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SPA Services: Healing or Pampering (A Study on Significance of SPA Service to Individuals)

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Abstract:

The spas in today's world have become a strong feature of economy with people going back to the waters just like the olden days. Their modern avatars are offering a variety of services to cater to the needs of the stressed and the tired looking for rejuvenation and relaxation. Not just this, they are bringing in various options to satisfy the urge to stay young and to give peace to those who have enough money to spend on themselves. This paper is an attempt to find out the specific benefits that the spa industry is accruing on the health of the individuals based upon the perception and the experience of the spa industry. This research is trying to find the significance of the spas, their services and products with respect to this physical and psychological health of the individuals. For this purpose, a survey was conducted on 200 people and an item wise percentage analysis was conducted on the responses that were taken on a scale of five as Strongly agree, agree, indifferent, disagree and strongly disagree. Done on the above mentioned three dimensions and an attempt was made to find out the payoffs derived from the various spa services to individuals' mental and physical health. These were allotted weights as 5 to 1 and then an item wise percentage analysis was conducted for the purpose. It was found that spas carry a lot of significance to the health of the individuals. Not just the physical, but also the psychological health also benefits from the spa services. Thus, the economy would do well if it aids the spa industry to move forward along with the allied industry like medical, hospitality and tourism.

Key words: Significance, Spas, Individuals, Health, Physical, Psychological

1. Introduction

Globally, spas have become an industry to reckon with and they are showing a remarkable potential for the future as well. Health industry is recession proof and so is the urge of people to look and feel good. Due to this reason, even during difficult economic times, spas as an integral part of alternate medical therapies are still going strong. In fact, the upheaval in the economies raises the stress levels, thus, increasing the number of clients opting for the escape that the spas provide. This spearheads the overall progress of the industry. Spas are now synonymous with the ultimate destinations of luxury and healing combined in one. They are getting more coverage in the media, occupying a healthy percent in the hospitality market as more and more brands are including spas in their property. People are becoming more aware of the services they provide and the benefits they accrue. With an increase in the awareness levels, they are getting more acceptances in the population with even the medical industry supporting the alternate healing techniques. This tremendous rise in the cognizance and approval of the spa services and products has drawn big names to it as it holds promises of good profits in future. Price water house, the accounting firm, had predicted it to be a multibillion industry a decade back in 2002. Since then this industry has achieved a strong presence in the developed economies and is going robust in many developing ones. It has integrated itself to the hospitality and the medical industries of the areas. Governments have started recognizing it and insurance companies have started incorporating the services in their plans. Today, the spa industry is finding more entrants, more money and more interest of public and the institutions. Most of the reputed hotel chains, hospitals and even real estate companies are adding spas to their properties.

This industry is already a significant contributor to the revenue and employment in major economies. Developed nations like the United States have shown a remarkable growth of the industry and all the allied industries like tourism, medical and hospitality industries too have benefitted significantly. These results have encouraged a similar sentiment in the lesser developed counterparts like in India, where there is a renewed interest in it. The ancient legacy of Ayurveda and similar alternate healing practice has been picked up by the industry as the unique selling proposition of Spiritual India, aided with the yoga and meditation, thus luring more domestic and international clients. The ever rising stress levels and the inclination of people to connect back to the nature have shown a refreshing light to the once termed 'exotic' spas of countries like India. The much publicized visits of the celebrities to such spas have

brought in the glamour laden endorsements bringing up more reliability to the physical and psychological benefits from the spa services. Hollywood celebrities turning to Indian spas in their stressful times act as a testimony to their significant paybacks as the places to immerse oneself into for relaxation. The spa industry in the country has thus begun to realize the potential worth of services and the products it offers and is aptly cashing it with more and more spas opening up in recent years adding to the revenues of the industry.

The industry offers services that claim significant three in one advantage to the clients availing of them. Physical, psychological and spiritual benefits are the most important ones with some of them offering scientific backing too. This paper is dedicated to finding the significance of the spas, their services and products with respect to these dimensions for individuals. For this purpose, an item wise percentage analysis is done on the above mentioned dimensions and an attempt was made to find out the payoffs derived from the various spa services to individuals' mental and physical health.

To understand the significance of the spas, it is imperative to understand the benefits that they accrue on individuals. A look into the related literature and evidences available confirms the importance of alternate healing methods offered by spas. This study divided the benefits as per the beneficiary. For the individuals, it was further divided into physical and psychological benefits. The study indicates the reasons for the spa visits as spas are perceived in various lights like the place for leisure and pampering, relaxation and also as the places to avail of medical remedies and healing. Some people even see it as a place for social interactions. But as in the services market, not all the time one gets what one perceives, it was thought appropriate to analyze the reasons as in the specific services for which the people go to spas. Those services were selected which were generally offered by most of the spas and thus massages, facials, manicure, pedicures, body wraps, fitness training, detoxification and nutritional counseling were included. People were asked to rate the benefits that they have experienced from the services. The responses are used to understand the indicators of the benefits of the spa services. As mentioned earlier, a scale of five was used as Strong agreement, Agreement, Indifference, Disagreement and Strong disagreement.

2. Literature Review

For the purpose of the study, a thorough review was done of the available literature online and otherwise. As the study includes the physical and psychological benefits from the spas, even medical journals were studied. It was found that individually, spa services have been studied but there is not much work done where all the spa services are taken up together. This paper is an attempt to fill in that gap in the available literature.

- **Loup (1326)** claimed that the spring named Espa, provided medical cures and later in 1571, William Slingsby who had been to Belgian town, Spaw, found chalybeate spring in Yorkshire. He called it Harrogate, with enclosed wells, the first resort in England for drinking medicinal water. Later it was renamed as 'The English Spaw, by Doctor Timothy Bright. Thus started the use of word spa as a genetic description and it was no more just a place name of some Belgian town. Initially spas referred specifically to resorts for drinking water and not the baths, but gradually this distinction was lost and spas began to offer external remedies as well. Most of the researches in the field claimed that the word is an acronym of various Latin phrases such as 'SalusPerAquam' or 'Sanitas Per Aquam' meaning health through water.
- **Heywood (1990)** reviewed spa treatment for lead poisoning in the 18th and 19th century in Bath when paralysis due to chronic lead infection was a common problem owing to the widespread use of lead in household ware, cosmetics, food colorant, wine and salts for medicinal use. Even in the 16th century, the Bath in England was famous for clearing paralysis through treatment consisting of bathing, drinking and diet. For several years patients were admitted in Bath for paralysis due to lead intoxication and mostly were cured while more than ninety per cent had at least improved. These fantastic results of cure for paralysis by spa therapy were attributed to several factors like sitting in warm water, chemical composition of the water, relaxed environment and healthy diet.
- According to **Tubergenand Linden (2001)** of the Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Rheumatology, University Hospital, Maastricht, The Netherlands, and spa therapy is quite effective in ankylosingspandyllhs. This observation was based on a randomized controlled trial (2001) in which two groups followed three week spa therapy course at two different spa resorts, and were compared with group who stayed at home taking standard treatment of anti-inflammatory drugs and physical therapy. There were visible improvements in movements, pain relief, global wellbeing and morning stiffness.

Throughout the ages, the interest in the use of water in medicine has gone up and down. Similarly, their place in the remedial therapies has been accepted with different opinions ranging from enthusiastic to very critical and beneficial to harmful. But once again, they are enjoying renewed attention with the influx of health tourists. Owing to the fact that the precise therapeutic potential of spa therapy is still largely unknown, more profound scientific evidence for its medical efficacy is needed.

3. Research Methodology

This paper is an exploratory cum descriptive research. A sample of 200 people was taken using non purposive probability technique and a questionnaire was formed to get an insight into their minds. The respondents were asked to respond on a scale of five with the extremes being strong agreement and strong disagreement to the statement of the question. The middle responses were agreement, indifference and disagreement to the statement. The responses were then allotted points with strong agreement equaling five, continuing up to strong disagreement getting one point. Then, the total number of responses was multiplied with the maximum point (five) and a percent score was calculated for various indicators.

4. Significance of the SPAs, Their Services and Products

This segment describes the results obtained from the sections of the survey that indicated the significance of the spas, their services and products in terms of the benefits that the clients experienced from the spa services. A total of 200 valid questionnaires were returned back as a response to the link sent to the people residing in the USA and India, 100 each. These were taken up for the statistical tests while the rest were discarded.

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement to the questions pertaining to the significance of the spas, their services and the products. For individuals, it was decided to take the physical and the psychological benefits from the selected spa services as the parameters to understand their importance.

S. No	Description of the indicator of significance of spas to individual		
1.	Benefits experienced from spa massages:	Obtained Score N=1000	Percentage Score
a	Relief from chronic pain	710	71
b	Ease in joint movements	736	73
c	Relief from stress	871	87
d	Skin hydration	881	88
e	Weight loss	571	57
f	Sleep improvement	823	81
g	Better body flexibility	665	66
h	Better immunity	571	57
i	Younger looking skin	620	62
j	Overall fitness	592	59
TOTAL SCORE	N = 10000	7000	70
2	Benefits experienced from facials:	Obtained Score N = 1000	Percentage score
a	Skin exfoliation	882	88
b	Skin hydration	873	87
c	Anti-aging effects	776	77
d	Beauty enhancement	806	80
e	Skin nourishment	825	82
TOTAL SCORE	N =5000	4143	83
3	Benefits experienced from manicures and pedicures:	Obtained Score N=1000	Percentage Score
a	Better looking hands and toes	886	88
b	Younger looking skin	842	84
c	Relaxation	879	87
d	Self-esteem boost	829	83
e	Skin exfoliation	867	86
TOTAL	N= 5000	4278	86
4	Benefits experienced from fitness training and nutritional counseling:	Obtained Score N = 1000	Percentage Score
a	Better and healthy lifestyle	891	89
b	Weight management	871	87
c	Improved self confidence	874	87
d	Detoxification	869	86
e	Anti-aging effects	839	83
f	Improved health	860	86
g	Improvement in existing medical conditions	825	82
TOTAL	N = 7000	5994	86

5	Benefits experienced from cosmetic procedures:	Obtained Score N =1000	Percentage Score
a	Improved looks	784	78
b	Weight management	723	72
c	Improved self esteem	771	77
d	Anti-aging effects	753	75
e	Improvement in existing medical conditions	669	67
TOTAL	N = 5000	3678	74

Table 1: Item wise Percentage Analysis of the Indicators of Benefits of the SPAs and Their Services

The above data can be represented into easy to understand figures like bar diagram. The following pages give a clear picture of the significance of each spa service taken individually. Different services accrue different benefits like relief from chronic pain, stress, skin hydration, better immunity and younger looking skin are explained through the bar diagram.

Just like massages and facials, manicures and pedicures are among the most popular services offered by the spas and they not only exfoliate the skin resulting in better looking hands and toes but also boosts the self esteem of the client as it helps in making the skin look young. Such payoffs are essential to market these services as the confidence building relaxing exercises.

The above table gives us a good insight into the contribution of spas to the individuals, the economy in general and tourism in particular. Individuals have experienced and appreciated the benefits of the spa to their physical and psychological health. A significant percentage of respondents (seventy percent) have applauded the payoffs received from the massages in terms of improvement in sleep patterns, relaxation, enhanced immunity and body flexibility, relief from stress and chronic pain, better joint movement, skin improvement and hydration as well as in terms of weight loss. Not just this, the other services of the spas, namely manicures, pedicures, fitness training and nutritional counseling (eighty six percent), facials (eighty three percent) and cosmetic surgery (seventy four percent), are also considered significantly beneficial aiding the physical and the psychological health of the individuals.

5. Conclusion

The above data clearly supports the popular notions that people are drawn to the spas for the benefits they accrue. It is interesting to note that majority of the people go to spas for availing of the services that have been in vogue since the Roman times like massages and nutritional counseling. People have come back to the spas like olden days and spas have started becoming an integral part of the lifestyle especially in the developed nations. The awareness level of the benefits is spreading and people are trying to reap in both the physical and the psychological payoffs from the services. Consequently, Spas are proving to be an advantage of the economy and the tourism of a destination.

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