the SPA centre, special attention has to be paid to the balance of quality and price of services. Location is the least important factor, meaning that the geographical range of the potential customers is quite wide, provided that there would be a wide range of high-quality services for reasonable prices.

The SPA centre attendance is associated with health improvement (87.9%) for many respondents. The overall trend shows that society has been paying increasing attention to a healthy lifestyle.

The SPA centre attendance is a way of family recreation for 75.9 % of the respondents, meaning that the offer of the SPA centre must be suitable not only for adults but also for children,

Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 27-28 April 2017, pp. 55-62 such as a play room with both educational games and attractions for physical activity, appropriate personnel, for example, the possibility to hire a babysitter etc.

73.3 % of the respondents believe that the SPA is a good place to relax with friends or for leisure (71.8 %). This means that the SPA centre has to offer a variety of recreational facilities, such as bar, catering, bowling, disco or live music, sports facilities - billiards, table tennis etc.

Beauty care as a reason for attending the SPA centre is only for 69.5 % of the respondents, because large part of people carry out beauty treatments (for example, the beautician services), using "their" specialists in other beauty salons.

The SPA centre as a place to spend time with colleagues is seen only by 52.6 % of the respondents. This is due to the common collegial traditions in Latvia. In other countries, such as Germany, it is normal that colleagues relax together after work. Mostly, colleagues do not spend time together in non-working hours in Latvia.

The survey reveals the extent to which the seasonality will affect the SPA centre attendance. The results show that the largest demand of the SPA centre could be in the winter season (85.5 %) and the lowest in summer (43.7 %).

Most respondents believe they could use the SPA centre services once a month (55.5%) or once every six months (51.6%) as well as once a year (41.4%). The authors consider that the owners of the SPA centre should pay special attention to this factor when developing the offer in order to motivate those who intend to use the SPA services once every six months to do it more often.

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#### Table 1

### **Division of the SPA**

Division	Description	Examples in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia
SPA – resort	Large centres near thermal waters or sea combining water cure with a variety of cosmetic procedures (SPA iedalijums, 2016). Tourists are able to use not only the SPA services, but also participate in various recreational activities in the SPA resort (Monteson, P., Singer, J., 2002).Visitors can receive healing services as well as to treat a variety of ailments in the SPA resort (Spilioti E., Vargiami M., Letsiou S. et al., 2016) The SPA resort has a service with a number of ancillary services as well as gym, pool, golf, and tennis (Retno I. Tranggono, 1999). A possibility to combine a healthy with a pleasant, SPA treatments and pleasures that fulfil customer's life (Monteson, P., Singer, J., 2002).	Estonia Resort Hotel & Spa, (Estonia) Baltic Beach Hotel & SPA (Latvia)
SPA – centre	The SPA centre services are meant for tourists who want to improve their health or simply relax, using all the SPA offers (Monteson, P., Singer, J., 2002). The SPA centres become increasingly popular due to their services that help customers to remove the physical and mental fatigue (Spilioti E., Vargiami M., Letsiou S. et al., 2016).	"Promenade Hotel" SPA (Latvia)
SPA – hotel	Hotel with the SPA complex situated on the territory of hotel. Its aim is to diversify the time hotel clients spend at a hotel, combining various recovery and relaxation procedures. The overall level of professionalism of the service staff is allowed to be a little lower, medical counselling is usually not provided. Such complexes usually offer a wide selection of facial and body skin care procedures and services of beauticians and stylists. Their diversity and quality depends on the hotel's prestige and class (SPA iedalijums, 2016). The SPA services are combined with the resort or hotel, offering the services of professional SPA, fitness and recovery, healthy nutrition (Thorsteinsdottir K., 2005). The SPA hotel – a tourist accommodation with a hotel-specific infrastructure, the client is offered water treatments and services for wellness and health improvement, including baths, saunas, swimming pool, massage, fitness club, slimming, cosmetic, beauty care, and other services. According to the SPA type, the service may also include special catering (Viesnicu standarta pamatprasibas saskaņa ar LVS 2000-1:2009).	"Spa Hotel Ezeri" (Latvia) "Pirita Spa hotel" (Estonia) Hotel Jurmala Spa (Latvia)
Day SPA	A variety of professional SPA services a client might use within a day (Thorsteinsdottir K., 2005). Services to improve health, with or without accommodation services. Much attention is paid to the beauty and wellness programs, such as facial and body treatments, manicure, pedicure, massage (Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N. Y., Zarina A., Norishahaini M.I., 2012) Visit to the day SPA is fully dedicated to the revitalization and beauty. The category includes centres with beauty salons, hairdressing salons and hydrotherapy treatments (SPA iedalijums, 2016).	ESPA Rīga (Latvia) Day Spa OÜ (Estonia) Azia Spa (Lithuania)
SPA club	Usually it is a fitness centre with equipment for the water SPA procedures. These services are generally available to members only. The category includes any health club, gym, and recreation centre with the SPA area, which is separated from the active fitness area, offering a peaceful atmosphere. The range of services offered is similar to the Day Spa (SPA iedalijums, 2016). Fitness, aerobics, yoga, and other sports activities that are perfectly able to fit together with the SPA procedures (Thorsteinsdottir, K., 2005).	Joker klubs (Latvia) Tropic Fitness & SPA Club (Latvia)
Destination SPA	Customers manage their vacation as they wish in this type of SPAs; they can choose a variety of services and take break from the daily temptations, as a healthy menu is usually provided that does not include alcohol (Thorsteinsdottir, K., 2005). Companies, where the main product is SPA services, often combined with educational programs and healthy nutrition (Monteson, P., Singer, J., 2002).	Annas (Latvia) Taka SPA (Latvia) SPA Vilnius Anyksciai (Lithuania) Puhajarve Resort (Estonia)
Holistic SPA	It differs from other SPA, in particular with regard to the interior and the available treatment (Yaman, R., Alias, Z., Ishak, N. Y., Zarina A., Ishak, N.M., 2012).	Holistic SPA Hotel "La Passionaria" (the Czech Republic)
Medical SPA	Medical and recovery services as well as SPA services are offered. It is often combined with cosmetic/plastic surgery (Nagy, A., 2014).	Baltic Beach Hotel Spa (Latvia)
Mineral SPA	If the SPA therapy or any other treatment process uses mineral water or mineral mud, it may be compared to a whole treatment system (Forestier R., Forestier, F., Francon, A., 2016). The SPA uses the natural minerals, hot springs, and sea water. Minerals include such substances as calcium, magnesium, iron, bromine etc. (Broms, A., 2015)	Varska Resort (Estonia) Spa Vilnius Anyksciai (Lithuania)

Source: compiled by the authors

The respondents of the survey had to evaluate which SPA centre services they would like to use.

89 % of the respondents would gladly use a bubble bath (jacuzzi) centre, 84.6 % - a swimming pool, and 80.5 % - underwater massage pools. Despite the fact that there are two swimming pools in Rezekne city, people are interested in having it in the future SPA centre as well. The understanding of a pool may be different in the SPA hotel - it should not be 25 m or 50 m long; it may be small and of different forms. The main goal is not to swim, but "to dabble" (although it is important for many people to swim). The pools have to be adapted for people with special needs, and offer different depths and temperatures.

63.8 % of the respondents would prefer using cascades, 62.5 % - a musical pool, while 58.6 % - aqua bar services.

The SPA centre is inconceivable without the sauna area. The responses show that any type of sauna would be accepted, since 80.7 % of the respondents would use the aroma sauna, 79.8 % - Finnish sauna, 77.7 % - steam baths (the Roman baths), 75.8 % - the salt sauna, and 72.1 % - the Turkish bath. The ice sauna (the Cryotherapy) would be used only by 60.2 % of the respondents. The authors believe that the low level of support for this sauna type is related to the respondents' lack of awareness and knowledge of this service.

91.1 % of the respondents would prefer using relaxing massages, 87.9 % - water treatments, and 80.1 % - the medical SPA. The aforesaid SPA services are the most commonly used and requested in the SPA centres. Only 53.5 % of the respondents would use SPA capsules.

The respondents rated their possible level of spending per visit at the SPA centre. Data suggest that a majority of the respondents (82 %) are willing to spend up to 15 EUR per visit, while a relatively large group (76.1 %) - 16-30 EUR. The authors believe that the SPA centre services should be focused to an amount

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### Conclusions

1) Based on the assessment of the accommodation services' offer in Rezekne city within the framework of the project "Assessment of the hotel services' development opportunities in Rezekne city", it is clear that Rezekne needs a new four-star hotel that would satisfy the growing demand for accommodation and the SPA services, as well as would prolong the tourists' duration of stay in the region.

The authors believe that the potential customers of the Rezekne SPA hotel are people with middle and high incomes who would use the SPA centre services to improve or maintain their health, to relax with family or friends, and it would be a good resting place. Since the location, according to the respondents' opinion, is not the most important factor, the potential customers are not only inhabitants of Rezekne city or region, but also people of other Latvian regions. The authors consider that the residents of the neighbour countries, for example, Lithuania or Estonia, also would use the SPA hotel services if they are designed in an interesting way, provide special offers, unprecedented and diverse SPA services (swimming pool, saunas, additional services, quality service). The services must attract customers and encourage to drive a fairly long distances with their personal transportation. The Embassy of Latgale "GORS" is a great sample, because its services are used not only by locals but also by people from other regions.

2) The customer flow and demand will be directly dependent on the range (diversity) of the services offered by the SPA and high quality, though, at the same time respecting the principle of a reasonable price, because most of the service users will be the customers of average incomes willing to spend relatively small amounts of money (up to 30 EUR per visit).

- 3) Since the demand for the SPA services will be higher in winter season than in summer, the developers of the SPA centre should use the strategy of differentiated pricing to provide a continuous flow of incomes – to offer services at a lower price when demand is lower (in seasons, days of the week, or hour of the day), and to set a higher price at a time when the demand is higher.
- 4) Pools are considered as one of the integral parts of the SPA centre. The pool would be interesting to children, taking into account that many people consider the SPA centre to be a leisure opportunity for families.

5) Bubble baths (jacuzzi), underwater massage pools, and also cascades should be built in the SPA centre. The variety of the services increases customers' satisfaction and desire to return more often.

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- The sauna area as well as the swimming pool centre should diverse, offering unique and specific services.
- The SPA services should include relaxing massages, water procedures, and the medical SPA treatment.
- 8) The establishment of the SPA hotel in Rezekne is necessary because the nearest SPA hotel is 250 km away, though a special attention should be paid to the quality of the offered services.

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