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The correlation Between Health Consciousness and Wellness: Analyses of Consumers' Attitudes and Preferences According to a Primary Domestic National Wide Survey Results

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Abstract

According to the effect of health-conscious consumer trend the role of wellness became very important accordingly some of professional international research result. In this paper we would like to analyse the consumers' attitude towards health conscious behaviour and wellness. We surveyed the attitude towards wellness, analysed the preferences list of selection of wellness services and the correlation of wellness and health consciousness with the help of primary quantitative survey. We used during the primary research pretested standardized questionnaire and sample taking with quota. Based on the research results we could stay some marketing strategic suggestions to prove the role of wellness in the health consciousness and characterised the main consumer target group of wellness service.

Keywords: *wellness, health, primary quantitative research*

1. Introduction

There are several national surveys proving that prove that Hungary's indicators of healthcare are one of the worst in Europe. (Gaál et al, 2011) Despite this fact we can also experience a positive shift. It seems that part of the population is now starting to be aware how important role health preservation plays together with the significance of their own role and responsibility in this process. (www.gfk.hu)

It is also proved by a change in the structure of consumption i.e. total spending on products with healing effects or those considered healthy, health preservation, medicine, different products in healthcare as well as healthy nutrition. Another study also supports the fact that despite the crisis in the past few years more money has been spent on wellness, which is a very important service factor in preservation. (www.vg.hu) All this reflects that a process has already started in Hungary that may help direct enough attention to health and health care in the everyday life of people. In

our research we were thriving at examining what role wellness play in health preservation. The trend of wellness has been chosen as a focus because both the importance of health and a healthy way of life and the holistic approach to healthy lifestyle and way of life are concentrated in the phenomenon. The origin of wellness philosophy is also about preserving, improving health and harmonising body, soul and spirit.

2. Methodological background

One of the main objectives of our research project was to examine what the characteristics of people's attitude to wellness were and how decisive its role was in health preservation and what factors influenced the selection of a wellness service provider. In the first phase of the research project a national survey was carried out in the form of a pre-tested standardised questionnaire in March 2013. Respondents were older than 18- both males and females by using a non-representative snowball-type sample taking method. At the end, we received 953 questionnaires ready to be processed. Besides analysing the costs spent on health preservation questions about the assessment of wellness and the selection of a wellness service as well as socio-demographic issues are also asked in the questionnaire.

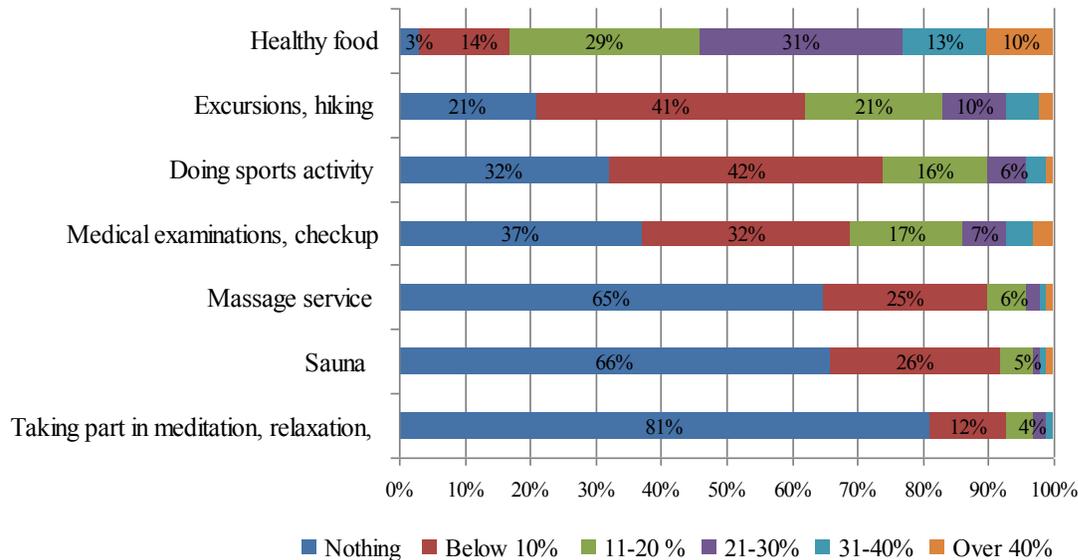
Regarding the socio-demographic features of the sample more than half of the respondents (60%) are females. In terms of domicile the majority live in the capital (41%) or Pest county (19%). More than half of the respondents (52%) are married or have a relationship and 36% of them have at least one child or more children. Concerning employment white collar workers are overrepresented in the sample (34%), who are followed by students (19%). Blue collar workers, entrepreneurs and pensioners were similarly represented (9-10%) in the sample. Regarding age most respondents were between 18 and 25 years of age followed by the generation between 26 and 35 (22%). The next three generations (36-45, 46-55 and above 55) were similarly represented. A significant part of the respondents have secondary or higher education qualification (49% and 47%, respectively). Only 4% was the ratio of those with elementary education.

3. Results

3.1 The role of health preservation

First, respondents were asked about health preservation on the basis of spending on activities and programmes that are connected to health protection as well as their attention and time directed at them. According to the findings, respondents spend the most on healthy nutrition and they can or want to spend the least on meditation, sauna and massage services. (see figure 1.)

Figure 1: Construction of spending for health preservation



Source: own research N= 953

Most of them spend less than 10% of their income on trips, sports activities and the fact that more than one third of the respondents do not spend anything on medical checkups cannot be regarded as a positive thing regarding prevention by all means.

The answers to the following questions are consistent with the extent of spending, i.e. the regular use of sauna and massage services and participation in meditations are not at all typical of the majority of the respondents. (see table 1.)

Table 1: Pursuing health preserving activities

Activities, statements	Average (1=not typical at all)
I regularly have a sauna	1.43
I regularly meditate	1.44
I regularly have a massage	1.45
I find time for intellectual relaxation	2.35
I eat properly and healthily	2.78
I regularly have medical checkups	2.37
I sleep enough hours	2.73
I do sports or some activities at least three times a week	2.50
I pay attention to drinking enough	3.11

Source: own research N= 953

Pursuing regular sports activities divided the respondents. Almost as many of them stated that that doing some active sports at least three times a week was typical of them as those who indicated the 'not typical' alternative. It seems that proper liquid intake, healthy nutrients and sleeping enough hours are the priorities in health preservation that most respondents stress. We also considered it vital to examine where the respondents got information about health preservation. In our opinion it is essential that people receive proper information on health preservation although to achieve this, it is indispensable to get acquainted with communication channels that provide assistance in reaching out for people effectively. The results obviously prove that internet is the primary source as 79% of the respondents use it to collect information about health preservation.

Another important communication source is the range of social functions: the opinions of acquaintances and friends, which is even more important than the opinions of the professionals or doctors. The influence of the television and the recommendations of family members are also decisive. It is interesting that the latter one is much weaker than the opinions of the friends and acquaintances. Magazines and the radio are the least preferred media if it comes to gathering information about health preservation. Naturopaths and masseurs have an even slighter role to which only a few respondents turn for advice.

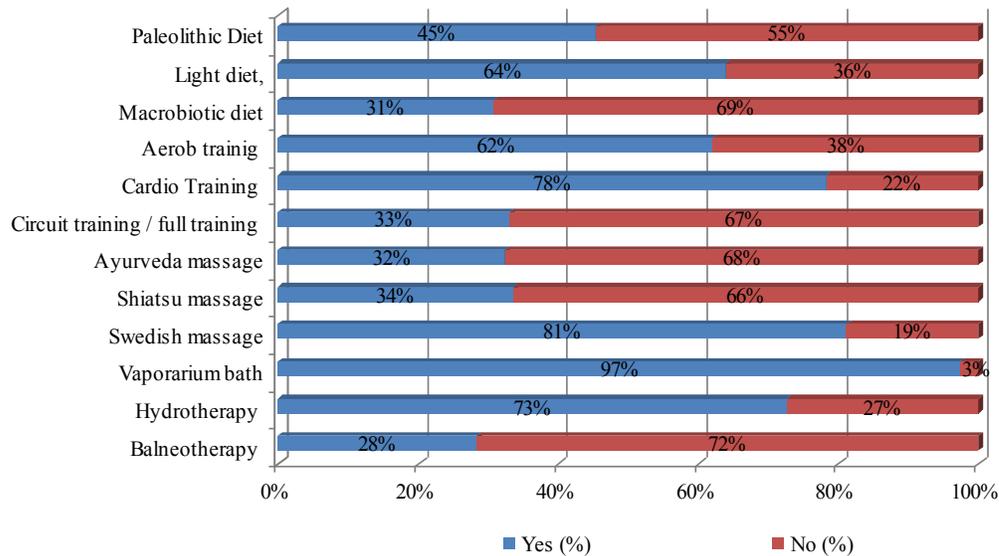
3.2 Opinion about wellness

By means of a list of statements we analysed separately what respondents thought about wellness. According to this, a lot of people still regard wellness as a status symbol, the privilege of the rich. It is consistent with the data of previous research. (Árpási et al, 2010.) The fact that people do not think of somebody who regularly uses wellness facilities as being more health conscious in everyday life is also consistent with the findings above. A lot of people (45%) thought that wellness did not play a significant part in health preservation.

All the results support the fact that people's opinion about wellness is still far from its real sense. Nevertheless, it would be important to make people understand what this expression means and what a real wellness service includes in order to create a more positive image. It is true that national service providers contribute to this association to a great extent and in many cases communication is not purely professional. Its main point was to offer mostly enjoyable, relaxing weekend programme as a service –thus diverting from its original meaning. It is not a surprise that users create such associations. From the point of view of marketing it is problematic because it excludes potential target groups from the possibility of using the service by assuming that it is the hobby of 'the well-off who are privileged'.

In contrast, the really important fact would be if wellness could be part of people's life by playing a health preserving role, i.e. deliberately selected services with relaxation and practising to lead a life. Several successful West-European examples show that promoting wellness approach can be efficient only if its original mission is emphasised. It should not be treated as a marketing opportunity but also as an adjective to repositioning a fading service. The other result of the questionnaire designates tasks also for the wellness management in which we examined how well the respondents were aware of the ideas in close connection with wellness.

Figure 2: Knowledge of concepts related to wellness (relative %)



Source: own research N= 953

According to the findings the idea of Swedish massage and steam bath was known almost by everyone. (see figure 2.) Cardio training, hydrotherapy, lighter diet and aerobe training also belong to the more popular notions whereas Palaeolithic diet, circle training, ayurveda and shiatsu massage were marked only by few people and the ides of macrobiotic diet and balneotherapy was almost unknown for most respondents. All this proves that in our country there are a lot of things to do in connection with wellness and its lifestyle as well as getting to know its service portfolio and promoting it in a professionally fair and objective way. In our opinion this could be the first step to clarify an image and create a consciously formed positive attitude.

However, we find it very important that people know and understand what wellness can provide them, what can at all be regarded as wellness, which can help in selecting a service. In our opinion making a more conscious decision is necessary as it can decrease the risk of the users and also can help evaluate the services based on relevant factors and last but not least, it can also result in raising the standard of supply.

3.3. The preference system of wellness service selection

Respondents were asked to evaluate how important the following factors are for them in selecting a wellness service provider. (see table 2.)

Table 2: The preference system of selecting a service

	Average	Spread
Factors	<i>1=not important at all</i>	
Professional background of the wellness centre	2.88	0.94
Aesthetic appearance of the wellness centre	3.29	0.73
Knowledgeability and helpfulness of staff	3.43	0.75
Spatial relations of service (accessibility, situation)	3.13	0.86
Availability of curative, medicinal water	3.21	0.89
Composition, effect of curative water	2.91	0.94
Play pools	2.82	0.97
Sauna services	2.86	1.01
Massage	2.75	1.01
Sports facilities	2.76	1.00
medical supervision, services	2.69	0.97
Fee of service	3.55	0.69
SZÉP card can be used for payment	2.31	1.21
Credit/bank cards accepted	2.78	1.13
Opinion of friends, acquaintances	2.99	0.83
Previous experience	3.28	0.82
Ads and website of the wellness centre	2.87	0.92

Source: own research, N= 953

Not surprisingly, price /fee/ was at the top of the preference system. It was followed by the knowledgeability and helpfulness of staff (56%). It seems that by means of setting a proper price or rather by using well target price tactics a service provider can increase their competitiveness. At the same time, the role of the front staff and its influence on perceived quality cannot be discarded, either. It is not by accident that the efficient management of the human factor, internal marketing, front and back office belong to the most important instruments of service marketing. The respondents also mentioned previous experience (46%) as an important factor of selecting a service, which derives from the 'confidential' nature of services.

The availability of medicinal and curative water at the given location (46%) was also essential for many people. It is not surprising as from another question of the survey it turned out that thermal and medicinal bathing is one of the most essential services being looked for besides sauna. Payment methods belonged to the less important factors of selecting a service. It can presumably be due to the changes made in the cafeteria system and the significant decreases of subsidies. We also examined from where respondents can obtain information about wellness service providers. We thought that they can serve as precious information for creating a successful marketing communication mix.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results we can conclude that respondents primarily gain information on the internet but the opinions of their friends and acquaintances are also as important for them. The role of television and magazines cannot be discarded, either. We assume that on the basis of the results the most important task is to clarify the definition of wellness. Disclosing professionally fair information and wellness-related service alternatives are also stressed.

To this end, there is a great need for selecting the right means of communication, which can primarily be implemented by the inclusion of the internet and social functions concerning the source of information on health consciousness and wellness service providers. In our opinion by creating a marketing strategy based on the right instruments and coordinating wellness service providers as well as a more conscious decision made by the users it would be viable for this life philosophy to play its role of health preservation.

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