Satisfaction and loyalty evaluation towards health and wellness destination

Avaliação da satisfação e lealdade em destinos de saúde e bem-estar

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Abstract | Nowadays, successful tourism destinations must offer diversity and new tourism products, addressing special interest niches, where it is possible to frame health and wellness tourism, with special emphasis on thermal tourism. It has been observed some changes regarding the customer characteristics, treatments, products, and services made available, as a strategy to overcome imbalances in physical and psychological well-being, diagnosed in the consumer. It is in the spas, with body and mind recovery treatments offer, complementary to the classic treatments, that individuals recover their well-being and, consequently, improve their quality of life. The quantitative research was based on a sample of 201 participants in the North and Centre of Portugal, in a pandemic context (COVID'19). The results confirmed that the socio-demographic profile of the participants influences the choice of the available services; the most valued aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment influence the degree of satisfaction regarding the trip and the thermal experience, and the intention to recommend and revisit the destination; and, Finally, overall satisfaction with the thermal destination significantly influences the loyalty to the health and wellness destination. Main contributions were identified, concerning the quality and variety of treatments, infrastructure, price, location, access and service, and the need for product design and proposals directed at identified target markets.

Keywords | Health and well-being tourism, Thermal baths, Spa, Satisfaction, Behavioural intention

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Resumo | Na atualidade, os destinos turísticos de sucesso devem oferecer diversidade e novos produtos turísticos, abordando nichos de interesse especial, onde é possível enquadrar o turismo de saúde e bem-estar, com especial ênfase para o turismo termal. Têm-se observado algumas mudanças no que se refere ao tipo de cliente, tratamentos, produtos e serviços disponibilizados, como estratégia de superação de desequilíbrios no bem-estar físico e psicológico, diagnosticados no consumidor. É nas estâncias termais, com oferta de tratamentos de recuperação do corpo e da mente, complementares aos tratamentos clássicos, que os indivíduos recuperam o seu bem-estar e, consequentemente, melhoram a sua qualidade de vida. A investigação, baseada na recolha de dados quantitativos a uma amostra de 201 termalistas do norte e centro de Portugal, em pleno contexto pandémico (COVID'19), confirmou que o perfil sociodemográfico dos termalistas influencia as escolhas dos serviços disponibilizados; os aspetos mais valorizados na seleção do estabelecimento termal influenciam o grau de satisfação relativamente à viagem e experiência termal e intenção de recomendar e revisitar o destino; e, a satisfação geral com o destino termal influencia significativamente a fidelização ao destino de saúde e bem-estar. São identificados contributos relativos à qualidade e variedade dos tratamentos, das infraestruturas, do preço, da localização, acesso e atendimento, e necessidade de desenho e propostas de produtos dirigidos a mercados-alvo identificados.

Palavras-chave | Turismo de saúde e bem-estar, Termas, Spa, Satisfação, Intenção comportamental

1. Introduction

As more consumers incorporate wellness into their lifestyles, there are many opportunities for all businesses to embed wellness in their offerings and tourists' attention. Wellness tourism will continue to grow as more consumers embrace wellness as a key deciding factor. This growth forecast is in line with the expected rising in many sectors that focus on wellness and health (e.g. fitness/mind-body, healthy eating, organic foods among others) as more consumers adopt wellness as a dominant lifestyle value and decision-making (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). Future wellness tourists will increasingly link personal transformation to the connections they make while travelling and impacts on the people and places they contact with. Wellness travel is becoming a more meaningful two-way exchange between tourists and destination, rather than a one-way consumer and commercial transaction (GWI, 2018). From the perspective of the Global Wellness Institute (2019), wellness improves public health because: It mit-

igates the rising cost of health care; It improves health equity by engaging wellness professionals in the community, and it addresses the growing mental health epidemic (GWI, 2019). On the other hand, well-being supports the protection of natural and cultural assets, environmental protection, as well as the enhancement of culture and local heritage; it supports workforce development and worker well-being; it improves quality of life and social capital through urban and community planning and infrastructure. People's lifestyles, behaviour, health outcomes and longevity are largely determined by social and environmental factors that are beyond the reach of health systems. Expanding the wellness sector can help combat the growing global health epidemic, improve public health and the health systems' financial sustainability (GWI, 2019). In 2007 the first National Strategic Plan for Tourism - PENT 2007 - highlighted the importance and concern with the development and diversification of the tourism offer. Health and wellness tourism then becomes one of the strategic products prioritised in the PENT with the ultimate

purpose of its activity being developed and consolidated, allowing to assess, once again, the importance and relevance for tourism and our country's economy. The main goals were to qualify and classify health tourism offer, viewing its development and growth as it has a strategic relevance for Portugal, in the medical, thermal, spa and thalassotherapy components, stimulating the structuring and joint promotion of medical and tourism aspects. Portugal's competitiveness factors considering this product have been identified (PENT, 2013): Quality and diversity of equipment and complementary services; National health system with internationally recognized quality, being Portugal in the 12th position in the World Health Organization's index of world health systems; Professionals with international experience and low communication barriers in the languages of potential source markets for Portugal; Existence of hospital units accredited by international systems, namely by the *Joint Commission International*; Diverse thermal resources and hydrogeological sources, especially in the North and Centre; Spas brands (e.g. Angsana Spa, Banyan Tree, ESPA Spa, La Prairie Spa and Six Senses Spa) internationally recognized in reference hotel units in the country; Extensive coastline with the Atlantic Ocean waters which are among the richest for the practice of thalassotherapy; moderate climate throughout the year, which favours convalescence and has a therapeutic effect on certain pathologies. The aim is to focus the product's offer on tourists whose primary motivation is to obtain benefits related to health care, by articulating the medical value with the tourist values that are directly and indirectly associated to it, from thermalism to leisure and well-being.

From the perspective of Porto and North Regional Tourism Authority, the use of naturally heated thermal pools or relaxing therapeutic treatments are important resources in the region, determining factors in the evaluation of the tourist experience. Just as in northern Portugal, the centre also offers products and services where tourists can escape reality, involving an atmosphere of tranquillity in a setting of incomparable beauty, and invigorate body, mind, and spirit. In the centre of Portugal, the waters have unique properties in combating several diseases. Whether by ingestion, use on the skin or inhalation, mineral waters have preventive properties, eliminating toxins, for example. In the thermal spas it is possible to enjoy thalassotherapy treatments, in which sea water, seaweed and marine mud are used (Entidade Regional de Turismo do Centro)[1].

The objectives of this research are to understand the relationship between the services provided and the sociodemographic profile of the thermal tourists in the North and Centre regions of Portugal; to evaluate the degree of satisfaction regarding the thermal offer (comparing the dynamics of thermal offer and demand in the North and Centre regions of Portugal); and to evaluate the degree of satisfaction and loyalty towards the visited thermal destination. In order to evaluate the proposed objectives, three research hypotheses are presented: (H1): The sociodemographic profile of the spa visitors influences the choice of the services provided; (H2): The most valued aspects in the selection of the thermal unit influence the degree of satisfaction regarding the trip, the thermal experience and the intention to recommend and revisit the destination; and (H3): The overall satisfaction with the thermal destination significantly influences the loyalty to the health and wellness destination.

This article begins with the literature review, framing the appreciation of health and wellness tourism in the strategic plans for tourism at national level, the relationship between the appreciation of health and wellness tourism and the evolution of contemporary society, and the need for qualification of the thermal offer. The second part

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[1]Source: https://turismodocentro.pt/saude-e-bem-estar-no-centro-de-portugal/ consulted on 20/04/2020

describes the research methodology, the procedure for data collection, analysis, and discussion of results. The third and final part presents the conclusions of the study, and its relationship with the important role assumed by the regional stakeholders to design innovative products in thermal tourism.

2. Literature Review

Successful tourism destinations must offer diversity and new tourism products, addressing special interest niches. An increasingly popular tourism product is health and wellness tourism. The concept of wellness usually integrates physical activity combined with relaxation of the mind and intellectual stimulation, improving well-being through the balance of body, mind and spirit (Rodrigues et al., 2010). Currently, tourism and hospitality sector should be positioned to meet the health and wellbeing needs of the public and can become effective antidotes to the current public health challenges for several reasons (Antunes et al., 2010, Ferreira et al., 2017). It is increasingly becoming an integral part of consumers' lives, given their innate characteristic of promoting mobility. Travel promises activities and environments that cannot usually be found in the everyday living environment. As such, holidays can potentially be an effective mechanism for improving human well-being (Lehto & Lehto, 2019). The factor gender, age, income level, marital status or culture influenced the impacts of holiday experiences on subjective well-being (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). The factor age and time assume a positive relationship with regard to length of stay for older age spa goers (Esiyok et al., 2018). Azman and Chan (2010), add that the elderly are the main category of tourists seeking health and spa services, followed by the professionals who are very health conscious and practice a healthy lifestyle (Azman & Chan, 2010). Some of the wellness tourism activities are

related to beauty therapy experiences, massage, relaxation or energy balancing classes, art, music, and the appreciation of nature. Not only is the direct relationship to health (i.e. non-illness) decreasing, but it is also more related to personal experiences and satisfaction, rather than more obvious, externally imposed health goals (Page et al., 2017). Health and wellness tourism has followed the evolution of society and, naturally, new market niches have emerged in order to meet the needs of increasingly demanding and diversified market segments (Gameiro, 2011). Marketing professionals should assume flexibility and adapt to changes in tourists' desires and needs, in addition to improving communication about the health and well-being experience offered and its benefits (Alén et al., 2014). Promoting well-being is a relevant motive of most tourists and should be considered in any tourism marketing strategy (Rodrigues et al., 2010). Some of the benefits sought by wellness tourists are: transcendence; physical health and appearance; escape and relaxation; restoring self-esteem; and indulgence (Voigt et al., 2011). Smith and Kelly (2006) add that a health and wellness tourism destination can be an alternative space in which someone can self-analyse without the stresses and distractions of everyday life and that with the addition of a supportive and like-minded 'community' can sometimes help to further encourage the individual on a journey of self-discovery (Smith & Kelly, 2006). Health and wellness tourism offer has, in recent years, undergone a significant development and diversification, evolving from the therapeutic and curative concept to the symbiosis of therapy with wellness. In the same way, the demand segments have also diversified on a large scale, since the focus is no longer only on physical health, but also on wellness and physical appearance. The concept of *wellness*, also understood in diverse ways by several authors and countries, can be an "umbrella" concept that encompasses both health and wellness and should seek to strengthen and promote

the physical, psychological, spiritual, and social wellbeing of the individual. Thus, it is important to associate the concept of *wellness* with the use of thermal water, as a generator element of that general well-being, enhancing its beneficial effects combined with other offers that the spa may offer (Gonçalves & Guerra, 2019). As one of the aspects of health tourism, thermal tourism is one of the oldest modalities in the world and has undergone significant changes over time. If initially the spas were associated essentially with healing places, today, the perspective of thermal tourism is different and its action extends to environmental issues, aesthetics, quality of life and prevention. In this way, the concept of "health resort" expands and gives rise to the concept of "Thermal Tourism" (Alpoim, 2010). "The thermal activity is, historically, linked to the health sector and the provision of care in this area" (Decree-Law no. 142/2004 of 11 June). The oldest known archaeological records in Portugal, which confirm the ancestral people's worship of water, are in Braga district, prior to the Celtic period. The use of thermal waters in Portuguese territory predates the foundation of nationality. The history of the development of bathing establishments and water use in Portugal is often associated with the Roman culture (Cantista, 2014). Cunha (2006) adds that for many years, the concepts to designate and identify the activities related to treatments based on natural resources located in sites characterised by the existence of specific factors or elements were unchallenged and well established: thermalism, thalassotherapy and climatism. Climatism has several healing properties, which with the help of the climate and the quality of the air are at the basis of climatic resorts. Thus, whilst thalassotherapy has water as its natural resource essentially, this modality is based on air quality, with preferential locations in mountains (Antunes, 2005). All treatments determine the existence of a complex set of equipment and services of different nature located in a delimited space, as in any tourist destination.

One of the treatments that has taken on a new dimension is thalassotherapy, which, despite being a remote activity, only began to be associated with the concepts of beauty, aesthetics and body care a few years ago. The offer of thalassotherapy services, based on seawater, includes the most sophisticated techniques and the necessary characteristics for the equipment of this service, as well as the high human specialisation required, which make these centres not accessible it is not affordable to the purchasing power of all potential customers (Alpoim, 2010). Antunes (2005) adds that the spas offering thalassotherapy services are located by the sea to benefit from the qualities of the water and the maritime climate. The effects of hydrotherapy can also be reinforced by algotherapy, a treatment based on algae collected from the seabed. Thalassotherapy is based on treatments related to today's concerns (stress, smoking, post-natal recovery, aesthetics, weight loss) and is therefore recommended for the recovery of physical and psychological fitness, although it can also be used to treat diseases such as rheumatism, circulatory problems, among others (Antunes, 2005).

3. Methodology

This research aims to understand the relationship between the services offered and the sociodemographic profile of the thermal spa-goers in Northern and Central Portugal; evaluate the level of satisfaction regarding the thermal offer (compare the dynamics of thermal offer and demand in Northern and Central Portugal); and evaluate the level of satisfaction and loyalty towards the visited thermal destination. The research methodology used was based on the application of a questionnaire survey addressed to thermal tourists from the North and Centre of Portugal, to obtain information about their motivations for health and wellness tourism for visiting thermal resorts. The sam-

ple is made up of 201 spa-goers, whose answers were obtained from the digital platform Google forms and in person at spas in the North and Centre of Portugal. The analysis of the collected data was performed using the SPSS version 26 software, and a univariate and bivariate statistical analysis was performed to validate the research hypotheses.

The sampling technique used was non-probability by convenience, since the sample was selected according to the availability and accessibility of the members of the target population.

Table 1 | Sample data sheet

Universe under study	15-85 years old
Place of application	Spas of Northern and Central Portugal
Sample size	201 respondents
Sample error	6,91%
Confidence level	95% with Z=1,96
Sample	Convenience sampling
Type of study	Quantitative
Method of data collection	Online questionnaire on Google forms and in-person in the spas of Northern and Central Portugal
Questionnaire	Questionnaire survey, non-probability sample
Data processing method	SPSS version 26
Period of data collection	25 May to 25 September 2020

Source: own elaboration

Table 2 | Sociodemographic Profile of the Sample

Gender	Male: 40.3%; Female: 59.70%.
Age	15-24: 9.95%; 25-34: 9.45%; 35-44: 9.45%; 45-54: 11.44%; 55-64: 15.92%; 65-74: 27.36%; >= 75: 16.42%.
Qualifications	Incomplete Primary Education: 3.98%; Primary School: 29.85%; High School: 22.39%; Professional Course: 10.45%; Degree: 25.8%; Master: 5.97%; Ph.D.: 1.49%.
Employment situation	Part-time: 4%; Full-time: 38%; Retired/Pensioner: 48%; Student: 7%; Unemployed: 2%; Inactive/Other: 1%.
Net Monthly Income	Up to €1000: 49.8%; €1001-2000: 33.8%; €2001-3000: 4.0%; ≥ €3001: 1.0%; DK/NA: 10.4%.
Country of Origin	Portugal: 95%; Canada: 2%; Angola: 2%; Brazil: 1%.

Source: own elaboration

The analysis of the socio-demographic profile of the sample shows that most of the respondents are female and that the percentage of respondents aged 45-54 years or over is increasing; in terms of academic qualifications, basic education, high school and university degrees are dominant; In terms of employment situation it is possible to ascertain that around 50% of the respondents are retired/pensioners and almost 40% are full-time workers; with regard to net monthly income, 49.8% of the respondents earn up to €1000, and 33.8% between €1001 and 2000; in terms of nationality, 95% of the respondents are Portuguese.

4. Results

For the study of hypothesis 1 "The spa users' sociodemographic profile influences the choice of the services provided", the relationship between the questions "What are the characteristics of the treatments attended in the scope of their experience" and "Gender", "Age", "Qualifications", "Employment situation", "Net monthly income" and "Country of origin" will be analysed, using Pearson's Correlation Test.

Table 3 | Chi-square test

		Gender	Age	Qualifications	Employment	Income	Country
CRL airways	Value	0,079	2,78	4,692	1,959	3,831	0,053
	Df (gl)	1	6	5	5	4	3
	P	1	0,836	0,584	0,855	0,429	0,997
Thermalism	Value	0,401	36,376	8,28	31,118	4,758	8,149
	Df (gl)	1	6	5	5	4	4
	P	0,636	**0,000	0,218	**0,000	0,313	*0,043
Pressotherapy	Value	1,806	17,102	6,185	7,44	4,372	0,277
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,311	**0,009	0,403	0,19	0,358	0,964
Electrotherapy	Value	0,415	14,147	6,318	4,122	3,949	0,191
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,801	*0,028	0,389	0,532	0,413	0,979
Thalassotherapy	Value	0,079	5,28	9,784	0,367	11,693	0,053
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	4
	P	1	0,508	0,134	0,996	*0,02	0,997
Reflexology	Value	0,0001	7,833	6,383	6,755	5,239	0,107
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	1	0,251	0,382	0,24	0,264	0,991
Mud treatments	Value	0,08	12,082	15,37	9,06	2,353	2,476
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	4
	P	0,938	*0,06	*0,018	0,107	0,671	0,48
Treatments with salts	Value	2,043	5,217	5,746	19,185	13,543	0,191
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,3	0,516	0,452	**0,002	**0,009	0,979
Seaweed treatments	Value	1,806	10,662	5,368	5,114	0,849	0,227
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,311	0,099	0,498	0,402	0,932	0,964
Aesthetic treatment	Value	0,0001	7,833	14,099	6,027	6,484	0,107
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	1	0,251	**0,029	0,304	0,166	0,991
Hydromassage	Value	0,008	2,893	9,989	3,392	6,906	3,144
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	1	0,822	0,125	0,655	0,141	0,37
Massage	Value	0,028	5,857	9,492	4,446	2,649	2,917
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,985	0,439	0,148	0,487	0,618	0,405
Sauna	Value	0,658	24,069	10,895	16,567	6,79	1,659
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,519	**0,001	0,092	**0,005	0,147	0,646
Turkish bath	Value	0,548	24,375	21,092	14,269	1,778	7,761
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,571	**0,000	**0,002	*0,014	0,776	*0,051
Jet shower	Value	0.910	9,799	4,75	4,039	8,263	2,067
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	0,428	0,133	0,576	0,544	0,082	0,559
Swimming pool course with sea water	Value	0,001	10,476	10,529	1,506	8,402	9,221
	Df (gl)	1	6	6	5	4	3
	P	1	0,106	0,104	0,912	0,078	*0,026

*p< 0,05   **p<0,01

Source: own elaboration based on SPSS outputs

According to table 3 there are statistically significant differences between the question "General motivations for practising health and wellness tourism" and the question "What are the characteristics of the treatments attended as part of your experience" in items such as: Age, employment and country of origin have statistically significant differences, 0.000, 0.000 and 0.043, respectively, with the choice of the "Thermalism" service; Age shows statistically significant differences: (0.009) with the choice of the "Pressotherapy" service, and (0.028) with the choice of the "Electrotherapy" service; Income shows statistically significant differences (0.02) with the choice of the "Thalassotherapy" service; Age and qualifications showed statistically significant differences, 0.06 and 0.018,

respectively, with the choice of the service "Mud treatment"; Employment and income showed statistically significant differences, 0.002 and 0.009, respectively, with the choice of the service "Treatment with salts"; Qualifications show statistically significant differences (0.029) with the choice of the service "Beauty treatment"; Age and employment show statistically significant differences, 0.001 and 0.005, respectively, with the choice of the service "Sauna"; Age, education, employment and country of origin show statistically significant differences, 0.000, 0.002, 0.014 and 0.051, respectively, with the choice of the service "Turkish Bath"; The country of origin shows statistically significant differences (0.026) regarding the choice of the service "Swimming pool with sea water".

To study hypothesis 2 "The most valued aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment influence the degree of satisfaction regarding the trip and thermal experience and the intention to recommend and revisit the destination", the relationships of the questions "What are the most important aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment" with the questions "Satisfaction regarding the trip and thermal experience" and "Regarding this thermal destination" will be analysed, using Pearson's Correlation Test which is a measure of the linear association between quantitative variables and varies between -1 and 1. The closer it is to the extreme values, the greater the association between the variables (Maroco, 2018, p. 22-26). According to Table 4 there are statistically significant differences between the question "Which are the most important aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment" and the question "Satisfaction regarding the trip and thermal experience". About Pearson's correlation, there are very high, moderate/high, and negligible associations between the variables. Very high positive correlation: "Exclusive facilities for adults" with "I believe I made the right decision in choosing this spa" (1). Moderate/high positive correlation: "Quality of treatments" and: "I feel happy to have chosen this spa destination" (0.60), "I believe that the spa offer at the destination is of high quality" (0.555), "I think that my satisfaction with life in general will slightly increase after this trip" (0.591) and "Overall, at the end of this trip I will find that this experience was memorable and that it will enrich my quality of life" (0.557); "Location and Access" and "I believe that the thermal offer in the destination is of high quality" (0.558); "Hygiene and Safety" and "I think that my satisfaction with life in general will slightly increase after this trip" (0.573); "Quality of equipment and infrastructure" and: "I think there is a wide variety of spa services/treatments" (0.557).

Table 4 | Pearson's Correlation Test: "Which are the most important aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment" and "Satisfaction regarding the trip and thermal experience"

Correlations		I think I made the right decision in choosing this spa	I feel happy to have chosen this spa destination	I believe that the thermal offer in the destination is of high quality	I think there is a wide variety of spa services/treatments	I consider that the spa services/programmes offered are carried out by well-prepared professionals	Overall, I think I will be happy to get back from the trip	I think my satisfaction with life in general will increase slightly after this trip	Overall, at the end of this trip I will find that this experience was memorable and will enrich my quality of life (N=201)
Quality of treatments	Pearson Correlation	,419**	,600**	,555**	,455**	,546**	,533**	,591**	,557**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Variety of treatments	Pearson Corr.	,506**	,539**	,518**	,524**	,512**	,554**	,493**	,465**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Location and Access	Pearson Corr.	,414**	,508**	,558**	,505**	,492**	,492**	,476**	,474**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Attendance	Pearson Corr.	,386**	,473**	,487**	,515**	,477**	,538**	,495**	,510**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Offering healthy food options	Pearson Corr.	,479**	,393**	,433**	,465**	,453**	,517**	,450**	,462**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Health and Safety	Pearson Corr.	,230**	,529**	,520**	,500**	,527**	,537**	,573**	,532**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Quality of equipment and infrastructure	Pearson Corr.	,389**	,528**	,535**	,557**	,522**	,550**	,562**	,519**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Multiplicity of activities	Pearson Corr.	,622**	,467**	,487**	,510**	,512**	,524**	,435**	,476**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Price of services	Pearson Corr.	,412**	,322**	,354**	,313**	,397**	,364**	,349**	,327**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Quality of accommodation	Pearson Corr.	,336**	,377**	,331**	,300**	,343**	,324**	,366**	,308**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Brand awareness	Pearson Corr.	,528**	,507**	,534**	,480**	,492**	,495**	,537**	,490**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Exclusive facilities for adults	Pearson Corr.	1	,401**	,411**	,353**	,413**	,428**	,346**	,383**
	P		**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 ends).   *p< 0,05   **p< 0,01

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS outputs

Also, "Overall, I think I will feel happy when I return from the trip" (0.550) and "I think my satisfaction with life in general will slightly increase after this trip" (0.562); "Multiplicity of activities" and "I think I made the right decision in choosing this spa" (0.622).

According to Table 5 there are statistically significant differences between the question "Which are the most important aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment" and the question "Regarding this thermal destination". Regarding Pearson's correlation, there are negligible associations between the variables: "Offer of healthy food options" and "I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family" - 0.299; "Offer of healthy food options" and "I intend to return to this spa destination in the future" - 0.299; "Price of services" and "I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family" - 0.273; "Price of services" and "I will make positive comments about this spa destination to my family and friends" - 0.261; "Price of services" and "I intend to return to this spa in the future" - 0.253; - "Price of services" and "I intend to return to this spa destination in the future" - 0.163; "Quality of accommodation" and "I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family" - 0.247; "Quality of accommodation" and "I will have many stories to tell about this experience" - 0.211; "Quality of accommodation" and "I intend to return to this spa in the future" - 0.210; "Quality of accommodation" and "I intend to return to

this spa destination in the future" - 0.214; "Quality of accommodation" and "This is one of the best spa destinations I have visited to date" - 0.270; "Exclusive facilities for adults" and "I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family" - 0.227; "Exclusive facilities for adults" and "I will make positive comments about this spa destination to my family and friends" - 0.186; "Exclusive facilities for adults" and "I intend to return to this spa in the future" - 0.217; "Exclusive facilities for adults" and "I intend to return to this spa destination in the future" - 0.287. The findings obtained fit with the studies by Pyke et al. (2016), Uysal et al. (2016), Kim et al. (2017), Luo et al. (2017), Hartwell et al. (2018), Chen et al. (2020), and Wang et al. (2020).

For the study of hypothesis 3 "Overall satisfaction with the spa destination significantly influences loyalty to the health and wellness destination", the relationships of the questions "Satisfaction regarding the trip and spa experience" with the question "Regarding this spa destination. . . ." will be analysed, using Pearson's correlation test.

According to Table 6, statistically significant differences were found between the question "Satisfaction regarding the trip and spa experience" and the question "Regarding this spa destination".

Table 5 | Pearson's Correlation Test: "Which are the most important aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment" and "Regarding this thermal destination"

Correlations		I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family	I will make positive comments about this spa destination to my family and friends	I will have many stories to tell about this experience	I intend to return to this spa in the future	I intend to return to this spa destination in the future	This is one of the best spa destinations I have visited so far (N=201)
Quality of treatments	Pearson Correlation	.525**	.453**	.337**	.375**	.384**	.445**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Variety of treatments	Pearson Corr.	.414**	.401**	.352**	.320**	.346**	.490**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Location and Access	Pearson Correlation	.449**	.420**	.395**	.406**	.430**	.502**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Attendance	Pearson Correlation	.437**	.477**	.419**	.431**	.394**	.523**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Offering healthy food options	Pearson Correlation	.299**	.360**	.401**	.364**	.299**	.495**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Health and Safety	Pearson Correlation	.481**	.532**	.337**	.453**	.420**	.491**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Quality of equipment and infrastructure	Pearson Correlation	.415**	.378**	.340**	.320**	.303**	.440**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Multiplicity of activities	Pearson Correlation	.325**	.368**	.477**	.359**	.339**	.529**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Price of services	Pearson Correlation	.273**	.261**	.349**	.253**	.163*	.351**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	*.021	**.000
Quality of accommodation	Pearson Correlation	.247**	.321**	.211**	.210**	.214**	.270**
	P	**.000	**.000	*.003	*.003	*.002	**.000
Brand awareness	Pearson Correlation	.448**	.458**	.348**	.446**	.489**	.514**
	P	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000	**.000
Exclusive facilities for adults	Pearson Corr.	.227**	.186**	.367**	.217**	.287**	.417**
	P	**.001	*.008	**.000	*.002	**.000	**.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 extremities).

*p< 0,05   **p< 0,01

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS outputs

Table 6 | Pearson's Correlation Test: "Satisfaction regarding the trip and spa experience" and "Regarding this spa destination…"

Correlations		I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family	I will make positive comments about this spa destination to my family and friends	I will have many stories to tell about this experience	I intend to return to this spa in the future	I intend to return to this spa destination in the future	This is one of the best spa destinations I have visited so far N= 201
I think I made the right decision in choosing this spa	Pearson Correlation	,700*	,629**	,479**	,634**	,611**	,626**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
I feel happy to have chosen this spa destination	Pearson Correlation	,677**	,613**	,456**	,599**	,575**	,672**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
I believe that the thermal offer in the destination is of high quality	Pearson Correlation	,744**	,727**	,578**	,677**	,657**	,757**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
I think there is a wide variety of spa services/treatments	Pearson Correlation	,664**	,668**	,462**	,606**	,555**	,703**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
I consider that the spa services/programmes offered are carried out by well-prepared professionals	Pearson Correlation	,674**	,706**	,472**	,597**	,580**	,747**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Overall, I think I will be happy to get back from the trip	Pearson Correlation	,697**	,665**	,449**	,600**	,554**	,663**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
I think my satisfaction with life in general will increase slightly after this trip	Pearson Correlation	,624**	,657**	,508**	,544**	,484**	,635**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000
Overall, at the end of this trip I will find that this experience was memorable and will enrich my quality of life	Pearson Correlation	,724**	,694**	,495**	,611**	,576**	,696**
	P	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000	**,000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 ends).

*p< 0,05   **p< 0,01

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS outputs

About Pearson's correlation, there are high/moderate associations between the variables in all items, except for the item "I will have many stories to tell about this experience". High positive correlation: "I believe I made the right decision in choosing this spa" and "I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family" (0.700); "I believe the spa offer at the destination is of high quality" and "I will recommend this spa destination to my friends and family" (0.744); "I believe the spa offer at the destination is of high quality" and "I will make positive comments about this spa destination to my family and friends" - (0.727); "I believe that the thermal offer in the destination is of high quality" and "This is one of the best thermal destinations I have visited so far" (0.757); "I consider that there is a great variety of thermal services/treatments" and "This is one of the best thermal destinations I have visited so far" (0.703); "I consider that the spa services/programmes offered are performed by well-prepared professionals" and "I will make positive comments about this spa destination to my family and friends" (0.706); "I consider that the thermal services/programmes offered are performed by well-prepared professionals" and "This is one of the best thermal destinations I have visited so far" 0.747); "Overall, at the end of this trip I will find that this experience was memorable and will enrich my quality of life" and "I will recommend this thermal destination to my friends and family" (0.724).

The findings obtained are consistent with the studies by Pyke et al. (2016), Uysal et al. (2016), Hartwell et al. (2018), Chen et al. (2020), and Wang et al. (2020).

5. Conclusion

The research established some previous objectives. The first objective was to understand the relationship between the services provided and the sociodemographic profile of spa visitors in the North and Centre regions of Portugal. This objective gave rise to Research Hypothesis 1: The spa users' socio-demographic profile influences the choice of the services provided. The relationship between the sociodemographic profile of spa-goers and the choice of the services provided is a subject with scarce literature, which was considered relevant. Therefore, it was pertinent to study this hypothesis undertaking an innovative research proposal.

Research Hypothesis 1 (H1) concluded that: Age, employment and country of origin influence the choice of "Thermalism" service; Age influences the choice of "Pressotherapy" and "Electrotherapy" service; Income influences the choice of "Thalassotherapy" service; Age and qualifications influence the choice of "Mud treatment" service; Employment and income influence choice of "Salt treatment" service; Age and employment influence the choice of "Sauna" service; Age, education, employment and country of origin influence the choice of "Turkish bath" service; Country of origin influences the choice of "Swimming pool with sea water" service. Hypothesis H1 was accepted.

The second research objective was "To evaluate the degree of satisfaction regarding the thermal offer (comparing the dynamics of thermal offer and demand in the North and Centre of Portugal)", from which Hypothesis 2 was proposed: The most valued aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment influence the degree of satisfaction regarding the thermal trip and experience and the intention to recommend and revisit the destination. According to the analysis of the dimensions it is possible to state that the most valued aspects in the selection of the thermal establishment influence the degree of satisfaction regarding the trip and thermal experience and the intention to recommend and revisit the destination. More specifically, the following dimensions: exclusive facilities for adults; quality of treatments; location and

access, hygiene and safety, quality of equipment, infrastructures, and multiplicity of activities. H2 hypothesis was confirmed.

According to the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (2007 and 2013-2015) and the strategies for tourism (2017-2027), health and wellness tourism has become a widespread concept being sought after by those who, in addition to several treatments, require an environment that simultaneously provides a sense of relaxation and comfort, with the aim of obtaining maximum satisfaction during the experience. There is a positive relationship between travel motivation and expectations of local tourists' spa facility services (Ayaz and Dag, 2017). Tourism experiences and activities have a significant effect on tourists' overall life satisfaction, i.e. tourists' experiences and activities tend to contribute to affect positively in several life domains such as family life, social life, leisure life, cultural life, among others (Uysal et al., 2016).

As a last research objective, the present study proposed to "Evaluate the degree of satisfaction and loyalty towards the visited spa destination", giving rise to research hypothesis 3: Overall satisfaction with the spa destination significantly influences loyalty to the health and wellness destination. In particular, the relationships of the following dimensions confirm hypothesis 3:

> Spa guests who believe they made the right decision in choosing the spa and that, overall, the experience was memorable and will enrich their lives, recommended the spa destination to friends and family.

> Holidaymakers who believe that the spa offer in the destination is of high quality, will recommend the spa destination to friends and family, make positive comments about this spa destination to them and feel that it was one of the best spa destinations they have ever visited.

> Holidaymakers who consider that the spa

services/programmes offered are carried out by well-prepared professionals, will make positive comments about this spa destination to family and friends and will feel that it was one of the best spa destinations they have ever visited.

> Spa guests who consider that there is a wide variety of spa services/treatments will feel that the spa destination is one of the best they have ever visited.

A positive and satisfactory experience is crucial so that those who experience a health and wellness tourism service can praise it to others and thus encourage them to seek the same experience (Loureiro et al., 2013). A satisfying tourism experience depends on the tourist's intentions, mood, and adaptability, but also on the skills and professionalism of the wellness team to interpret and meet the visitor's needs. Wang et al. (2020), confirm that the effect of destination fascination and attachment on improving subjective well-being, create effects of subjective well-being and destination attachment on increasing destination loyalty. Subjective well-being and destination attachment fully mediate the effects of destination fascination and loyalty. Product performance, affective experiences and satisfaction are significantly associated with loyalty (Wang et al., 2020). Lourenço (2012) states that the levels of satisfaction and loyalty of spa guests are evidenced through statements such as "Coming to these spas has been a good experience" and "Intention to recommend". Also, the higher the satisfaction with the services of the hot springs, the greater the loyalty of the users. To understand that the socio-demographic profile influences not only the motivations of the spa users, but also the choice of the services offered by the spas, which is an important aspect that influences the operations, the creation of new spa services, the marketing, and its strategy, adapted to target markets with different interests and motiva-

tions. Age is an important factor when considering the treatments' choice such as thermalism, pressotherapy, electrotherapy, mud treatment, sauna, and Turkish bath. This result is a starting point to highlight the knowledge towards the customer and promote an adaptation, thus improving these treatments with new products or services. From the point of view of the spa hotel management, as well as the marketing department, the study inserts an important component which can contribute to the improvement of the services' quality of the spa establishment. Contributions are made concerning the quality and variety of treatments, infrastructures, price, location, access, and customer service. This research has concluded that these characteristics influence the degree of satisfaction regarding the trip and spa experience and the intention to recommend and revisit the destination. The issue of consumer behaviour is fundamental to sustain all marketing activities carried out with the purpose of developing, promoting, and selling tourism products (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). The fact that most of the respondents use thermal spas with their couple should be considered in the marketing strategies of thermal hotels, designing, and proposing health and wellness products aimed at couples, complementing, eventually, with other offers at the destination, considering gastronomy, wine tourism and nature tourism areas, among others.

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