

The Analysis of Community Readiness Towards Green Services: the Developments of Health Spas in Samarkand

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ABSTRACT

This research reflects the role and importance of spa and wellness tourism in Samarkand and the community's readiness for green services.

The paper aims to segment the main customers of spas in Samarkand and analyze their demands and wants. Another purpose is to find and suggest solutions to tackle some problems in this field of service and improve quality. This study discusses the needs of urban residents for spas, what kind of spas they want, and some of the mistakes that can be made in the future. Apart from that, the paper has information about the ancient baths of Samarkand and the historical development tendencies of spa and wellness tourism. The paper also includes the results of a survey conducted to determine the readiness of the population to increase the number of modern spa services. In this research paper, the results of the survey were analyzed in depth and then the necessary conclusions were given, possible problems were predicted and solutions were suggested. There is information on how to take the initial steps in widely opening spas and developing wellness tourism based in Samarkand city. The measures to develop the market of spa and wellness tourism in this city are discussed in this research.

KEYWORDS: *tourism, spa, wellness tourism, Samarkand, Muslim, masseur, marketing, customer portrait, segment, target.*

Introduction

The most important strategic plan of Uzbekistan for development in recent years is the growth of the tourism sector. Both inbound and outbound, domestic and international tourism should parallelly develop. Before Covid-19 Samarkand was the second city in terms of reception of local guests. Despite the pandemic, a lot of measures are being done in Uzbekistan to develop domestic tourism. Many efforts are being made to ensure seasonal tourism with a stable flow of tourists in other seasons as well. The opening of spas in the historic and young city and providing existing spas with modern equipment will help to improve the quality of service, simultaneously, it certainly increases the flow of tourists.

As the hub of many civilizations and traditions, ancient Samarkand has a great history. When the Samarkand was located at the intersection of the Great Silk Road there were many caravanserais and hammams (baths). Even many active hammams have survived to this day, one of them Dovudi Hammam (Tripadvisor).

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However, the term Spa which we are frequently using today did not come from the “hammam” word. The spa is derived from Spa town, one of the towns of Belgium (H. Schuman.). Some researchers considered that this word comes from the Latin language, “spargere”, which means sprinkle (Dr. A van Tubergen). In classical times, Spa rehabilitations are claimed as the best treatment for several diseases. Nowadays, wellness spa has turned into the trendiest segment of recreational tourism, globally. World widely, a spa is defined as a service that offers massage treatment and at least two procedures that are provided with water, as well as the sauna, energy treatments, yoga exercises, herbal treatment, or other services. The types of services are also different, for example, there are a day spa, natural spring spa, resort spa, cruise spa, medical spa, and other types of spas. The spa market is estimated to grow by \$ 25.48 bn from 2020-to 2024 (Spa Market: Global Industry).

Literature review

Before defining the term health spa, it is crucial to understand what it means for health. WHO (World Health Organization) is well-defined that health as "the degree to which an individual can understand fulfill needs, and to change or adapt to the climate. Health is the first thing for regular daily existence" (Smith and Puczko). Additionally, other scholars like Carrera and Bridges consider health tourism as "the organized travel for the recreation or restoration of a person's well-being morally and physically". In the opinion of Smith and Puczkó, health tourism is a "type of tourism that is centrally concentrated on physical health, however which also recover mental and spiritual well-being" (Mainil). Another researcher points out that health tourism is "a commercial term of the industrial world which makes a person traveling away from the normal home environment for the benefit of improving health" Hall (2011). And World Tourism Organizations consider, health tourism like the "umbrella term" for wellness tourism (UNWTO, 2017). As aforementioned there are many definitions for health tourism, the meaning of health tourism is not clear as the future of health tourism. There are many types of research are conducted to define and analyze the market of health tourism.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to find out the attitudes and opinions of Samarkand residents towards spa salons. We surveyed the population to get accurate statistics. Then research was conducted and analyzed using the quantitative method.

The types of questions in the survey were open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, and rating questions. As well, to create a portrait of survey participants several demographic questions are also asked. By gathering all the answers primary data about spas in Samarkand is collected eventually.

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First of all, a full portrait of the audience is created, then questions about the opinion of survey participants are asked. The survey consists of 7 demographic multiple-choice questions, 19 rating closed-ended questions, and 3 open-ended questions. The questions are basic and simple, but from a psychological aspect, every response gives full information about the quality of spa services and the demand for spa services in the market.

Data collection

In table 1 all the technical specifications of the survey result are introduced. The main goal of making closed-end questions is to minimize the difficulty and duration of the survey. Surveys were made with Samarkandians.

Table 1: The survey results

Characteristics	Survey
Title	Spa services in Samarkand
Geographical scope	Samarkand
Sample size	87 respondents
Sample error	2,5%
Confidence level	97,5%
Method of information gathering	Online survey

Research outcomes

Respondents' portrait: Almost 70% of participants were under 26 years old, from the city center and upper-middle class, extrovert people and they work in the privacy center. Half of them are married and under 21 years old. 10% of participants work in the public sector and the same number of participants is from districts.

Table 2: the number of response

SECTIONS	1	2	3	4	5
Selfcare / income estimation (3 questions)	132	81	51	9	18
A propensity for sports (3 questions)	54	66	30	57	54
Acknowledgment (5 questions)	85	35	25	75	15
Community readiness (3 questions)	36	33	72	12	108
Level of need or demand (3 questions)	159	66	12	0	24
Rating (2 questions)	26	36	74	32	6

The most selected options are painted in red and in black, and the last selected choices are painted. The left side is the positive side, and the right side of the table is the negative one. Most of the red-colored cells are on the left side, so, there is a demand for spa business and the quality of this service is not bad. In our table, 3 sections have the first point red color, particularly, the self-care section, which means Samarkand residents care about their health; the second is acknowledgment, this section has the most interesting point, because this section has red color in the first point and black color in the fifth point, so participants have complete knowledge of the advantages and benefits of the spa; and last best-selected section was demand section. However, there is one section that is highlighted in yellow, which is worth analyzing deeply, because exactly this section – community readiness should be improved in Samarkand. In this section were three questions and among these questions, most of the “no” answers are related to the section about the gender of masseur-therapist. The question was “If the professional masseur-therapist were a woman/man, would you get a massage?”, namely we offered a masseuse service to men and women male masseur service. Presumably, because of their traditions they cannot agree to their body parts are touched by a member of the opposite gender.

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Conclusion

It is clear from the survey that, Samarkand residents take care of their health and many of them like to spend more time with friends. It can be concluded from this study that there is a need for spas in Samarkand and 90% of the population can receive this type of service. Of course, before organizing this type of service, it is also necessary to determine some demographic characteristics of the population, for example, religion and traditions of society. If we take into account that, more than 90% of the population of Samarkand is Muslim, it is possible to open more spa centers by adding some Islamic rules. This would not only prevent future problems but also attract a large number of religious people.

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