



The Wellness Stew

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Abstract

This research examines the factors that motivate tourists to go on a wellness holiday. Even though the literature provides knowledge regarding tourist motivation in relation to spa and wellness, but this study seeks to enrich it. The study will be conducted at a wellness resort from an Eastern European country, Romania. The research will aim to offer answers to two research questions:

What motivates tourists to visit a wellness resort?

What are the motivational differences behind various age groups for visiting a wellness resort?

The first question is the main question of the research. The second question is asked in order to study more in-depth the tourist motivations in relation to spa and wellness. The research is a qualitative study which was conducted under the social constructivist paradigm.

The data gathered regarding the topic was firstly made through reviewing the literature. Afterwards, the authors went on a study trip to Romania where primary data was gathered through interviewing tourists which were on a holiday at a wellness resort. This data was furtherly used in order to be analysed so that patterns among visitor motivation regarding spa and wellness tourism could be identified.

The findings conclude that the main motivational factors that push a tourist towards visiting a wellness destination are: desire for relaxation, maintain health and socialising. The various distinct attributes of a wellness resort, such as the thermal baths and variety of facilities can act as pull factors. The analysis showed that uniqueness in various services such as the nocturnal baths or sauna programs with sauna master, medical centre, variety of treatments, make the destination attractive for the ones who are interested in this kind of services.

The theory chosen to analyse the findings was be the motivational theory of the push and pull factors. The analysis showed that tourists are motivated to visit a wellness resort if their needs are well catered by the services present at the destination. The intrinsic reasons why tourists expressed their needs to go to a wellness resort were mainly shaped by the desire to improve their health, to socialize or to escape social contexts. On the other hand, the analysis revealed

that tourists are prone to be “pulled” to the destination by the unique destination attributes, such as the presence of thermal baths in the case of this project.

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1.0 Introduction

Wellness is a term which was popularized in the modern times, but in fact has ancient roots (Global Wellness Institute 2016: online). For instance, *Ayurveda* (practised between 3,000 - 1,500 BC in the ancient Hindu culture) was a “holistic system” that aimed to harmonise the “body, the mind and spirit” with the purpose of preventing diseases (Global Wellness Institute 2016: online). Other cultures had their own way of practising wellness in the ancient times. The TCM (*Traditional Chinese Medicine*) (3,000 - 2,000 BC), the ancient Greek culture (500 BC) and ancient Roman medicine (50 BC) also emphasized on preventing illness (Global Wellness Institute 2016: online). The western ancient cultures (the Romans and Greeks) shared a main illness belief: that it was produced by “diet and lifestyle” and therefore aimed to produce a safe public health system (such as the aqueducts and supervised public baths in Ancient Rome) (Global Wellness Institute 2016: online). On the other hand, the Eastern ancient cultures (represented by the Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Hindu beliefs) focused on holistic approaches (such as yoga, meditation, acupuncture, promoting an inner harmony) which would prevent illnesses (Global Wellness Institute 2016: online). Drawing a line, ancient cultures had their different ways of practising wellness, but all focused on an aspect: the prevention of diseases and improving health. Nowadays, through the development of modern transportation and through globalization, the world has access to various wellness methods which will be further described. Thus, the curiosity in this domain about why people nowadays engage in wellness.

Health and wellness-oriented activities are becoming more and more popular among people from different regions, world-wide (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017). The authors of this master thesis considered interesting to research if people who visit a certain destination have the same motivation to engage in wellness activities as the tourists who were studied so far throughout literature: Mak, Wong and Chang (2009), Crompton (1979) Monteson and Singer (2004), Kucukusta and Guille (2014) and others; and also to investigate if there are differences between various tourists who have different characteristics. The idea had the basis in the fact that every person is unique in his way, and the needs and wants of individuals vary from one person to another. Another factor which brought up our interest in the subject is the visible development of wellness tourism, due to a strong interest in health and well-being (Yeoman, 2008). Thusly, nowadays people emphasize on keeping themselves fit and healthy.

This lifestyle is emerged in the concept of wellness, which is described as the actions of a person, such as the way one eats, exercises, the way one deals with stress, how one sees and feels in the surrounding or living and working environment and how one controls these actions in order to keep himself healthy and keep working for an even more healthful way of living (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017). As it is a complex concept, which will be further discussed, the research project focuses its attention on wellness and spa tourists from a chosen destination in Romania, due to the fact that it offers a number of services which includes health and wellness packages, and also offers thermal treatments.

It is important to mention that spa is one of the fastest growing sectors of the health and wellness tourism (McNeil and Ragins, 2005). The term spa comes from the Latin expression *salus per aqua*, which means “*healing through water*” (Frost, 2004). The term also has origins from a small town in Belgium, named Spa, which had thermal curative springs that were discovered in the 14th century (Van Tubergen & Van der Linden, 2002). Looking at the modern-day spa, it is now a “*place devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit*” (International Spa Association, 2015). A spa is considered to *be a place with a mineral spring which has health-giving proprieties, and a commercial establishment offering health and beauty treatment through such means as steam baths, exercise equipment, and massage.* (Oxford Dictionary, 2017).

The topic of spa will be further discussed in the following pages, but the reason why it is mentioned now is to gain a better understand that the specific wellness centre that is considered for the case study has also the attributes of a spa and because spa is part of the wellness tourism as mentioned before. Therefore, in order to clarify these two concepts, a few general differences will be mentioned: wellness centres have a number of services that are based on medical treatments, in comparison to spas which are considered spots for relaxation. Furthermore, wellness services have their core services based in various types of massages, while spas focus their services on cosmetic treatments or body treatments. In other words, what is in connection to body pampering is mainly connected to spas (Stanciulescu and Diaconescu (2015). The following figure will contain a summarization of the health tourism, spa tourism and wellness tourism. It is important to mention the differences in order to gain a better understanding regarding the overall topic of wellness tourism.

Health / Spa Tourism	Spa Tourism	Wellness Tourism
Provision of health facilities, using the country's natural resources, especially mineral water and climate. Health tourism refers to those clients with medical conditions who travel to experience healing therapies.	Spa tourism is widely recognized as a basic element of health and wellness movement, covering a wide spectrum of holistic curative and preventive activities.	Wellness can be defined as a state of balance - body, spirit and mind - including holistic aspects as self-responsibility, care for physical condition and beauty, healthy eating, relaxation, mental activity and sensitivity to the environment, as fundamentals. Wellness is also seen as a way of life that aims to create a healthy body, spirit and mind by positive interventions based on the knowledge acquired. A person looking for a wellness trip is generally healthy, interested in

Figure 1: Concept differentiation. Adapted after Stanciulescu and Diaconescu (2015)

Wellness tourism appears to be a growing niche market in the hospitality and tourism industry, therefore it is important to understand the wellness tourists, starting from their motivation to their preferences in terms of services and products (Voigt, 2017). One of the existing trends in today's era is health awareness, which is about how one views, reacts, concerns about personal health, lifestyle, fitness, which leads to a bigger demand in health-related holidays or activities (Chon and Singh, 1995). This trend is on a continuous rise, as an increasing number of people travel for health reasons to various centres which cater to their needs (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017).

As an increasing number of people travel and require services in connection to their health and well-being, we, as researchers find it intriguing to better understand their motivation for doing so. Motivation is a wide concept that can be found in physiological, psychological or philosophical studies (Petri & Govern, 2004: 3-14). This thesis aims to approach it from the tourism perspective. In tourism, it has been used for understanding people's beliefs, opinions and especially behaviour, specifically in connection to their choices when acquiring goods or services (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017). Crompton (1979) also considered that motivations are used in order to better understand the behaviour of tourists. Understanding tourist motivation also helps the tourism providers to better cater the needs of their visitors, and develop their product or service according to the demand (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017).

Understanding the motivations behind the profile of a wellness tourist is a complex task. Pesonen et al. (2011:311) stated that this is still an unexplored field of study, because there is not a high amount of data related to the benefits desired by the well-being tourists. According to the research of Kelly (2015), their main motivation was “*to unwind and de-stress*” (Kelly,2015:5), succeeded by the motivation regarding health, spiritual connection, which are all followed by social reasons. Other studies found that the main factors which motivate tourists to practice wellness tourism are escapism, the need of personal space, or desire to lower quotidian stress (McNeil and Ragins, 2004).

1.1 Research Question

The tourists’ motivations to visit a given destination intrigued the authors of this thesis. With an aim to be innovative and further explore the interconnection between wellness, spa and tourists’ motivation, ideas which were previously explored in the introduction chapter concluded as the following problem formulation:

What motivates tourists to visit a wellness resort?

A research sub-question was contextualised as:

What are the motivational differences behind various age groups for visiting a wellness resort?

The reason why a specific wellness resort will be chosen as the study case of this thesis is embodied by the fact that the authors had access to conduct interviews with the wellness centre’s visitors and staff. In the same vein, it was found important to attribute the guest’s motivation to a specific resort as to further explore and understand how can the centre improve itself. Moreover, a case study is considered to be part of the contextual information which can be placed around the research question and around which research can be made. The authors of this thesis considered relevant regarding wellness experiences to also study whether tourism motivation varies in terms of different age groups.

1.1.2 Introduction to the study case

Due to an accentuation in the past decade of a general health decline resembled by elevated stress-levels, lack of dedicated personal time or a chaotic way of living (Douglas, 2001; Pollock & Williams, 2000; Smith & Puczko, 2008), many people have been concerned about improving their general health state and maintaining it. Nowadays, tourists feel encouraged to search for havens where not only they can “forget” about their livelihood, but also improve their general health by preventing diseases. Several destinations promote their regular tourist services along their curative health facilities (Goodrich & Goodrich, 1987). It can be said that in the past decade there exists a tendency for tourists to deliberately travel for health reasons (Ross, 2006).

Furthermore, Benner, King and Milner (2004) suggested that “any pleasure-oriented tourism which involves an element of stress relief could be a form of health tourism.” (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017:2). Wellness tourism is a subsector of health tourism, as spa sector belongs to wellness and health tourism (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017:2). The spa sector is also on the rise, due to the high interest people place on improving their health and well-being, and is considered more of a necessity than a luxury (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017). Wellness is very much adapted to regional and local traditions or cultures. Depending on what resources are used, health and wellness tourism progressed (Smith and Puczko, 2009). This is an interesting point of view which will be further looked at during the project, as the selected destination has also its specific wellness properties which can be found only in few places within the country.

1.1.3 The wellness centre as study case

This project report aims to explore the motivations of people that engage in wellness tourism, with a focus on their holiday experiences and activities. In order to do so, we chose to further explore the motivation of people who engage in wellness tourism in relation to a specific wellness resort. It is very important to mention that the real name of the resort will be changed in order to provide anonymity. This master thesis is not interested in promoting it, and the purpose of the thesis is not to share the information found with the administration of the wellness centre (de Vaus, 2012: 192-193).

Aqua Lung is a wellness resort located in an Eastern-European country, Romania and is very close to the Hungarian border and 25 km from the Ukraine Border.

The organization managing the wellness resort also includes full touristic packages which include accommodation, transfer to the wellness centre and entrance tickets to the resort, including activities and experiences that will give the visitor a “taste” of the region (Aqua Star: online, 2017).

The resort offers a range of services, starting from various wellness packages to saunas, restaurant, sports centre, aqua park and other similar in this category (Aqua Star: online, 2017). The visitors can benefit from the wellness facilities in order to rejuvenate, relax (but not only physically, but also spiritually and mentally (Aqua Star: online,2017). The wellness centre provides various services, such as: infrared sauna, salty sauna, Finnish sauna, steam bath sauna (Hammam), different types of medical procedures, physiotherapy, kineto-therapy, hydro-massages, Kinesis Tape, or mud-packing, (Aqua Star: online,2017).

Tourists also have at the opportunity to access numerous water-based services or procedures, and one important aspect is that they have at their disposal natural thermal spring waters, which has a lot of medical benefits for the body and mind (Aqua Star: online,2017).

1.1.4 Thermal waters

The reason why thermal tourism is included in the project report is because the study case resort includes facilities regarding thermal baths. Thermal tourism is a type of wellness tourism which can be considered to be both therapeutic and leisure tourism (Smith and Puczkó, 2009). The emphasis is being made on the motives of relaxation and on cure, as the thermal baths have various beneficial curative and restorative effects (Smith and Puczkó, 2009). Numerous diseases can be prevented and both cured, because thermal waters are rich in various minerals depending on their springs. For instance, thermal waters (which are rich in chloro-sodic, bicarbonate, and sulphurous minerals) are also agents in the recovery processes for gynaecological and skin illnesses, or are used as treatments for treating locomotors, or articular system disorders (Berlescu, 1982). It is worth mentioning that various thermal springs have different minerals, but as previously mentioned, visitors can treat diseases whilst practising a wellness tourism based on thermal waters services included at the destination.

1.2 Structure of the project

The master thesis is divided in six chapters. The first one is represented by the introduction. The second chapter will present an extensive review of previously conducted studies about wellness tourism. By reviewing other studies, new understandings about how other researchers approached the topic of tourist motivation in terms of wellness tourism will be gained. Based on the literature review, the third chapter will introduce the theoretical approach of this master thesis. This chapter will be divided in two sub-chapters: motivation theories and push and pull factors. In the fourth chapter, the methodology which was chosen for the thesis will be detailed. The chapter will begin with a research design, followed by the paradigmatic approach chosen in order to conduct the research. The data collection methods which are used in order to conduct the research will be also presented. The fifth chapter represents an in-depth analysis of the collected data. The analysis will be done by following the theoretical lenses of the push and pull factors and their sub-factors. The findings will be critically evaluated and also connected to other theoretical studies. The sixth and final chapter includes the conclusion of the master thesis. The meanings subtracted from the findings will be showed in order to present an answer to the research question and sub-question. Lastly, this final chapter will also include two sub-chapters. One is related to what contributions to the existent literature the research adds and the second is about other lines of research the study could have taken.

2. Literature review

The following pages will contain a literature review of other studies conducted in relation to wellness and spa tourism considering the motivation of tourists for engaging in spa and wellness activities. The wellness tourism and spa tourism will be discussed in a more detailed manner. This is important for the research project because factors of comparison are needed in order to have a better understanding of the topic in discussion. In the analysis chapter the literature from this chapter will be connected to the findings from the data collected.

2.1 Wellness tourism

Many people are looking for different ways to relax, re-energize, rejuvenate themselves and escape the daily routine (Knocul N., 2012). Within the tourism industry, these behaviours are under the label of “wellness tourism” (Knocul N., 2012). Worldwide, there is an increasing number of people who are travelling to various destinations that have wellness facilities (Knocul N., 2012). Therefore, the wellness concept is an interesting and ambiguous multi-faceted topic.

Moreover, we all live in an era of a continuous change, which influences people's attitudes, behaviour and general lifestyle (Knocul N., 2012). There are also changes in the social discontent and a fall in the happiness index (Knocul N., 2012). With regards to finding ways and solutions to social problems such as economic decline, unemployment, and other issues such as stress, dissatisfaction, depression, the tourism industry caters refuge in form of services that can relax the body, the mind and the soul (Knocul N., 2012).

The actors from the tourism industry have been developing and offering various wellness services such as spa and health treatments, occupational health therapy, beauty treatments, sports facilities and activities, spiritual activities, massages, rehabilitation programs, hydrotherapy and many more (Knocul N., 2012).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the past decade, people have been attracted by health and wellness activities. Therefore, tourism providers have made interesting wellness packages in specialized areas (Knocul N., 2012). With the rise of new wellness destinations, new wellness services are also being developed. Therefore, the potential customers have a wide range of services and facilities to choose from.

Throughout the literature, the concept of wellness tourism is used in various ambiguous ways (Voigt et al., 2011). Concepts like “health Tourism, medical Tourism and wellness tourism” are commonly used but adapted to different contexts (Voigt et al., 2011). However, it is considered that “health tourism” is used *“as a comprehensive umbrella term that subsumes medical and wellness tourism”* (Voigt et al., 2011:17). Judging by Muller and Lanz Kaufmann’s research, medical tourists are interested in curing an already existing issue, while wellness tourists are interested in maintaining and strengthening their health and well-

being (Muller and Lanz Kaufmann in Voigt et al., 2011). The latter difference is maintained by various authors throughout tourism literature (Henderson, 2004; Muller and Lanz Kaufmann, 2001; Nahrstedt, 2004; Puczko' and Bacharov, 2006; Smith and Puczko'; 2008; Voigt, 2010).

According to Smith and Puczko (2009), health tourism is divided into two important branches: *medical tourism* and *wellness tourism*. Depending on the reason and type of treatment one receives when going to a spa and/or wellness centre, the services fall under the sector of health tourism primarily. Within the tourism literature, many studies have been made in connection to health tourism, but with a focus on medical tourism, and not so extended in terms of wellness and spa (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017). Even more, most of the studies are focused on the marketing, development and positioning of the wellness facilities, so basically the importance was merely given to the supply segment, and not so much on the demand segment (Azman, Chan and Kim, 2017).

The authors of this thesis consider that it is important to look at definitions in connection to health tourism, as this research is interested in the activities and experiences of the consumers. Thus, Hall (1992) views health tourism in connection to tourism activities, specifically: "*sun and fun activities; engaging healthy activities; travel for sauna, massage, , medical treatment*" (Hall, 1992:151).

According to Goodrich and Goodrich, a definition of health tourism is "*an attempt on the part of a tourist facility to attract tourists by deliberately promoting its health-care services and facilities, in addition to its regular amenities. These health care services may include medical examinations by qualified doctors and nurses at the resort or hotel, special diets, acupuncture, trans-vital injections, vitamin complex intakes, special medical treatments for various diseases such as arthritis, and herbal medicines*" (Goodrich and Goodrich (1987 :217). Kaspar (1996) gives a slightly different version of the health tourism definition "*the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a change in location and residence by people in order to promote, stabilize and, as appropriate, restore physical, mental and social well-being while using health services for whom the place where they are staying is neither their principal nor permanent place of residence or work*" (Kaspar, 1996:7)

There is a difference between health and wellness. Considering the statement of Muller and Kaufmann, wellness tourism is a subcategory of health tourism. Dunn (1959) opinions that wellness is a “*state of health, which comprises an overall sense of well-being and sees a person as consisting body, mind and spirit*” (Knocul N., 2012:3).

There is a difference between health tourism and wellness. Wellness is about finding balance and harmony between the body, the mind the and soul, also to strengthen biological health, and about having a certain lifestyle that is healthy for one. Therefore, wellness is not related to diseases disease or such serious health problems (Knocul N., 2012).

The concept of wellness is the “*co-product of the awareness of sound health, well-being and happiness*” (Knocul N., 2012: 6). Wellness can also be a process where one is searching for self-well-being, which includes healthy nutrition, beauty care, physical fitness, meditation, education, mental activity, and other elements that combined give an overall state of positive approach to life, a holistic well-being (Knocul N., 2012). Thus, this holistic approach underlines that wellness is a more complex concept, in which health is part of.

Smith and Pczko (2009) discuss the basis of holistic tourism in connection to wellness, which is also the framework of health tourism. People are acknowledging that for a better and longer life, and general happiness, it is vital to dedicate time to health, sport and wellness activities (Knocul N., 2012). Regarding the article of Knocul N (2012), the concept of wellness is on the rise, and a symbol of future trends, as it is rapidly becoming a part of the modern tourist’s lifestyle.

The concept of wellness has been defined from various points of view and according to different contexts (Kelly and Smith, 2008). Most of the research made in connection to wellness is focused on body, mind and spirit and not so much on the holistic well-being (Mintel, 2007).

In connection to the latter statement, holistic wellness tourism is strongly connected to places in which people can engage in different activities that have that target to balance the three elements mentioned above: the body, the mind and the spirit (Kelly, 2015). In such places people go to regain or maintain good health, spiritual purpose and rejuvenation (Kelly, 2015).

In the recent years, there has been an increased demand in wellness services, thus the growth of wellness centres, spas, retreats and alternative therapies (House of Lords Report, 2000).

Wellness has different meanings to different people. For instance, to some individuals it is about a spiritual journey, whilst to others it is about self-development and finding the balance between the elements of self. Wellness can also be about cosmetic purpose-which improves self image and psychological well-being (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006).

Authors now believe that wellness is not only about the physical nature of the body, even if we mention spas, massage, hydrotherapy, because there is a psychological dimension to those experiences (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006).

Myers, Sweeney and Witmer (2005: online) state that wellness is “*a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which the body, the mind and the spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community*”. It seems that most of the definitions mention about the harmony of the three elements and the holistic well-being, but what is interesting is that we can see a pattern after reading various definitions and apparently, most of them are context bounded. It is intriguing to find out what the present-day wellness tourism experience is about, as the studies show that it is a mix of physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006). This leads to the following idea in which wellness is not only a passive way of escaping the real world, but also a way in which tourists actively look for enhanced well-being (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006). Regarding this research, it will be interesting to better understand how various tourists are driven by the need to engage in different activities, therefore seeing the motivation out of their contexts. Moreover, the wellness resort where the research is conducted also offers a variety of facilities and services that can both please the tastes of active and passive wellness visitors.

2.1.1 The wellness tourist

It is important to not only look at the concept of wellness, but also at the wellness tourists in order to see who they are and what is their motivation to engage in wellness activities. According to literature, the general stereotype of a wellness tourist is that he or she is interested in achieving an overall sense of well-being. For some it may be stress relief or

maintain health, while for others changing their lifestyles towards a healthier one (Kelly, 2015). Mehmetoglu (2004) argue his angle on the matter, and feels that is important to look at psychographics, not only at socio-demographics to understand the tourist's philosophies and values.

The most part of the wellness tourist group is based on women, with an emphasis on spa visitors (Smith and Puckzo, 2008), which travel alone or in groups and are in the mid-30s or 40s, and belong to an education and income group that is higher than average, and are particularly interested in short visits, ranging from one to a few days. This idea is supported by other researchers, which state that the main market for wellness tourism are women in their late 30s to 50s (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006). The research made on the topic suggests that it will a deal of great importance that in future time to engage other market other than female, and focus also on men and younger people (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006). But, in order to make this possible it is suggested that the wellness centres should promote their services and activities in such ways that it will also attract the other gender (Kelly K. and Smith M., 2006).

2.1 Tourist motivation in spa and wellness

In this chapter, the research will focus on the motivations and characteristics of tourists who engage in wellness and spa activities, by considering different studies conducted by various researchers. The reason is to find patterns between the studies, and compare them to our findings in the analysis chapter.

Firstly, other studies and their conclusions will be investigated. The first relevant example is a research made by Mak, Wong and Chang (2009) where they examined which are the factors that motivate tourists to engage in spa activities. Moreover, they also scrutinized their socio-demographic characteristics and their views in connection to the overall spa experience.

The study of Mak, Wong and Chang (2009) was made by adopting a qualitative and quantitative approach, more exactly having a focus group interview of six participants , which was followed by a questionnaire which had a basis in the findings from the interview, together with a review of past literature. Considering this master thesis aims to study a similar matter, it is important for our research to better understand their study. According to Gitelson

and Kerstetter (1990), the socio-demographic characteristics have a certain degree of influence over tourist motivation. For example, the age and marital status impacts the motivation of travellers. Moreover, as Uysal *et. al.* (1990) argue, for travellers who are single it is more important to “have fun” or “to be entertained” in comparison to the married couples which find that is more important to “spend time with someone special” and to experience a “family togetherness” (Mak, Wong and Chang , 2009: 188). As various age groups will be analysed within this study and, this information will be useful in the following chapters.

When investigating the spa experience of tourists, the cultural and social background of the spa-goers has a significant influence on their spa experiences and motivations. This idea is also underlined by Miller (1996) and Douglas (2001) which mention that European spa-goers have the perspective of the spa experience as primarily curative and therapeutic (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009)

The findings within the study of Mak, Wong and Chang (2009) on the motivation and characteristics of the Asian spa-goers will be discussed in the following paragraphs. In connection to the age groups of the study, the majority of respondents were situated between 26-33 years old, followed by the age group of 34-42 years old (out of a total of 302 responses of the survey). One third of the participants had a master’s degree, and another one third had a bachelor degree (Mak, Wong and Chang ,2009). In their study the majority of people were single, followed by married couples with children, and more than half of the total respondents answered that they had visited a spa destination up to five times in the last two years. Within the Asian context, mineral spring spas’ which have therapeutic proprieties are very popular among their travellers (Mak, Wong and Chang ,2009).

As we briefly understood the ways socio-demographics impact the motivations of wellness and spa tourists, the research will continue on better understanding their perceptions of the spa experience. This is relevant for the present study, because it might be further analysed if motivations of other tourists from various geographical regions are similar to the ones of the Eastern Europeans.

According to Mak, Wong and Chang (2009) and their findings, the majority (97.4%) felt that a spa was the place for “relaxation”. Thusly, most of the travellers focused on the following services while at the spa destination: “*pampering*”, “*beauty treatments*”, and “*enchantment of overall health*” (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 190). Due to Hong Kong ‘s

living conditions, the majority's main purpose for going to spa is to unwind and relax, to find the inner balance and harmony (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009).

The most important motivating factors for tourists to go on a spa holiday identified by the research were (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 192):

1. *"To seek physical relaxation"*
2. *To pamper oneself*
3. *To reward oneself for working hard*
4. *To seek mental peacefulness*
5. *To get away from the pressures of work and social life"*

(Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 192).

These results match the previous statements which specified that spas are a place for "relaxation and pampering" (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 192). Out of the 21 motivating factors used in questionnaire, they underlined only the ones which had a higher value of responses. Therefore, five important motivations why tourists go on a spa holiday appeared: *"friendship and kinship"*, *"health and beauty"*, *"self-reward and indulgence"*, *"relaxation and relief"* and *"escape"* (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 193).

Out of the five factors, *"relaxation and relief"* is considered the most important motivating factor. It included items such as *"seek physical relaxation"* and *"seek relief for a medical condition"* (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 193). *"Escape"* was the second most important motivational factor. This factor was also argued by Iso-Ahola's (1980, 1982) to be important in the escape-seeking theory. The theory mentioned that spa-goers are motivated by the "escape" force when they are experiencing overstimulation in their life. Therefore, they have the need to escape their daily world routine (for example failures, personal problems, etc.) which can be a reflection of the life-style in Hong Kong (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 193).

The third most important factor is concluded to be the "self-reward and indulgence", followed by the "health and beauty" factor which includes items such as "improve overall health, lose weight, enhance physical attractiveness, rejuvenate one's appearance" (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009: 193). The fifth factor "friendship and kinship" referred to "spend time with family and friends, foster friendship ties, enhance family bonding" concluding that it is important for the spa goers to have the spa experience with friends and family (Mak, Wong

and Chang, 2009: 193). The study also indicated that the age group between 28-25 years was more influenced by the factor “escape” than the age group of 43 years and above (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009). These findings are highly relevant for this research project because the main topic is related to the motivation of tourists for going on a wellness holiday across various age groups. The information provided in this section will be compared with the findings of the project.

As a final reflection to this study, the findings state that the motivation factors for the Hong Kong spa goers are a combination of relaxation, self-reward and health (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009), which are in contrast with European spa-goers which mainly engage in spa experience for health and therapeutic reasons (Miller, 1996, Douglas, 2001), while American visitors perceive the spa experience as a way for self-rewarding (Kaspar, 1990, ISPA, 2006)

2.2 Spa Tourism

Regarding spa tourism, it is also important for this research to better understand what other studies found in connection to the motives of wellness tourists regarding visiting spa destinations. One study of such kind is Dimitrovski's and Todorovic's (2015). Before looking at how the study was made and which were its findings, the following lines will contain a brief description of the spa destination. Many tourists express a need to find a place where they engage in processes related to healing and rehabilitation through natural, thermal and mineral springs (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). European spa services are mainly focused on a general health improve of the tourists, in comparison to the US spa services which incline towards the promotion of a healthy lifestyle (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). In today's world, spas are a place where one can improve health and appearance, can eliminate stress, can meet other people and socialize (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). Thus, spa, according to Koh, Yoo, & Boger (2010) includes relaxation, treatment, satisfaction, rehabilitation and socialization.

Within the study of Dimitrovski and Todorovic (2015), an interesting outcome that is mentioned in connection to wellness tourism, is represented by the fact that there is such a demand for this type of tourism due to society's pressure of one having the perfect appearance and exposing an eternal youth (Henderson, 2003; Smith & Puczko, 2008).

Considering that this research is also investigating the motivations of tourists to visit a wellness destination, the following idea is important. According to King (2012), tourists do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of spa, or spa tourism, because they have their attention focused on maintaining their health, or preventing disease. They cannot understand how spa and wellness are interconnected. Everything that is a spa service is a part of wellness tourism (Muller and Kaufmann, 2001).

Wellness tourism is on the rise due to the fact that people ranging from middle and upper classes are becoming aware of the importance of maintaining their health while living in a stressful work environment (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). “Wellness guests require a comprehensive package of services which includes taking care of physical fitness and beauty, healthy nutrition, relaxation, mental activities and education” (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). Also, the typical wellness visitors have certain characteristics, such as: have a high income, a tendency of being older people, driven by the desire of relaxation, health improve, rejuvenation or escapism (Smith and Puczko, 2009).

The younger segment is also interested in spa services so to prevent the problems caused by stress, or just to maintain their physical condition (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). Spa visitors want to undergo health treatments, socialize, exchange experience with friends, relatives and partners (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015).

The study of Dimitrovski and Todorovic (2015) included a sample of 165 participants who visited a popular spa in Serbia. The results from the questionnaire showed that there were more female respondents than men, and the majority of them were in the age group 20-25 and had at least high-school education (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). The main motives found were: rejuvenation related “to improve mental health, to improve physical health, to be pampered, to enjoy and to rejuvenate physical appearance” Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015. It was followed by socialization and excitement - meaning “to have fun, to experience adventure, to enjoy with friends, to enjoy a special occasion” (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). The third important factor was hedonism –which included “weight loss, indulge in luxurious experience, reward oneself for working hard” (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). The other factors found were in connection to health and beauty, relaxation and escape – “(which referred to getting away from the pressure of work, to relieve stress and to get away from daily routine” (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015). In this research, the motives of

rejuvenation, relaxation and socialization were found to be the strongest motivators for tourists to visit a wellness resort. These findings were similar to the ones of of Chen and Prebensen, 2009; Koh et al., 2010; Mak et al., (2009).

Still in the spa context, it is useful for the research to better understand which are the main spa services visitors want. In their study of spa goers and their choices in therapeutic activities in Ghana (Adongo, Amuquandoh, and Amenumey, 2017), it was found that massage was the favourite activity, followed by beauty treatments, physical exercise, thermotherapy (sauna, steam bath, wraps) and wellness counselling. Similar findings were identified by Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz (2013) among wellness visitors in Gran Canaria. The main preferred treatments were cold-hot thermal treatments (sauna), relaxation treatments (massage), sports, beauty and aesthetic treatments.

From a survey made to 314 visitors, Adongo, Amuquandoh, and Amenumey (2017), noticed that the chosen activities at the spa were directly influenced by the expected benefits, which mostly were relaxation, beauty enhancement, improved health and spiritual fulfilment. Age was also found to considerably influence the choice in which activities the visitors engaged. Specifically, as the visitor's age was higher, there was a higher probability of choosing massages, followed by wellness counselling and thermotherapy (Adongo, Amuquandoh, and Amenumey, 2017). They also found a strong link between relaxation and massage therapy. The tourists who desired to improve their health mainly preferred to engage in physical exercises and thermotherapy (Adongo, Amuquandoh, and Amenumey, 2017).

In the following lines the literature review will focus on another study which researches spa-goers' profiles in the USA and investigates why people go to spas and how do they feel after their spa experience. This is in a direct connection with what is examined in this master thesis.

The study was conducted by Health Fitness Dynamics (HFD) and it included 28 resort-based spas and nine destination spas, therefore had a number of 2,332 + 435 responses, meaning 2767 answers in the form of a self-administered questionnaire (Monteson and Singer, 2004).

The majority of participants were in the age group of 50 years, followed by the age group below 35 years. Mainly women which had professional or executive careers and had visited one or more spas in the last year were predominant in this study (Monteson and Singer, 2004).

2.2.1 Why different age groups visit spas

As the master thesis aims to better understand the motivation behind different age groups in going on a wellness holiday, the following literature review is relevant for our investigation. The most important four reasons of tourists for engaging in spa experiences identified (Monteson and Singer, 2004:285) in the study are:

1. *“They felt ‘stressed’”*
2. *“They wanted to have a small “indulgence””*
3. *“They felt like ‘splurging’”*
4. *“They wanted to ‘feel better’”*

“Rest and relaxation” and “pampering” are equally important reasons of why the participants chose to go to the spa (Monteson and Singer, 2004:285). A fact that needs to be highlighted is about the comparison made within this study between a past HFD (Health Fitness Dynamics, 1997) report and the 2003 ISPA (International Association Study) study, which emphasizes on the fact that importance has not changed in term of motivational factors over the years (Monteson and Singer, 2004). Relaxation is still the most important motivational factor of why people go to spas (Monteson and Singer, 2004).

In addition to the idea mentioned above, different segments from the study will be briefly (Monteson and Singer, 2004:286).

“Women under 40 years old

- *They are interested in intimate visits to the spa, more likely accompanied by one other person*
- *Large groups, noisy children and families might influence their experience at the spa*
- *They pursue stress reduction, pampering, engaging in beauty treatments*
- *This segment is not interested in health-related services or facilities*

Women over 50 years old

- *They are interested in the healing forms of the spa*

- *Renewing the mind and spirit, rejuvenation*
- *Beauty treatments*
- *The spa is the place for escape*
- *If pleased with the services, this is the most loyal group -with high chances of returning*

Male spa-goers

- *According to the study they do not fit in a particular group*
- *Most likely they came with spouse/ girlfriend/friend/relative*
- *They are interested in relaxation through different forms such as sauna, steam-bath, massage, health –related procedures, and exercise machines” (Monteson and Singer, 2004:286).*

As a conclusion to the ideas written above, spa goers are mostly interested in relaxing and reducing stress (Monteson and Singer, 2004). To continue discussing about why people visit a spa, within the study of Lund (2009) there are enumerated various reasons to do so: “1) *To live up to your potential both physically and mentally* 2) *To minimize the effects of aging* 3) *To establish new eating habits* 4) *To feel happier* 5) *To feel healthier* 6) *To tone up* 7) *To reduce weight* 8) *To quit smoking* 9) *To quit drinking* 10) *To look more attractive* 11) *To increase athletic skills* 12) *To prevent diseases* 13) *To help cure common ailments* 14) *To treat specific male/female problems* 15) *To stretch your body* 16) *To stretch your mind* 17) *To eliminate or reduce stress* 18) *To have fun* 19) *To meet people* 20) *To achieve a better body and more balanced personality* 21) *To be pampered* 22) *For family togetherness* 23) *For individual activity* 24) *For solitude* 25) *For relaxation* “ (Lund, 2009: 4-5)

The reason these motivational reasons for people to go on a wellness vacation were mentioned is because they will be used as a comparison to the findings of this research. Even if the data will not mention exact words, associations will be made and connect their answers to some of reasons mentioned above. Furthermore, it will be interesting to understand which are the reasons tourists visit the wellness resort within our research, as there are numerous factors of why a person can be interested in a wellness experience.

The tourism industry is constantly trying to satisfy the tourists’ health related needs, by acknowledging interests such as “physical flexibility, weight loss, better digestion and

circulation, mental and physical relaxation, cosmetic surgery, and stress management” (Hall, 1992 in Kucukusta and Guille, 2014: 116). Those are just few of the main motivations of the spa-goers.

2.2.2 The preferences of Spa-goers

Throughout this sub-chapter, studies regarding the motivation of the spa-goers will be reviewed. Moreover, considerations about what literature provides regarding the factors which influence the overall spa experience will be mentioned.

In the previous sub-chapters, it was said that in the study of Mak et.al. (2009), the main identified motivation factors for tourists to go on a wellness holiday were: relaxation, relief, escape, self-reward and indulgence, health and beauty. Koh et.al. (2010) also studied the benefits of the spa experience in the U.S. market. He argued within his study that tourists shared the following motives for visiting a spa resort: relaxation, health, and rejuvenation. He also stated that visitors are looking for a number of benefits when engaging in spa experiences (Koh et.al., 2010).

Tsai et.al. (2012) researched the male spa-goers’ preferences in the US context and concluded that relaxation is the main motivational factor why they go on spa holidays. Loureiro et al. (2013) had a similar conclusion in connection to motivation, namely that relaxation is the central sought outcome in the context of a spa experience.

Kucukusta et al. (2013) investigated the preferences of the Hong Kong travellers to spa hotels and among the reasons why people visited the specific hotels are relaxation, pampering, and beautification. Furthermore, three important elements of criteria selection came to light: therapists, price, and product and treatment type.

It is important to understand how visitors perceive the spa attributes, considering that they influence their overall experience. When collecting data for the present research, will be interested in finding out which are the motivational factors the tourists consider most important when choosing a wellness resort, and how do certain elements influence their overall spa experience.

Various attributes may influence differently the tourists’ spa experience, depending on their socio-demographic backgrounds (Kucukusta and Guille, 2014). In the study of Kucukusta and Guille (2014), their findings in connection to the importance of the destination attributes related to the visitors’ overall spa experience stated that: the qualification of the

therapists was most important and that the price and level of privacy were more important than the range of spa facilities. The age groups with tourists between 26 and 35 years old and below 26 years old value more the therapist qualification, while the older groups (36-45 and 46+ years old) mentioned that price is the most important attribute (Kucukusta and Guille, 2014). The same difference was obvious between the visitors with a college or university degree and the other ones with a graduate or lower degree. Those tourists also focused on price over other attributes (Kucukusta and Guille, 2014). Furthermore, other preferences among the visitors are: the spas should offer various facilities and services at their disposal (such as treatment rooms, pools, saunas and so on) (Kucukusta and Guille, 2014).

To sum up the above mentioned, the attributes of a spa resort are important to the overall spa and wellness tourist experience. Previously mentioned studies found out that the most important attributes are: the therapist qualification, the price and the level of privacy, which differ in terms of importance depending on backgrounds of the visitors (Kucukusta and Guille, 2014).

Furthermore, the importance of the attributes of a wellness resort will be reviewed by considering the study of Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz (2013). Those aspects will further be used by the research within the analysis chapter when comparing them to our findings.

2.2.3 The attractiveness of the wellness destinations

Destination attractiveness is a discussed topic within tourism researches, as it is considered to be the ability of a destination to pull certain tourists and further improve their holiday experiences (Taplin, 2012). Destination attributes are also called the “pull factors”. Those are the factors who influence the tourists to visit a certain destination (Lee *et al.*, 2009).

The study of Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz (2013) explores the attractiveness of wellness destinations, taking in consideration the opinions of the tourists from Gran Canaria. The attributes can be divided in different groups: supporting facilities and services, and service quality (Deng, 2007). Those are used as reference points in the afore mentioned study of Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz (2013). It is relevant for this research to review other studies because we, as the authors of this master thesis, are interested in better understanding which destination attributes were found important by other researchers. Furthermore, they will

be used in order to compare them with our own findings, specifically in the terms of the destination attributes found at a wellness resort.

The study was conducted by gathering data through face-to-face interviews, surveys and questionnaires in 15 wellness centres that are part of the Gran Canaria Spa and Wellness Association (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013).

The findings revealed that out of 798 visitors to the wellness centres, the average age was 44 years old. 34.7 % were younger than 36 years old, 43.6 % between 36 and 55 years old, while 6.77% of the tourists were older than 65 years (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013). The educational level of the respondents was higher and intermediate level.

Having a list of 24 determinants of wellness destination attractiveness, the tourists had to state the importance of each factor (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013). Using the principal component analysis, they found 6 principal factors which impact the choice of wellness destination (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013). Although some of the factors identified included items that were not relevant to our case, the review will focus on the ones which can be used for comparison further in the analysis.

“Factor 1: “Attractiveness of the offer of wellness treatments:

- *Cold–hot’ thermal treatments (sauna, Turkish bath. . .)*
- *Water treatments or hydrotherapy (swimming pools, Jacuzzi, showers, water jets. . .)*
- *The attraction and uniqueness of some wellness treatments*
- *Treatments for relaxation and well-being (massages, seaweed, mud, aromas. . .)*
- *The offer of treatments and services to relax and reduce stress” (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013)*

The second factor refers to the natural conditions of the destination (for example beach, mountain, sea) which includes items that cannot be found in our case study, therefore we can consider for this factor the natural thermal waters as they are part of the natural condition of the destination (wellness centre).

“Factor 3: The business offer complementary to wellness treatments

- *Treatment programs lasting several days*
- *The general medical service of the wellness center*
- *I receive wellness advice that I can follow when I return home*
- *The offer of beauty and body care*

Factor 4: Price competitiveness

- *The quality–price ratio of the trip for wellness motives*
- *The low cost of the trip, including wellness services*

Factor 5: The offer of sports activities

- *The chance to enjoy gymnasia and other sports facilities (tennis. . .)*
- *The chance to practice sports while in touch with nature*

Factor 6: Differentiation based on personalized and professional attention

- *The wellness centers offer me personalized attention*
- *The staff of wellness centers are qualified and professional” (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013: 528)*

The findings reveal that the most important determining factor was the natural conditions of the destination. It was followed by “(2) *differentiation based on personalized and professional attention*, (3) *price competitiveness*, (4) *attractiveness of the offer of wellness treatments*, (5) *the business offer complementary to the wellness treatments* and (6) *the offer of sports activities*” (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013: 528)

3. Methodology

Throughout the following chapter, the methodological approach of this project report will be described. Moreover, the manners in which the philosophy of science is addressing the ontological and epistemological approaches will be detailed. Lastly, the theoretical concepts will find their basis in the chosen methods which will be further analysed.

From a methodological perspective, this study can be considered qualitative, worked upon under the social constructivism paradigm. Regarding the ontology, it is relativist. The

epistemology is subjectivist. The following sub-chapters of the methodology section will further detail and explain how this will be seen in the research.

3.1 Research Design

This sub-chapter aims to provide an explanation of the process of the writing this master thesis. The project starts with an introduction, where the reader is familiarised with the topic of this research. Within the problem statement, the research question and sub-questions of the research is presented. In the case of this research, it aims to study the motivations of tourists to visit a wellness destination. The sub-question further expands the main research question by adding a comparison between three age groups to it. Afterwards, the authors of this master thesis gathered information about the motivations of wellness tourists throughout the process of literature review. After thoroughly analysing it, the means through which data was collected were written. Based on availability, the authors chose a wellness resort where data would be collected. An interview guide was afterwards written. Afterwards, using the conceptual lenses of the motivational theories of the push and pull factors, the analysis of the findings was done. Lastly, the conclusions were stated in a final chapter among other ways through which this research could have been done.

3.2 Philosophy of science

The methodological understanding of this project report is shaped through a paradigmatic perspective. The latter concept was defined by Guba as *“a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry”* (Guba, 1990:17). The world is a social construct that various actors continuously nurture. As of that, the surrounding world is understood through subjectivity (Bryman, 2012: 32-33; Ingemann, 2013: 169-171). The world around us is a place which exists outside humankind, but is nevertheless constructed through social interactions between the participant actors. In other words, this understanding is attributed to the social constructivist philosophical point of view (Bryman, 2013; Ingemann, 2013; Guba, 1990; Jonassen, 1991). The social constructivism sociological theory also implies that every being has their own viewpoint over a given fact (Bryman, 2013; Ingemann, 2013; Guba, 1990; Jonassen, 1991). Therefore, the authors of this master thesis acknowledge that there is no

universal truth about any given statement and that the answers of this master thesis to the research question cannot be absolute and final. The analysis and conclusion sections must, therefore, be regarded as an understanding of how the motivations of various tourists is influenced by their social existence (Bryman, 2012: 32-33; Ingemann, 2013: 169-171). Various factors, such as the tourists' momentarily choices, their economical and personal situation will shape the data collected by the authors of this master thesis. As the observed or interviewed tourism actors' behaviour and answers are guided by their contextual knowledge, the authors of this master thesis responsibilities are to interpret and comprehend the actors' reality. The researcher's quest is not to find a right or a wrong response, but to find an appropriate meaning towards the proposed research question within the data collected by using a toolbox, namely theories.

The authors of this master thesis emphasize on the importance of the nature of knowledge. Considering that each actor has their own identity shaped by personally accepted truths, the social constructivism approach implies that each tourism actor has their own subjective opinion over various ideas which are prone to be biased.

Acknowledging that there is no universal truth, it is of a vital importance to mention that the data and the findings of this project report will be biased by the viewpoints of the authors (Klausen, 2012). To lessen the bias, the collected data will be analysed through the lenses of various theories.

3.3 Ontology

Ontology refers to basic understandings regarding to the nature of being, as to the ways it came to existence and how it is prolonged (Ponterotto, 2005; Pedersen & Juul, 2012). A common question when one thinks over the logic behind a process would relate to "*What is the nature of the "knowable"? Or what is the nature of "reality"?*" (Guba, 1990: 18).

In the case of tourism, truth is negotiated as the social world is created by various actors with specific identities (Bryman, 2012; Ingemann, 2013). Furthermore, regarding this master thesis' research question, tourists have their own constructed world. In this case, there are several motives people have in order to visit and choose a wellness centre. The authors of this master thesis acknowledge that the surrounding existence is within every actor's consciousness, hence subjective (Brymann, 2012; Ingemann, 2013). In this case, the quest of

finding truth in a socially constructed world is somehow problematic because every moment in space and time can be interpreted through individual viewpoints of what is real or not (Ingemann, 2013). The authors of this master thesis also have an influence over the research, as they interpret the view points of the individuals interviewed.

Usually, the social constructivists adopt the relativist ontology (Guba, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As mentioned before, the relativists consider that the surrounding world is constructed by different realities which co-exist and are constructed in humankind's mind (Guba, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We, as researchers, do not believe that the tourists have specific motives to visit any given wellness resort. This research is focused on discovering the perception of various tourists regarding their motives for going on a wellness holiday. Furthermore, the analysis chapter will aim to reveal to us, the authors of this master thesis, what motivates certain tourists to visit a wellness destination and also uncover patterns among different age groups regarding those motives.

3.4 Epistemology

The concept of epistemology refers to the manners through which knowledge is achieved and to the ways one contextualizes their understanding of what can be or what cannot be known (Pedersen & Juul, 2012, Ingemann, 2013: 234-235). In other words, what is known about the surrounding world is interpreted through one's consideration of the world (Ingemann, 2013: 234-235, Guba, 1990). In the case of social constructivists, such as us, the authors of this master thesis, there is no universal truth accepted. The emphasis put on the interpretation of the data collected which is then filtered by the researcher's knowledge is very important. Arguing ourselves to be social constructivists, we admit that there exists a close connection between what is researched and the researchers, as knowledge is created in relation to the reality perceived by the researchers (Pedersen & Juul, 2012; Guba, 1990; Ponterotto, 2005). Taking in consideration the social constructivist paradigm, it is important to remark that the authors cannot be objective (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010).

Within the social constructivist paradigm, the ontology and epistemology are closely connected (Guba, 1990). As previously stated, we acknowledge that there is no universal truth and that humankind constructs its own reality. Because of that, the researchers are analysing the data procured through various methods in the following manners.

Interpretation can be understood as finding sense out of a given situation, or in other words understanding the surrounding reality through one's personal knowledge (Ingemann, 2013:119). Interpretation will be used in the present research by finding meaning in the data collected. The interviews and observation conducted regarding tourist's motivations to visit a given wellness resort will be interpreted to find useful information which will be further analysed.

Understanding and meaning are also subjective approaches to an assumed situation. They are used to add objectivity to a subjective situation (Ingemann, 2013: 120-123). The master thesis will analyse the subjective understandings of the interviewees regarding the questions provided and the ways they perceive the surrounding world through the lenses of various theories.

3.5 Data Gathering

The investigation of the research problems is done by using qualitative data. The reason why this approach is chosen is because us, as researchers, desire to better understand the patterns of the perspectives of the persons interviewed and relate those perceptions with the information gathered through desk research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have the following description of qualitative research:” an *interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.*” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). This definition describes very well the approach we take to gather data, due to the fact that we discuss with the visitors in the setting of the location mentioned previously in the project. Afterwards, we interpret the data gathered and find meaning and patterns. Furthermore, the paradigm chosen, social constructivism, and qualitative research have elements which complement each-other. This can be seen in the following quotation: “*Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry*” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:8). Therefore, it is understood that when doing qualitative research there is a need of

interpretation in order to analyse the data gathered which can be affected by the interaction between the researchers and the interviewees, or any other type of data collected.

In such situations, when applying qualitative research methods, the focus is on the perspective of the participants in discussion, but the outcome is slightly influenced by the eyes of the researchers, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state: *“Behind all research stands the biography of the gendered researcher, who speaks from a particular class, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective”* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:21). Taking in consideration that the project study is made in English, and the interviews were conducted in another language (Romanian), it is possible that when the translation was made, some discrepancies appeared, even though the meaning from the answers was kept. Considering the definition stated above, it is also relevant to mention that the authors of this master thesis are students within the line of humanities, with a specialization on tourism, and they might see the situation differently from the eyes of the interviewees. Therefore, it is important to mention how the authors’ biography might have influenced the research. Not only the subjective view over the world of the interviewees has influenced the research, but also the knowledge of the researchers also had an impact on it. As Murphy, 1997 states, the researcher also *“interprets and constructs a reality based on his experiences and interactions with his environment”*. Considering the above, it is very important to mention that the authors had little theoretical knowledge about the motivation of tourists regarding wellness holidays prior to this research. By having little knowledge about the topic before this study, the authors gained in-depth knowledge about the topic while researching about it. Furthermore, it must be mentioned that the study was done through the aid of a theoretical framework using certain methods. The previous knowledge about the topic of the authors is reflected in this research from the point of view of how they used the theoretical toolbox in order to analyse the data gathered. By having little previous in depth knowledge about the topic, the authors did not rely on that, but on analysing the data collected through the lenses of various theories. Also, according to the social constructivism paradigm, we are not searching for a single truth, but analyse various perspectives constructed by the views over the world of the chosen interviewees regarding the topic discussed.

Qualitative research includes various approaches which can be used in order to have a better understanding of the interpretable reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), and this is

because it is based on people's own perceptions about their experiences and social practices (Brinkmann & Tanggaard 2010).

The primary qualitative methods used in this project research are the semi-structured in-depth interview and observation. Secondary data contains articles, book reviews, study projects, etc. In other words, different data that was already gathered by other researchers but is valuable for this master thesis and for having a better understanding of the topic discussed.

3.6 Semi structured in-depth Interview

Interviews are one of the most common methods used in gathering data, from a qualitative perspective (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). They are used in order to retrieve information regarding the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of the interviewees (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). This is why this specific method suits best for our problem discussed, because our research is in connection with motivation and experiences.

According to the theory of Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008), interviews are also the most typical method used in healthcare research, and because we deal with the subject of wellness, which is strongly connected with health, we also considered that the semi-structured in-depth interview is the method that will provide us with the information needed.

The semi-structured in-depth interview contains a few key questions in order to get the participants to talk about the topics that we are interested in, but also leaves room for developing the ideas in more details or going in the direction wanted. As Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) argue, this type of format gives the people who are being interviewed a little guidance on what is to be discussed about, which can be proven very helpful. Moreover, another advantage of using a semi-structured in-depth interview is its flexibility, especially in comparison with structured interviews. This can offer knowledge that was not even considered by the researchers, but given by the interviewees (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008).

The main purpose of the interviews is that they offer a “*deeper understanding of the social phenomena*” (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008:2) rather than other quantitative approaches, for example surveys or questionnaires (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). Thus, in order for us to understand the motivation of the tourists and their experiences, we have chosen the semi-structured in-depth interview as the primary qualitative data collection. The subjective information provided by the interviewees was then analysed through the lenses of the theories of push and pull factors. Moreover, the way an interviewer connects with an interviewee the most is through a face-to-face interview (Bryman, 2012). Regarding that, every interview conducted by the authors of this project report was in a face-to-face context.

Before the interview took place, the participants were mentioned about their anonymity and confidentiality. Details about our study were stated, such as the fact that the research was in relation to the motivations of tourists to visit wellness resorts. Thus, the prior step mentioned will hopefully give a feeling of secureness and little knowledge about what to expect from the interviewer. Most importantly, it will increase the chance of getting a higher amount answers (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). It was essential to provide full anonymity to the interviewees, because in this case they felt more comfortable in talking about various considerations about their motivations on going on a wellness holiday (de Vaus, 2012: 192-193). Moreover, the authors of this master thesis emphasise the fact that the real names of the respondents were not asked and not provided by the interviewees (Veal, 2011: 104-106).

The interviews took place at the wellness resort, therefore the environment was neutral for both sides. We also needed to consider that the respondents were having a holiday. Therefore, we had to find who was willing to give up from their time to discuss with us, and also to know how to better understand if some did not want to share their opinion in connection to some of the topics we were interested in. We also considered that the answers might be vague if the respondents wanted to finish the interview as fast as possible. Taking in consideration that they were on a holiday, their own mood also had an influence on the discussion. The researchers paid extra attention on finding the right moment to discuss with the visitors, as we did not want to interrupt them from their activities. By being open-minded and sensitive to what they had to say, together with other verbal and non-verbal techniques

offered elaborated information, a better understanding of the interviewees' situation was provided.

3.7 Interviewees

The participants from our interviews were visitors of the Aqua Lung wellness resort. To be precise, the number was 22 interviewees, all sharing the same nationality (Romanian). A 23th interviewee was conducted with the manager of the resort. It is worth mentioning that out of the 22 interviewees, two of them were not tourists. They were locals having a subscription at the wellness resort. The answers provided by them were not further analysed because the purpose of the study is to research the motivations of tourists regarding going on a wellness holiday. The other participants belonged to different age groups, occupational and educational level, which provided a diversity of the market. The emphasis was on their different age segments and their opinions. The groups regarding the interviewees' age were segmented in three parts: a young age group segment (with ages between 20 and 39 years old), an adult age group segment (with ages between 40 and 59 years old), and an old age group segment (with ages ranging between 60 and more years old). The reason why the age groups were segment in this manner is because throughout literature various authors studied motivation in connection to wellness tourism by using similar age groups. By using similar age segments, the findings of this research can be better connected to the ones of other researchers and similarities or differences can be better seen.

Lastly, due to a good collaboration, not only staff members, but also a number of interviewees were open to further queries if necessary for the research project. Figure 1 presents the names and the ages of the interviewees.

Name	Age group
Roxana	20-39
Cristina	20-39
Helene	20-39
Timea	20-39
Anthony	20-39
Anna	20-39
Arabela	20-39
Jon	20-39
Samuel	20-39
Micheal	20-39
Dragos	40-60
Meda	40-60
Marcelo	40-60
Andreea	40-60
Cristiano	40-60
Mariana	40-60
Carla	40-60
Damian	40-60
Alexis	40-60
Fernando	40-60
Iacob	60-80
Laura	60-80
The Manager of the Wellness Resort	

Figure 2: Interviewees

3.8 Observation

Another tool for collecting data for this project is the observation. The observation method is considered practical in many ways, due to the fact that it helps researchers to look for information in different manners, for example for nonverbal expression of feelings or what is their behaviour when doing certain activities, who are they interacting with (Schmuck, 1997). In this project, the observation will be used as an auxiliary method of gathering data.

Different researchers share their perspective on what observation is. For example, Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation in the following way “*the systematic*

description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989:79). When doing observation, the researcher uses his senses in order to make a description of the situation observed. Participant observation entails different actions such as: "active looking, writing detailed notes, informal interviewing and requires also a lot of patience" (DeWALT and DeWALT, 2002, p.vii). By looking at their activities, behaviour, reactions, attitude and facial expression, the research aims to connect it to data gathered through desk research, interviews regarding the topic studied and analyse it. Gold, 1958 state that a complete observer is not known to the participants and is also not obtrusive. Therefore, we, as researchers, did not desire to interfere with the tourists' holidays. The other people present at the wellness resort were not aware that we were present there as researchers (Gold, 1958). In the case of this research, the aim of the observation was to retrieve supporting data to the one gathered through interviews. Moreover, the observation was used in order to better understand the settings where the interviews took place. For example, when the discussion was about a certain topic (such as their comments about the thermal baths), we could observe if the interviewees were doing the activities mentioned, or just capture with our eyes some moments that were previously explained. Considering that this research studies constructions of reality, the data retrieved through the observation was not analysed alone. If we were to do that, the data would be created through interpreting the authors' own constructions. On the contrary, by being complete observers we merely gathered additional data which supported the interviews.

Taking the context of complete observers into consideration, it was easier to blend in and make the people around us feel comfortable because, as researchers, we were being doing the same activities as them, and were a part of that community.

The complete observer allowed us, as researchers, to engage in the activities of the interviewees studied, but the main goal was to collect data, while the people studied were not aware of the researcher's intention (Gold, 1958). Merriam (1998) underlines the idea that even if the researcher can get in contact with various persons from whom he can get information, it is still up to the researcher how much is he willing to share; therefore, the other side is in control on the flow on information exchanged.

As mentioned before in the section of the interview, the participants did not know that we are collecting data for our project writing as students. The theory of Kawulich (2005) in

connection to observation and ethics emphasizes on the fact that it is important to keep their anonymity, and to have open and honest relationship between the researcher and participants.

4. Introduction to the motivation theory

Tourist motivation has been debated by many researchers (Crompton 1979; Dann 1976,1977; Dann & Cole 1976; Lundberg 1972; Mak, Wong and Chang 2009; Douglas, 2001; Pearce 1979;) and it considered to be a fusion of various ideas and approaches, as it is also referred to by Cohen (1974:528) “fuzzy set of definitions and descriptions”(Graham,1981).

It seems that many researchers along the years have been questioning the nature of why people practice tourism; engage in various activities, and so we as student researchers are curious about why a specific group of people engage in wellness tourism at a specific location. This question is related to Lundberg’s general question “why do people travel?” (Lundberg, 1972:107), to which he states his perspective on tourist motivation; by mentioning the difficulties within the answer for the previous question (Graham,1981). The first difficulty is regarding the individual and his or her cultural context, and the second difficulty is the words of the individual (his answer) because his motives can reflect his needs, needs that might not want to be said out loud or even recognized (Graham,1981). The ideas above mentioned will be taken in consideration when doing the interviews.

The motivation theory was developed based on a basic set of needs by Murray (1938). Taking motivation into a tourist context, the definition goes as follows: “...a set of needs, which predispose a person to participate in a tourist activity” (Pizam, Neuman & Reichel, 1979 in Chen, Prebensen & Huan, 2008:107). The latter plainly states what we as researchers are trying to investigate: the set of needs (motives) which drive the visitors to engage in wellness activities at the chosen destination. It is considered that wellness tourism is about relaxation, pleasure and increased well-being (Connel, 2006). Hence, it is likely that there is more than one motive why people engage in social touristic activities (Pearce, 1993).

Since tourism offers various experiences, a set of conceptual requirements is designed to understand better the tourism motivation (Smith & Puczkó, 2017). Several key points were identified regarding the theory of tourist motivation which was also emphasized in other

studies (Pearce, 1993 in Smith & Puczkó, 2017). Firstly, research made by other authors is important because findings from this project report can be compared to other studies (which can be found in the Literature review-see ch...) Another requirement of the motivation theory is that it should address to different groups and different researchers (Smith & Puczkó, 2017), which is an important element for us because this project report does investigate different age groups. A third requirement is that the research methods are presented in an easily understandable manner (Smith & Puczkó, 2017). That is also relevant because we, as researchers, address questions to a large group of tourists and they need to understand what is it that we are researching. Another requirement deals with the fact that it allows for many motives, therefore the motivation theory is to include the perspective that visitors tend to satisfy various needs in the same time, and not just having one specific desire (Smith & Puczkó, 2017). Even though there are one or two main motives for visiting a certain location, it is preferable that there are identified various motives and followed by finding a pattern between them (Smith & Puczkó, 2017). The authors of this project report find that the ideas encompassed in the previous paragraph are of a high importance regarding the present project report, reason being that various sets of motives drive distinct people into travelling. The project report also aims to find the travel motives similarities between individuals from different age groups.

Another important aspect of the motivation theory is that it details both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Smith & Puczkó, 2017), therefore it needs to detect if travellers are driven by intrinsic desires or if they respond to outside influencers.

Although there are a variety of theories and approaches, this project report will analyse the wellness tourist motivation in the context of wellness industry, by using the push and pull approach.

4.1 Push & Pull Theory

Throughout the following lines, the theory of push and pull factors will be detailed. This theory is relevant to the thesis for various reasons which will be further elaborated. Firstly, it offers the researchers a “tool” through which the motivations of tourists to visit wellness centres can be analysed. Secondly, the theory provides a duality between the

intrinsic forces that “push” or motivate one to visit a certain destination, and the extrinsic forces which “pull” that tourist towards visiting that given destination.

The push and pull theory has been discussed by many researchers as one of the main tourist motivation theories (Dann, 1977, 1981; Crompton, 1979; Zhang and Lam, 1999; Jang and Cai, 2002; Hsu and Lam, 2003). A general definition of the theory could be contextualised as *“people travel because they are pushed into making this decision by internal forces and pulled by external forces of the destination’s attributes”* (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994:844).

Regarding both terms which are connected in the theory of push and pull factors, the push segment is represented by the intangible and intrinsic motivation of a given tourist which impulses him/her to engage in various activities (Gnoth, 1997, Bowen and Clark, 2009: 92; Dann, 1981: 191; Jurowski and Uysal 1994: 844; Seebaluck et al., 2015:203). Various factors can “push” tourists to travel, examples being: *desire for escape, rest and relaxation, health and fitness, adventure, prestige and social interaction* (Azman and Chan, 2016:4; Gnoth, 1997, Bowen and Clark, 2009: 92; Seebaluck et al., 2015:203, Woodside and Martin, 2008:18). Moreover, Crompton (1979) identified seven psychological (push) motives: (i) *escape from a perceived mundane environment*, (ii) *exploration and evaluation of self*, (iii) *relaxation*, (iv) *prestige*, (v) *regression*, (vi) *enhancement of kinship relationships* (Azman and Chan, 2016:4).

On the other hand, the pull factors can be defined as extrinsic and physical motivations which “pull” tourists towards visiting a given destination. For example, the attractiveness of a specific resort or the facilities offered by a wellness centre can represent factors which can attract a given visitor (Bowen and Clark, 2009:92; Dann, 1981: 191; Jurowski and Uysal, 1994: 844; Seebaluck et al., 2015: 203). Another pull factor can be represented by the *“marketing image of the destination and the benefit expectation”* (Azman and Chan, 2016:4). Moreover, the qualities of the pull factors (such as novelty and education) heavily influence the decision making of the tourists for their destination choice (Crompton, 1979; Azman and Chan, 2016:4). Various studies will be reviewed in the following lines in order to report their findings in connection to the push and pull factors.

In relation to the chronology in which the push and the pull factors happen, Dann (1977) argues that the push factors are a “logical and temporal antecedent” to the pull factors (Dann, 1977:186). In the same vein, it is considered that the intrinsic push factors are dominant because these factors shape the destination in the eyes of the tourists (Heitmann, 2010:33). However, the pull factors (or the attributes/qualities of a destination) can also serve as a factor which shapes a given tourist’s behaviour (Klenosky, 2002). What is suggested by Klenosky’s research is represented by the fact that “one pull destination attribute can be driven by multiple motivational forces” (Klenosky, 2002 in Woodside & Martin, 2008:21). As of that, the intrinsic factors that motivate tourists to visit a certain destination/resort can be contextualised by just a characteristic of the destination.

It is important to mention that due to technology tourists are well-informed nowadays and their quest to find an ideal matching destination is thorough. Therefore, the services offered by various destinations are of a high importance to have a high potential of “pulling” tourists.

Regarding the health and wellness tourism, Azman and Chan (2016) connect to it the push and pull theory because there must be factors which motivate tourists to engage in wellness and spa services while traveling to a destination. Concerning the destination’s characteristics, it must also have some attributes that draw the tourists to its specific facilities. Continuing with a further elaboration, Azman and Chan’s research (2016) uses the push and pull motivation theory in order to identify various motivation factors regarding health and spa tourists. Their research also includes a profile characteristic of their subjects. This theory is used in their study to understand the perceived importance of health and spa services for tourists in their holiday period in Sabah, Malaysia. Thusly, they are investigating the reasons for tourists to engage in the overall spa experience (Azman and Chan, 2016). The research was conducted using qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and it contained questions regarding the spa and wellness experience at the destination. Their interviews also asked questions about the tourists’ personal perspectives on health and wellness and their demographics (Azman and Chan, 2016). They had 21 interviews, but 15 entirely completed, due to issues such as time constraint.

The participants were merely females, with an age average above 30 years old (80%), having a university degree, and professional and executive jobs. The majority age group was 30-49 years old, followed by age group which is less than 30 years old (Azman and Chan, 2016).

The findings demonstrated that the subjects believe it is important to engage in activities which contribute to their health and well-being, and feel that during vacation they have the most time to do activities that improve their well-being, nevertheless relaxation being the main goal (Azman and Chan, 2016).

The participants thought that the SPA is “*a place that has the ideas of relaxation, pampering, luxury, the idea of massage and varieties of treatments, regeneration, clean and calm, tranquillity, enjoyment, and expensive*” (Azman and Chan, 2016:11), and they also affiliated spa with hot tubs and hot springs. The study’s findings suggest that the tourists go merely on holiday for relaxation, and the spa experience is part of the enjoyment of the overall experience, but the importance of relaxation is underlined (Azman and Chan, 2016).

In connection to the motivational factors, the following ideas were concluded: Regarding the push motives, the holiday was considered a reward for a hard-working period of time. Self-satisfaction, self-fulfilment, the desire to distress and rejuvenate were other factors that made those tourists visit a wellness destination.

On the other hand, tangible resources such as the destination’s environment, outlook, affordability, availability, accessibility, the range of treatments and professionalism were concluded as pull factors which made tourists visit that destination (Azman and Chan, 2016).

It was concluded that each tourists’ needs are the main motivations to visit spa facilities during their holiday in Sabah, Malaysia (Azman and Chan, 2016). The attributes of the spas were not as mentioned as the motives for which they engage in such experiences (relax, pamper, distress, etc); thus, the motivating factors are obviously driven by psychological aspects such as wants and need of the participants (Azman and Chan, 2016).

The study of Azman and Chan (2016), underlines that fact that the tourism and spa providers should pay attention to the health-related needs and wants aspects, meaning the push of the tourists to go to spas.

The theory of push and pull factors will be used in the analysis chapter in a close connection to the interviews. The tourist’s opinion over this project report’s study case will be analysed through the motives they chose that destination.

5 Analysis – Push Factors

The following chapter will present the analysis of the collected data. Through that, the research question and the research sub-questions will be answered. The chapter will begin with a general presentation of the tourists visiting the Aqua Lung wellness resort. Afterwards, the analysis will focus on examining the tourists' motivations to visit a wellness centre, which in this thesis is represented by Aqua Lung Wellness Resort, Satu Mare - Romania. The tourist motivations will be analysed through the conceptual lenses of the push and pull factors. Through that, the thesis will provide insight with regards to whether their travel motivations differ or not. Each section of the analysis chapter will briefly reintroduce the conceptual framework used, continuing with findings and sub-conclusions based on the answers of the interviewees concerning that topic. Various quotes from the interviews will be presented in

order to validate the conclusions. The analysis chapter will end with a main conclusion which will combine the findings throughout the chapter.

5.1 Tourists' profiles

Various tourists go to wellness centres for many reasons. After interviewing several people, we understood that there are some patterns in the tourists' motivations to visit a wellness centre. For instance, age is a parameter, and this thesis is focused on researching this aspect in order to answer the research question. What is also of high interest is to understand the differences in motivation between the different generations, and to see if there are patterns within the answers of visitors of the same age group. As it says in the literature review (**see chapter 2**), socio-demographic characteristics have an influence over tourist motivation, such as age or marital status (Gitelson and Kerstetter, 1990).

According to studies of Miller (1996) and Douglas (2001), the cultural background also has an influence on the spa experience and motivation. Their study mentions that the European spa-goers view the spa experience as being curative, therapeutic and increasing one's wellbeing. Taking in consideration that our interviewees are coming from Romania, the analysis will also examine if that idea also coincides with the answers gathered.

In order to better underline the differences, we chose within our research to include three age categories, ranging from 20 years old up to 80 years old. Although the categories are presented in figure 3, it is possible to separate the interviewees in two larger groups, for example 20-39 and 40-59 years old as the majority of the respondents are within these two main age groups. We can also consider an older third group, with the age between 60-80. There were conducted 23 interviews, plus one in which the manager of the wellness resort was interviewed. There is a balance in the age categories, meaning the two main groups; 10 respondents in the 20-39 age category (the young group); and 10 in the 40-60 age category (the adult group). The other three respondents are situated in the 60-80 age category (the old group).

Half of the respondents have a higher education (they are part of different age groups, starting from the age group 20+, and up to the age group of 60 years old. The other half finished high school, or has an AP degree. It is worth mentioning that most of the interviewees from the young age group (20-39 years old) are currently students or have

finished a higher-education degree. The adult age group is mixed, namely half of the interviewees have a university degree and half not, whilst the old age group includes people which did not study a higher education degree.

Each of the participants has visited one or more spas in the last year. The respondents engaged in various wellness activities at least two times in the last year (meaning 12 months before the present day or day of the interviews).

5.2 Understanding the wellness tourists' motivations.

Within this section, the motivations of tourists to visit wellness centres will be explored. This will be done through the aid of the Push and Pull factors theory. Therefore, the sub-chapter will be separated in two parts: one where the push factors and its sub-categories will be analysed, and one where the pull factors will be detailed. This theory was chosen by the authors of the thesis because tourists are motivated both from internal and external forces to visit a wellness centre. The purpose of this section is to provide an answer to the main research question: *“What motivates tourists to visit a wellness resort?”*

5.2.1 Push factors

The push factors are intrinsic elements, or internal forces that motivate a tourist to visit a certain destination. This section will be divided in various parts where each push factor will be analysed. Afterwards, a sub-conclusion of each push factor followed by a main conclusion where all the push factors will be included will be made.

5.2.1.1 Escape

One of the most important reason why tourists go to wellness centres is to escape their daily life. Moreover, what “escape” is understood by various interviewees will be further explored. The importance of escaping from the surrounding world for various reasons will be also highlighted. The answer to why a spa holiday is suitable in the case of the visitors

interviewed will also be examined. People desire to escape from the surrounding world for many motives: be it stress or having a break from what is happening around them. Some interviewees provided answers regarding the negative connotation correlated with the aspect of the daily routine and the importance of family. For example, Anna said that:

"I want to get out of my daily routine and spend time with my family" - Anna (20-39)

Anna understands the importance of family, but because of her routines, we can understand that little time remains to spending with her husband and children. An important reason why Anna prefers going to the specific wellness destination is because there she can find activities that fit the entire family, and because she is very interested in massages, swimming and sauna. Therefore, whenever she finds time, she likes going to a wellness centre with her family. This aspect is also highlighted by Helene, who thinks that:

"The reason why I go to Aqua Lung was, in the first place, to spend time with my family and also for recreation (through swimming and sauna) - Helene (20-39)

Many activities, such as swimming, or sitting in a sauna provide a haven where Helene can further spend time with their family. Even though Anna and Helene shortly provided us with a glimpse of what wellness tourists represents to them, Cristina further details this aspect:

"I find the nocturnal offers interesting [the fact that you can go swimming in the night] because then I can be only with my husband and we can relax + there is a romantic ambience. The crowd is significantly lower. I manage to relax more in this circumstance, rather than coming here during afternoon when there are a lot of people and children who run all over the place, talk loud and splash everyone with water. Of course, I love equally when we go out with our children, but those evening moments are something special." - Cristina (20-39)

This statement suggests something very important. For Cristina, family is very important, because spending time with children is a priority for her. However, this let her little space to relax and further bond with her husband. Romanticism is a way of escaping her daily routine or forgetting for a few moments about the daily life pressure. Cristina considers that at a wellness centre, the daily hours are crowded because there are too many people present at the destination. It is important to mention that Cristina, Helene and Anna share a similar desire: to spend time alone while their family is also present. In their cases, they prefer for

various reasons (such as practicing spa activities) to go into spa holidays and enjoy time alone while the family is also there. Similarly, that justifies the conclusion of a study conducted over American women by Monteson and Singer, 2004. They found that most American women below 40 years old desire to spend time at the spa accompanied by other persons. Furthermore, the same Monteson and Singer, 2004 stated that this age group segment desires to spend quality time in an intimate environment close to their partner. Therefore, quietness is also a very important escape factor to consider, especially for some tourists, such as Cristina, Helene and Anna, because mental and physical peacefulness can be sought in a calm environment (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009). Sitting at a wellness centre during the night is also emphasized by Anthony, who thinks that:

"... but if I have the chance, I like trying something different to get away from my daily routine. Here I enjoyed the nocturnal baths very much; it was something new" -Anthony (20-39)

Anthony desires to escape his daily life by experiencing something new. In another context, escape can mean for some people the search for something new. That something new is represented in this case also by the nocturnal baths. We could state that novelty and spending time in the company of family is a very important escape element. Experiencing something new, or escaping from daily life is also mentioned by Smith & Puczkó, 2017. Moreover, stress is another reason by tourists are motivated to visit a wellness centre. As Ioana explains:

"While my kid is playing in the water, I also enjoy the hydro massage and I swim because these activities help me reduce stress... in my job I always get stressed" -Ioana (40-50)

Even though we might say that Ioana visits a wellness centre because she wants to bond with her family, she enjoys relaxing alone by swimming and experiencing hydro massages. Stress caused by one's job is a vicious problem nowadays. Moreover, the personal space and time spent alone is underlined by the previous interviewees - meaning that within the centre and the variety of activities they like to have their own time enjoying the facilities or services needed. We might say that people want to escape from the daily routine, but also want to rediscover themselves. Cristiano and Mariana also understand the need of escaping from daily duties, such as work and stress. They regularly visit various wellness resorts while on holidays. This adult couple wanted to escape their daily routine or they wanted to relax by

going to hydro massages, gaining access to facilities focused on body pampering or sitting in thermal pools. They mentioned that:

“After a few very stressful weeks at work, we like going to a wellness centre” - Mariana

While on holidays, escape in the context of wellness tourism is very important. This push element provides a break or a disconnection from the mundane world. For the interviewees Mariana and Cristiano, the escape to a spa is important because of their preference in thermal waters. This is also underlined by authors such as Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009 who state that the escape factor was found as the second most important motivational factor in their study. This is also supported by Iso-Ahola's studies (1980,1982) regarding the escape-seeking theory that mentions the fact that spa-goers are mainly motivated by the escape factor when they feel that the pressure of their daily life is too high. Moreover, Monteson and Singer, 2004 found that for American women who are above 50 years old, a spa is a place to escape.

5.2.1.2 – Rest & Relaxation

Rest and relaxations are two push factors, according to the theory of Bowen and Clark, (2009: 92), Crompton, (1979), Dann (1981) which in the eyes of the authors are intertwined in terms of wellness tourism. Relaxation is found to be the most important motivational factor in studies of: Mak, Wong and Chang (2009), Monteson and Singer, 2004: Koh, Yoo, & Boger (2010), Koh et.al. (2010), Loureiro et al. (2013) , Kucukusta et al. (2013). Whether in a holiday or just entering in a wellness centres, the interviewees expressed a main interest into resting and relaxing. This section will be divided in three parts, each one analysing a different age group segment. Hence, a main part of the research question will be answered, namely *“What are the motives behind different age groups for engaging in wellness tourism”*. It is important to mention that every motivational factor is important for this study.

The first group of interviewees has their age ranging from 20 to 39 years old. A first rest and relaxation factor is represented by the satiation of personal needs. It is important to mention that various tourists were motivated to undertake a wellness getaway for other

various rest and relaxation reasons which will be further elaborated. For instance, Anna (20-39) stated that:

"While my son swims with his father in a pool, I enjoy the hydro massage on my own"
- Anna (20-39)"

Even though Anna decided to go to the Aqua Lung wellness centre with her family, she still feels the need to be able to relax alone. Various facilities offered by the wellness centre, such as saunas or hydro massages attract her into experiencing them alone. By going there, not only she feels satisfied that her family is enjoying their time there, but she also satiates her desire to go to hydro massages. Therefore, a dimension of the rest and relaxation push factor is represented by the need of spending quality personal time. Moreover, Anna also mentions that:

"I am interested in wellness, especially massages and SPA... this is something I do often" - Anna (20-39)

Interpreting her both statements, we understand that the family members like engaging in different activities. This can be seen as a validation of the theory which states that *"self-reward and indulgence"* is an important motivating factor why people seek a wellness gateway (Mak, Wong and Chang, 2009:193). However, in their pursuit for quality personal space, even a small problem can affect a tourist's overall experience. Hence, another dimension of the rest and relaxation push factor is represented by the quest towards finding quietness at the wellness resort. However, not every interviewee pronounced this problem, but it was important for some. Whilst Anna was preparing to go to hydro massages, she said that:

"Sometimes I cannot completely relax because there are too many people around me, noise, and a little bit cold" – Anna (20-39)

Therefore, some people find quality in the small things. Interviewee Anna desires the ambient temperature to be well-adjusted. The lack of quietness is another factor that impacts Anna's experience. Even though some problems interfered in her overall experience, Anna preferred to visit the Aqua Lung wellness resort. In her opinion and from our observation, she was sitting in a thermal bath whilst conducting the interview. This is an important attribute of the wellness resort which made her spend her holidays there, even though she was sometimes upset about the noise made by other people. Her remark is also consistent with a study conducted by Hall, 1992 which had as an outcome that a problem which the tourism industry,

including the wellness tourism industry, is aiming to fix is the need of physical and psychical relaxation. Moreover, Monteson and Singer (2004) concluded that women below 40 years old find that noisy crowds and families negatively influence their spa experience. In relation with Anna's query, she cannot feel completely relaxed because of reasons stated above.

On the other hand, Josh also expressed his interest in wellness, but for enhancing the spiritual self. Thus, the quest for developing oneself is another dimension of the rest and relaxation push factors. For instance, he said that:

"I am interested in wellness, especially meditation and yoga; I like to enhance my mental health with the right nutrition and sauna" -Josh (20-39)

This interviewee was traveling alone. His main reason why he chose the Aqua Lung wellness resort is because there he was able to meditate and practice various meditation techniques in a wellness environment. Regarding that, Josh mentioned that *"A wellness centre should be able to expand the human mind, the body and the soul" -Josh (20-39)* as well. The interview with Josh was conducted after he finished a massage session. We understood that he was more interested in the development of the spiritual self. For him, resting and relaxing are done through ways which are improving one's mind condition. Therefore, rest and relaxation are not only motivating factors that push a tourist to visit in wellness centre to improve their physical condition, but also their spiritual self. This also confirms the outcome of studies conducted by Uysal et al (1990), Gitelson and Kerstetter (1990) and Lund (1990). The study stated as a conclusion the fact that single travellers are more inclined to entirely satisfy their needs, such as, for example, their mental serenity.

For others, not thinking about mundane tasks motivates them to visit wellness centres is their main reason why they chose to go to Aqua Lung wellness resort. For instance, Helene expressed that:

"Being here not only helps me to maintain a healthy body, but it also helps me relax due to the fact that I don't think about all the tasks that I have to do..." -Helene (20-39)

Like the other interviewees, Helene is interested in keeping a healthy physical condition through various exercises. By completely focusing towards doing them, she forgets about her daily duties. Therefore, being at a wellness centre allows her to destress. Within literature, stress is seen as a main reason why people engage in SPA and wellness related activities (Monteson and Singer, 2004:285)

Two other interviewees see a wellness centre as a place where they can gain a boost of energy. Antony considers that:

"...being in a sauna or receiving a massage relaxes and fills me with positive energy. During the following day, I am much more productive" -Anthony (20-39)"

Facilities where one can receive massages, go to a sauna, swim or relax in a pool can improve one's energy levels. Likewise, Timea said that:

"...the reason why I came to Aqua Lung was to relax and to receive medical treatments and I really like the way I feel now... reinvigorated and productive" -Timea (20-39)

Antony and Timea stress on the productivity benefits gained at a wellness centre. Not only that they can treat various illnesses or keep a healthy body, but they also feel more energetic after leaving that place. Therefore, body pampering is another dimension of the rest and relaxation push factors which motivate various tourists to visit wellness centres. It could be argued that harmonising one's life and boosting their energy is very important, fact also highlighted by various authors (Lund, 2009; Kucukusta and Guille, 2014; Koh et al., 2010).

The first age group of interviewees (20 – 39 years old) have various motivations to visit a wellness centre. Some focus their interest on a personal development, such as interviewee A. Spending quality time alone, being able to meditate or relax their minds are main motivation factors which attract them to a wellness centre, as remarked by interviewees Anna, Josh and Helene. Moreover, being able to energise and improve their productivity through various activities is also important, as stated by Timea.

The second age group (between 40 and 60 years old) share some of the previous group's interests, but also visit a wellness centre for others. Like Anna, another interviewee that finds the surrounding noise and a large crowd unattractive is Carla. He stated that:

"... or during the summer, for example, I cannot sit calmly in the pool without being splashed with water by the kids" -Carla (40-60)

As she desires to relax, simply being bothered by others reduces her levels of relaxation. However, Carla chose to spend her holidays at this wellness centre because she can go to various spa treatments, saunas, swimming pools and take advantage of the thermal waters. Her main problem is represented by not completely being able to clear her head

because several other people are there. It might be said that even though she agrees that the wellness centre can be improved, she visited it because she can find in one place everything related to spa and wellness that she wants. For instance, cosmetics is another dimension of the rest and relaxation factors pursued by many female interviewees. For instance, the same interviewee, Carla, said:

"I am interested in cosmetic treatments... oh, which woman wouldn't be interested in that ?? getting a massage and cosmetic treatments are a way of relaxing and getting pampered" - Carla (40-60)

Carla wants to keep a healthy and a good-looking physical appearance. Cosmetic treatments received at a wellness centre not only mean that they are done by professionals. Other facilities, such as saunas, pools, thermal waters, massages, are a combined attraction which allegedly detoxifies the bodies of the tourists. Therefore, some women are motivated to visit wellness centres also because of the fact that they can improve their aesthetics. Likewise, Mariana considers that:

"I am interested in a healthy lifestyle which would include healthy food, SPA, cardio fitness and cosmetic pampering" -Mariana (40-60)

A slight difference between Ma and C is that Ma also focuses her interest on healthy food and cardio fitness. In her opinion, at the wellness centre she can take advantage of various equipment to improve her general wellbeing. A healthy diet is seen interesting to be undertaken whilst practising relaxing activities. By going on a wellness holiday, people such as Ma associate it with a healthy lifestyle. It can be said that she associates that with doing exercises, or eating organic food. For them, this type of holiday is a period of time when they focus their energy on improving their wellbeing. In their opinion, whilst on a wellness holiday, combining organic nutrition with various types of wellness activities has the effect of body detox. Another important mention is represented by the fact that throughout the interviews, gender differences are also important. Most of the female interviewees, such as Mariana, Carla, or Anthony focus on the positive effects that wellness has over their aesthetics. Moreover, even though Carla and Anthony agreed that being bothered by other people can decrease their level of rest and relaxation, they still chose to visit this wellness centre. As a common factor, they agreed that the services present at the destination, which they find qualitative, are most important.

On the other hand, men, such as Alexis, underlined the aspect of nutrition whilst on a wellness holiday. He said that:

"I am interested in medical procedures, pampering and nutrition, because my nutritionist told me I must change my diet in order to get rid of extra weight" -Alexis (40-50)

Some tourists, such as Alexis, are motivated to visit a wellness centre because they think that through receiving body pampering services, or practising various light activities, such as pool volleyball, they can improve their physical condition. Consuming organic food in a relaxing environment is motivating some interviewees to follow professional medical advice. If we were to compare his view of a wellness holiday with the ones of various females, he mainly focuses on following medical advice. For him, going to a wellness centre is strictly related to improving health issues. However, in the case of females it was seen that aesthetics and their interest in cosmetics push them towards pursuing various wellness activities. Monteson and Singer (2004) emphasise in their studies that body pampering is an important motivation why many American women under and over 40 years old are interested in going on wellness holidays. For other tourists, meeting old friends and spending quality time together in a healthy environment is what motivates them to visit a wellness centre. Surrounded by his peers, D said that:

"...we, the older guys, prefer chilling in the hot baths because it helps our joints and we can also talk " -Damian (50-60)

Having the opportunity to relax in hot baths is Damian's main reason why he went to the Aqua Lung wellness centre. Damian did not express his interest in practicing various wellness activities. His main desire was to catch up with his friends but at the same time to find himself in an environment where he can practice health-improving activities. Damian and his friends share this interest and going to a wellness resort together has several advantage. Except socializing, through health-improving activities it is meant that they can go to many facilities, such as body treatments or bath in thermal pools. They also associate a healthy nutrition based on organic food with a healthy holiday. Through our participant observation, we saw that Damian and his friends were bathing in the thermal pools at the moment when we asked for some time from his side regarding the interview. Most people had their eyes closed and they were sitting in the water. At the same time, Damian has a waterproof gadget in his hands and he was reading something while relaxing in the water.

On the other hand, novelty in the context of resting and relaxing is also a motivating factor for some. For example, Meda thinks:

"I like to go to places where we see something new (like going to treatments in different locations), but in the same time to relax and do something out of the ordinary" - Meda (50-60)

Relaxing is still his main interest. However, he wants to do something out of the ordinary, such as experiencing various wellness centres. For him, motivation does not rely in a single experience, but in the fact that he can test various wellness centres in order to gain new experiences. Through his interview, Meda stated that noise made by other people is a problem shared by various wellness resorts. However, he was enjoying his stay at the Aqua Lung resort because he found many various facilities under the same roof. For instance, he stated that thermal baths in other places were the single attraction, whilst at the Aqua Lung wellness resort this was combined with spa treatments, saunas and swimming pools. Another novelty that he remarked during his stay is that various outdoor activities supervised by professionals were present, thing which was a plus in his opinion.

The age group consisting of people with their age ranging from 40 to 60 years old are motivated to visit a wellness centre in terms of rest and relaxation for reasons ranging from destressing to improving their medical condition. Meeting friends in a healthy context is another factor which makes them visit a wellness centre. They understand through a healthy context the fact that the Aqua Lung wellness centre provided spa treatments, organic food served under medical supervision and specific attractions such as thermal baths. Their intrinsic motivation to visit a wellness centre was to find several health-improving facilities at the wellness destination, and the external services provided by the wellness resort matched what they sought. Aesthetics, represented by cosmetics is especially motivating women to go to a wellness centre. It is important to mention that not all interviewees visit a wellness centre for the same rest and relaxation reasons.

The third age group, represented by people ranging from 60 to 80 years old did not provide any answers strictly related to rest and relaxation push factors. As it will be seen in the future sections, their interest for visiting a wellness centre is for social interaction, improving their health and doing fitness exercises.

5.2.1.3 – Enhancement of kinship relationships

Enhancement of kinship relationships is another push factor relevant for this study (Azman and Chan, 2016:4). As stated previously in the theory section, certain push factors can have certain features of the pull factors. For instance, should a tourist not have the intrinsic desire to strengthen his or her relationship with his or her kin, an extrinsic location could not pull that tourist towards that place for that reason. The authors of this research understood that the enhancement of kinship relationships acts like a push factor. Reason being it acts antecedent to a pull motive (Dann, 1977:186).

Having the opportunity to spend time together with one's family or friends in a wellness centre is an example of the enhancement of kinship relationships factor which was underlined by various interviewees. Regarding the young age group, the first dimension of this push factor is represented by the interviewees' desire to spend time with their family. As A stated repeatedly throughout the interview:

"The main reason I came here is to spend time with my family...[and]... I engage in wellness activities such as swimming, saunas, different kinds of massages" Anna (20-39)

For her, a wellness centre is a place where she can improve her family relationship whilst in a healthy environment. Even though she goes to various activities, such as hydro massages "...I enjoy the hydro massage on my own" Anna (20-39) whilst alone, she needs to feel that her family is close by. I is another person who mainly goes with her family to the Aqua Lung wellness centre:

"I am interested in wellness; I go swimming often, to fitness - I regularly practice sports, and massages when I have the time. It's because most of the times I cannot find time for everything that I want to do. Sometimes when we are the whole family at the spa, my husband sits with the kids and then I get half an hour to pamper myself with relaxation massages" -Cristina (20-30)

Cristina is an active person who practices a variety of sports and goes to many SPA activities. However, even though she needs to find time alone to relax, her wish is to be together with her family.

Another dimension of the enhancement of kinship relationships push factor is represented by spending time together with one's friends. For instance, B considers:

"Even though I go by myself sometimes, I enjoy better going with friends to wellness centre due to the fact that I combine fun with relaxation" -Arabela (20-39)

In his opinion, visiting a wellness centre with friends rather than going alone is more important. Even though we can understand that Arabela's desire is to relax in a healthy environment, having company means that he also can take advantage of the wellness facilities better. In the same vein, Helene is another interviewee from the young age group who shares similar interests as Arabela. She said that:

"In the summer time, Aqua Lung is a place where I can spend my time with my friends. I find it fun, taking in consideration the Aqua Park, the possibility to play beach volley and tennis, and on top of that I like to lay in the sun." -Helene (20-39)

It is important to mention that the Aqua Lung wellness resort has outdoor facilities which are opened in the summer season. Therefore, having the company of her friends, S can further enhance her relationship with them whilst in a relaxing environment, namely the outdoor pools. Moreover, compared to the other interviewees, S fancies sunbathing. Hence, she is highly motivated to visit the wellness centre for the various facilities she can find there. It is important to mention that S alternates activities done out-door with activities done in-door related to spa and wellness. S is highly interested in going to saunas, massages and spa treatments. The main reason she visited a wellness resort is because she wanted to experience that, and the out-door activities are, for her, an additional activity she can do at the Aqua Lung wellness resort.

The young age group segment is mostly motivated to visit a wellness centre in relation to the enhancement of kinship relationships for various reasons. Firstly, spending time in the company of one's family, which in the case of our interviewees was with their partner and children, is important for some interviewees, such as Cristina and Anna. On the other hand, interviewees Arabela and Helene highlighted the importance of a healthy environment, such as the one of a wellness resort in relation with spending time with their friends.

The middle age group, with ages between 40 and 60 years old has the enhancement of kinship relationships factor represented by one interviewee. Ionut is a man who is very interested in spending time with his son:

"I came to Aqua Lung to spend time with my boy" -Ionut (40-50)

Ionut stated that he and his son shared various interests related to wellness experiences. Bathing in a pool, going to a sauna or playing games in a wellness environment were important shared reasons why they both visited this wellness centre. Therefore, in the context of the middle age group, with an answer only provided by Ionut, it can be said that a dimension of this push factor is represented by need to strengthen the son-father relationship.

The older age group segment, with ages of 60+ years old is solely represented by interviewee Laura. She stated that:

"If you would only know how good I feel now that I have a friend with whom to go to wellness centres... because if I go alone I don't know whom I would encounter and I feel safe when I have somebody close to me" -Laura (60-80)

In her opinion, safety is very important in relation to visiting any kind of tourism resort. This safety is closely connected to having someone nearby with whom she can talk and have a happy time. Laura's background story is that she is a widow and she recently had the opportunity of meeting a friend from her childhood. In the previous months, she travelled to various sites in her company because before she did not have whom with to go.

As a sub-conclusion of the enhancement of kinship relationships push factor, the age groups slightly differentiate between themselves. Firstly, the young age group segment had as primary motivation the need of spending time in the company of one's family or friends. The healthy context provided by a wellness centre was important in that matter as the interviewees stated they wanted to do various exercises. The middle age group, represented by only one interviewee also remarked the importance of spending time with the family members. In this case, the father-son relationship was highlighted by Ionut. An open-air space, such as the one of a wellness resort, with many facilities where they can do a variety of exercises was seen as a motivating factor. The older age group was only represented by Laura. The difference between spending time in the company of friends was mainly stated here as a desire to find someone with whom an old person can share thoughts.

5.2.1.5 – Health & Fitness.

Another reason why people engage in wellness and spa experiences is the push factor health and fitness. According to the study of Dimitrovski and Todorovic (2015) need a place that offers services in connection to health maintenance. The first motivating factor found in his study was rejuvenation which included *(to improve mental health, to improve physical*

health, and to rejuvenate physical appearance) Taking in consideration that the authors of this thesis aim to understand what visitors from the different age groups reflect in connection to this factor, this sub-chapter will firstly analyse the younger group (20-39years old). Afterwards, the middle age group (40-60 years old) will be examined. Lastly, the older age group (60-80 years old) will be studied. The final lines of this sub-chapter will contain conclusions with respect to what was found.

Maintaining health was highlighted by various other studies as one of the most important motivational factors why people engage in wellness experiences. For instance, in Mak, Wong and Chang's study (2009) the health and beauty motivating factor included aspects such as improving one's overall health, weight loss, rejuvenation, and enhancement of one's physical attractiveness. The previous factors were regarded as the most important health and fitness motivational factors why tourists engage in wellness activities.

The young age group found various reasons why they undertake wellness holidays with respect to health and fitness. For instance, respondent Anna said that:

"I engage in wellness activities such as swimming, different kinds of massages... but I have a particular interest in spa and massage "- Anna (20-39). Taking in consideration that she is a mother and a hard-working person (having a time-consuming job), these activities stand for her as a way to do sports and maintain health through swimming. Moreover, she considered that wellness activities and sessions of anti-cellulite massages help her maintain her physical condition. Maintaining the physical condition is also mentioned by interviewee B:

"I have a big interest in the topic of wellness starting from cosmetic treatments, fitness, health, lifestyle and beauty... and of course I go to swimming and to different types of massages" -Arabela (20-39).

The person in discussion has a high interest in all that is connected to health and beauty, Her likes are not only towards fashion design (as she is a fashion designer), but also everything in connection to a healthy and beautiful lifestyle. It can be understood that for Arabela, a beautiful and healthy lifestyle mean consuming organic food and participating in various wellness activities. She desires to visit a wellness destination because she wants to go to saunas, massages, and participate in as many activities as possible while at the wellness destination. Just like other young ladies, she is preoccupied with her physical appearance, thus

justifying her involvement in activities such as fitness, swimming, and various cosmetic treatments and massages.

Another good example of a young spirit interested in health and fitness is responded Jon. He stated that:

"Because I have knee problems due to my football career, I am keen on going to therapeutic massages and fitness" -Jon (20-39).

Jon's physical condition is very important for him as it motivated him to take advantage of the fact that Aqua Lung offers a variety of medical procedures. Combining those with the gym, he finds a wellness centre important because he can improve this health. It is important that he can find all the services or facilities that he needs within one roof, as he mentioned that it is more time consuming to drive from one place to another in order to get what he needs. Not only that he practices the activities mentioned before, but he also likes swimming and going to sauna.

Helene, another respondent from the young age group has similar attitudes towards this push factor, as she mentioned the following:

"I go to fitness weekly; I also go often to the sauna. Rarely do I go to massages - when time and budget offer me the possibility. -Helene (20-39) .

In the interview, she mentions that she is a student and also has a part-time job. When she has time and money, she is interested in travelling in order to enhance her appearance, Fitness is an important part of her life, and the reason she went to Aqua Lung is to mainly enjoy the saunas. Moreover, she was motivated to visit a wellness centre because she could take advantage of other activities, such as swimming, hydro-massages or relaxing in the hot baths.

Helene also finds a healthy lifestyle very important, as she mentioned:

"Even though sometimes I give up to certain food temptations, I am keen on having a balanced life by practising sports and eating healthy meals" –Helene (20-39).

Therefore, the reason why she is visiting a wellness centre is maintaining health and her physical appearance. Moreover, she also mentioned that everything which is connected to

a healthy nutrition catches her eye. Cristina is also situated in the young age group. She finds wellness activities important, because:

“I go to swimming, fitness (which I do regularly), massage not so often – sometimes I do not find time for everything” -Cristina (20-39).

In order to clarify, although she engages in different wellness activities, her job as a TV reporter and being a parent of two children requires time that otherwise would be spent focusing on herself. She and her husband are also interested in keeping fit and maintaining health, as they appreciate the hot baths when going to Aqua Lung. Timea is another tourist with similar views:

"I am interested in wellness, especially fitness and receiving massages. I also go to various cosmetic treatments and I regularly read about what's new in terms of beauty and lifestyle. I usually go to chiropractic massages" -Timea (20-39).

This person is also a female who is interested in sports, beauty and health, as her job is in the area of beauty and cosmetics. She is another young spirit which desires the best for her body. The reason why she goes to Aqua Lung is to undergo physiotherapeutic procedures.

Moving towards the middle age group, participant N (40-60) stated directly that he came to Aqua Lung for the purpose of improving his health:

“I came to Aqua Lung because: Firstly, I have problems with my knees and the thermal waters help. Second, for swimming. Third, I go to saunas and it gives me a sense of wellbeing (I need to lose weight so I go swimming; and also, the sauna is very good for the detox” -marcelo (40-60).

Due to his physical condition, he tries to combine the necessary with the pleasant. Even though N needs to lose weight or has problems with his knees, the activities in which he engages offer a sense of well-being. He explained that after a day of swimming and sauna he feels lighter. Moreover, it is easier for him to move, and can do better what he loves, which is playing football as a hobby, and other various sports such as tennis and beach-volley. He also attends classes of aqua gym, where more people of his age are enrolled in. Thus, this person is an active sportsman, with a strong motivation of keeping himself fit enough to do the hobbies he has, and to maintain the overall health.

Another similar perspective from the middle age group is stated by Carla:

“I come to Aqua Lung to (....).and to soak my old bones in the hot baths” Carla (40-60).

This person is very interested in the hot baths and all the benefice features that it has. Along with other reasons for coming here, she is interested in her health condition as she is trying to improve it through sessions of aqua gym and hot baths.

Likewise, Person Damian (40-60) is also an active person who is:

“interested in wellness because I go to swimming, aqua-gym, thermal water pools and various activities which help me maintain my health”- Damian (40-60). When he was asked why he came to the Aqua Lung wellness centre he said *“it is a good thing what they have done here, especially if you compare it to other places in the country... we are very pleased what we have found here, because I came here mainly to improve my health” -Damian (40-60).* He explains that he is satisfied because he can go to a variety of activities in order to satisfy his needs. Apart for the reason of improving health, he also enjoys socialising with his peers. Moreover, feeling part of a community where people of similar age and interest organize various excursions where they focus on losing weight motivated him to visit this wellness centre. Therefore, an important aspect of the health and fitness push factor is, as stated by D, the need to belongness to a group with similar areas of interest.

The need of being offered support by one’s family is another dimension of the health and fitness push factor. Interviewee Alexis said that *“I came here to relax and to maintain my health through sauna and swimming. I also pay attention to my diet” – Alexis (40-50) .* When he and his wife are there, they both do various exercises. As he explains, it is more difficult for him to do sports outside (of the water) because of his weight. In the meantime, his wife is going to a cycling class. It is important for Alexis that his spouse offers her support, as he is motivated to achieve his goal (which in this case is losing weight) faster. Moreover, they both enjoy the hot baths as they can spend time together. Therefore, from his statements we can understand that that his main reason for engaging in the wellness experience at Aqua Lung is improving his health. Nevertheless, the company of his wife is very important because it means that he has the support he needs.

Participant Andreea (40-60) also emphasized the importance of family in the context of visiting a wellness centre. She mentioned that she enjoys spending time with her family in a healthy environment, such as the one at Aqua Lung. The reason is because everyone from

her family finds something important to do there. Moreover, they are interested in the “*the beneficial effects of the hot baths*”. Separately, she also enjoys hydro-massage and sauna. She directly mentions that maintaining health is one of the main reasons she went to the wellness centre.

Interviewee Mariana (40-50) shared with her motives for visiting a wellness centre. Maintain health is one of the main reason because “*I came to Aqua Lung to....and an important part was to maintain my health*”. Swimming was the most important activity for her, but she also has a high interest in the thermal water. Moreover, she was also in the company of her husband who was accompanying her.

In the following paragraph, the same motivational push factor (health and fitness) will be analysed, but with a focus on the old age group (60-80 years old).

Iacob (60-80) stated that the reason for going to the specific location is to enjoy the hot baths, as it is very beneficial for his health. Undergoing various medical treatments such as from hydro-massages, kineto-therapy, acupuncture, physio-therapy, or ultrasounds were, in his opinion, also important.

“Me and my wife came here to improve our health. We like it because of this good water, and the doctors take their time and explain to us what they do and how it helps us, and we also spend time with our daughter and her grandchildren” (60-80) Iacob.

A dimension of this push factor in the context of the old age group is firstly represented by health. Following medical advice and practicing various activities is motivating Iacob to travel to a wellness centre. On the other hand, spending time with their family in a healthy context is also important because their relationship is strengthened.

Participant Laura (60-80) shares her opinion by stating:

“...yes I am interested in wellness, you know us, the old ones, we all have some kind of health disorders and I go to medical treatments on short and longer periods (sometimes even 16, 18 days)” -Laura (60-80).

Similar to Iacob, Laura was undergoing medical procedures while staying at the wellness centre for a few days. Moreover, through our observation we saw that she was accompanied by a friend of hers who had a similar age. It is important to mention that for Laura and Iacob, socializing whilst going to activities that improve one’s health is very

important. Furthermore, the hot baths represented an important attraction for L, as her medics suggested this.

When understanding the data gathered from all the interviewees in connection to the push factor of health and fitness, several patterns between the answers can be seen. The first group analysed, the young group (with the ages between 20 and 39 years old) provided similar answers. They are mentioning that they have an interest in health and fitness, and they engage in different activities, but maintaining health is one of the reasons for going to Aqua Lung Wellness centre. They mention as motivation factors spending time with their family or friends. Therefore, relaxation or recreation is their main motive for visiting a wellness centre. Nevertheless, health is also a part of the overall motivation. Even though the majority of the interviewees from the young group mentioned about their interests in different areas that are in connection to health and fitness, some visit just for the pleasure of socializing, or for the sake of bathing.

The core motivation changes for older age groups, such as for people with their age between 40-60 and especially 70-80 years old. They underline that their main motive for visiting a wellness centre is improve or maintain their health. The majority of the respondents from these age groups have either health issues, the need of losing weight or the desire of maintaining a fit body. Although there are more people in the older age group that are primarily interested in maintaining their health, it does not apply to all interviewees from these two age groups. This is because they mention other aspects such as relaxation or time spent with family members, or socializing as being the core motivation factors, and health is less important reasons for the visit to wellness centre.

Therefore, the difference between the age groups regarding the push factor of health and fitness relies in the level of importance perceived by them. Thus, the younger group has other core motivation than maintaining health, such as the need of socializing with their friends in a healthy environment. On the other hand, the majority of the older groups emphasizes on the aspect of maintaining their health (in the context of having their family or friends present).

Looking back at the perspective of Miller (1996) and Douglas (2001) in connection to how the European SPA goers see the experience as curative and therapeutic, we could say that many of our interviewees see it in the same way. This (the curative and therapeutic aspect) is

an important part of the overall motivation for most of the persons from the older group, and also for some of the younger ones.

Furthermore, the idea of Sayli, Akca, Duman & Esengun (2007), which states that tourists have a number of reasons to look for different activities related to health and wellness is supported by the data gathered from the interviews. For instance, a reason can be represented by medical advice, as various interviewees mentioned the importance of the hot bath for their health.

5.2.1.4 – Social interaction & Prestige

Social interaction and prestige are part of the push factors (Azman and Chan, 2016:4), which will be analysed in order to understand if the interviewees are also “pushed” to visit a wellness destination because of this aspect. First, this chapter will analyse interviewees from the young age group category (20-39 years old). Afterwards, the adult and old age group categories will follow.

Participant Anthony mentioned that: *"Usually when I go to a wellness centre, I prefer going with my friends because we can have a laugh"* Anthony (20-39).

Thus, it is obvious that for him the activities that can be done within the resort are more interesting if done in a group. He explains that social interaction is part of his everyday life, and that sometimes he wants to have other people around him so he can talk and have a laugh. However, in the case of going to a wellness centre he prefers to have a good company by his side.

Another interviewee who shared her interest wellness interest spoke about her involvement in a wellness community is Helene:

"I am very interested in wellness, everything regarding health, lifestyle, SPA... I'm also a member of an online group called the wellness universe, which is an on-line platform where people discuss different topics with regards to wellness..." –Helene(20-39).

With regards to Aqua Lung and the specific environment, she also likes talking to her friends or family, as she mentioned that when she had the opportunity to visit the Aqua Lung wellness centre she was either accompanied by her friends or family: *"...is nice that we can catch up with our lives, especially with old friends"* -Helene(20-39).

Going to the spa is an activity that participant Arabella (20-39) enjoys while being with his friends :

"I have never been to a spa for the whole day just by myself. Unless I go there specifically for massages or other cosmetic treatment, I want to have a friend with me". - Arabella (20-39)

Hence, social interaction plays an important role for people like Arabella, as she pointed out that she likes to be accompanied when she goes to the spa. The majority of the interviewees from the 20-39 age group went to Aqua Lung together with a partner, friends, or family. Only two mentioned that they were looking for relaxation, silence and recreation and were not interested so much in social interaction with others.

However, some were bothered by the crowd's noise or by having too many people around:

"What Aqua Lung lacks is the silence..." Josh (20-39) ; "I like to go there when they have nocturnal baths, because there are significantly less people and it is more quiet..." Micahel (20-39)

The perspective of the adult age group is clearer when it comes to the factor of social interaction, as many of them mention directly in their interview that apart from reasons such as relaxation and maintaining health, they also socialize.

"I come to Aqua Lung to relax, to also socialize a bit...and soak my old bones into warm water" -Carla (40-60)" ; "I came here in order to maintain my health and to catch up with old friends" -Laura (60-80).

Another interesting example comes from participant Damian (40-60) when he said:

"I, for one, want to (...).plus I spend time here with some acquaintances, with some of them we have a group where we do not only aqua gym, but a bunch of different activities that helps us improve or maintain our health, for example long walks in the forest, or..(..)I like it here because I socialize with others and I know what others are doing" -Damian (40-60).

For him, the fact that he can go with other people that he knows is motivating him to travel to a wellness destination. Discussing about various topics and talking about future plans

makes the overall experience to be more pleasant. Even if some of the persons interviewed mention about this aspect, others do not mind to be alone. When understanding responses from the young, adult and old groups, the difference for the social interaction factor is not visible. We cannot generalize and say that for the younger group this factor is not important and for the older one is, but what we can do is understand a slight difference within the old group. If we add our interpretive lenses, the older group might be more interested in this aspect than the younger ones, but at the end of the day everybody who was interviewed did talk with socialize other persons, fact which was also seen through our participant observation. Referring back to Mowen's (1995) expressive needs, it can be supported from some of the answers that a part of the interviewees also has the social need which they take care of.

The conclusion drawn from the data gathered is that social interaction, together with others, are push factors regarding the visit of a wellness centre. Lastly, we came to understand that this push factor is less underlined in comparison to others, such as rest and relaxation, health and fitness, or escape.

In connection to the observation made at the location, we, the authors of this thesis, looked at what the interviewees were doing before, while and after we talked to them. We not only observed the ones we discussed with, but also others from the area. We could start by considering one area at a time in order to discuss about their activities. First of all, when we were at the area where the swimming pools were placed, several people were engaging in activities such as swimming, aqua-gym, hydro-massage, or playing with their kids in the children's pool. It is worth mentioning that most of them were in motion. In these areas, most of them were accompanied by others, or were even in bigger groups. Therefore, we could notice that they were laughing, splashing each-other, sitting one next to another and talking. This brought up the socialization aspect of a wellness resort.

In the areas where the hot baths were, visitors were just sitting in the hot waters, most of them were discussing in groups of two or more. The larger groups were older persons whom we could say, from our personal judgment, that were above 60 years old. However, younger couples who were cuddling and spending time together were observed. Lastly, some people who were alone could be observed. Regarding those, they were just sitting and looking around, or they had their eyes closed enjoying their bath.

One important aspect that we noticed is that the hot baths were filled mainly by older people, which brings out the idea which was previously analysed- that the older people are interested in improving health and they do so with the help of the thermal waters). Moreover, the fact that older generations were there for maintaining their health and wellbeing can be underlined.

Another area included the gym. It had a direct exit to the tennis court and beach-volley court. In that place we observed various people different ages doing various exercises, which demonstrates the motive of health and fitness and socialization. It was obvious that many were interested in this area, as the gym had quite a large number of people in. Some of them were inside with a trainer, whilst others were doing exercises by themselves. It is important to mention that these people had a happy look on their faces, meaning that you could tell that the activity they were doing gave them satisfaction.

The area where the medical treatments and massages took place were private. Therefore, we could only see a few people coming out, therefore no relevant observation was made there.

We were also witnesses of a session of aqua gym, which included only persons of the adult age category. We connected several interviewees' answers (such as the ones stating they were engaging in activities such as aqua gym) to our observation made there. Therefore, it can be said that those people were clearly interested in maintaining or improving their health, as one of the interviewees mentioned this aspect to us. Apart from the aqua gym sessions, we noticed how parents were sitting and watching their children while they were involved in swimming lessons. The parents who were there also had their bathing suits equipped. This aspect supports the idea that some go there to spend time with their family members, thus justifying the motive of enhancement of kinship relationships.

5.1 Analysis – Pull Factors

Pull factors are the external motivations which might have the possibility of drawing certain tourists towards visiting a given destination. As Uysal and Jurowski (1994) state, people travel *“because (...) [they are] pulled by [the] external forces of the destination’s*

attributes” (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994:844). In other words, the facilities of a wellness centre can be considered the extrinsic motivations which attract given visitors (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994). An important perspective (Woodside & Martin, 2008) refers to the fact that the intrinsic factors which makes a person visit a destination can also act as a feature of the destination.

Throughout this sub-chapter, interviewees’ answers regarding the pull factors will be studied. Firstly, the opinions of the young age group (20-39 years old) will be analysed, continuing with the adult age group (40-59 years old) and finally with the old age group (60 and more years old). Finally, patterns and differences among their answers will be explained.

Aspects regarding the services, the attributes and the environment at the wellness destination are, for some interviewees, important factors which make them visit that place. Among them, an important destination attribute, namely the price – quality ratio is important (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013). For instance, interviewee A shared her opinion:

“The price and the opening hours of the wellness centre are important; I care more about the quality of the services rather than the quantity of services offered” – Anna (20-39)

A high quality of service is expected in the opinion of A to be provided by the staff, an attribute which can be turned into a pull factor at the destination. In relation to that, it might be considered that the admission fee has to reflect the aforementioned value of the services offered by the wellness destination. For Anna, as she is interested in cosmetics, spa treatments, and saunas, these services need to provide a high level of quality. However, quality is a subjective measure. For her, the wellness resort’s services match what she is looking for. Additionally, even though there might be several services offered by a wellness resort, their quality is more important than the number of activities Anna can go to. This idea is also supported by B, who said:

“Firstly, the wellness centre needs [...] to have accessible prices, [...] a helpful staff, a high variety of facilities and activities.” – Arabela (20-39)

Arabela is a student and whenever she has the chance she interested in going on a wellness holiday. Regarding the Aqua Star wellness resort, she considered that the prices were high, even with a student discount. Therefore, even though both B and A were satisfied by what they found at the destination, for B the high prices were a minus. It can be understood that a pattern which is occurring among women from the young age group is the fact that they

are interested in the admission fees at the destination. Regarding the same pattern, quality is more important than quantity. In other words, if the price is high, it needs to be reflected in what they can receive at the destination. The same aspect of the high admission fee and service prices is again mentioned by another interviewee. Jon (20-39) stated that:

"I care about the prices of the wellness centre (here I think they are a bit high compared to the median salary in the area)" -Jon(20-39).

Therefore, price is an attribute that is important for him too, and shares the same opinion as participant B. Although a low price is an element which could act as a pull for a destination, so far it seems is not the case for the persons considered. However, JOn thinks that the facilities offered at the wellness destination match the price, as *"I think it's good that this wellness centre has a wide array of services in terms of saunas and medical procedures, which I am interested in"* - Jon (20-39). Considering his condition (knee problems because of his football career) the facilities and services attract him to this specific centre. Therefore, just like in the case of interviewee Anna and Arabela, the fact that Aqua Star wellness resort offers a wide variety of services is an advantage. So far, strictly regarding the admission fees, Arabela and G remarked that they are too high for the regional level of wealth. It can be seen that G is strictly interested in the quality of services which would help him improve his knee problems. Similar to the opinion of young women, such as Jon, Arabela and Anna, he desires to follow a given set of procedures and is mostly interested that those are highly qualitative. H is another tourist who underlined the price aspect in connection to the services received at the wellness destination:

"[...] The price - even if the budget doesn't allow me to go, I would make an effort in the case I really liked how the resort looked like; [...] Lastly, I am checking what activities I would do whilst at the destination" -Josh (20-39).

H did not mention directly if the Aqua Lung wellness resort's prices are high or low. However, she desired that the prices were reflected in the quality of services provided by the destination's facilities. Regarding the latter, if through word-of-mouth or on-line reviews she would be pleased by what the resort's touristic offer, she would visit it. Her last statement further highlights the importance of a high level of services offered by the destination. Again, that measure is strictly subjective but certain interviewees, such as Helene, were very interested in the price-quality ratio. When asked about her opinion about them, Helene detailed:

"I expect that a wellness centre has a variety of facilities so that it pleases a number of needs; to be clean; the quality of the services to match the price. If I have a bad experience and I feel that I paid a price that doesn't match with my expectations, I will write my feedback on on-line platforms and also tell about it to my acquaintances; I would like to have a price offer which includes the entry to all the facilities at the centre; when I search for information about a wellness centre that I am about to visit, I look at the pictures, facilities, price and opening hours. The pictures and the price have the highest impact for me. For example, at Aqua Star I don't like that I have to pay separately the entrance to the sauna, whilst at other wellness centres that is already included" –Helene (20-39)

As seen before, especially regarding women from the young age group, price needs to reflect the services offered at the destination. S expected that she would be able to enter in the services provided by the wellness centre without further charges. However, at the Aqua Lung wellness resort, the price did not include entrance to various facilities such as the saunas. Nonetheless, she agreed that even though she had to pay in order to experience those services, she was satisfied with them. As of that, the pattern regarding the matching quality - price at the wellness destination is again underlined. Moreover, especially women from the young age group are interested in cosmetics and the quality of services regarding body pampering need to be high. Overall, the common thought shared between the previously mentioned interviewees is: even though the prices at the destination might be high and additional admission fees need to be paid to experience several services (such as the saunas or the spa treatments), the tourists are still satisfied with their experience at the Aqua Lung wellness centre. As of that, the quality of services provided at their destination wellness resort (in this case at Aqua Lung), are more important than the price required to enter them.

The adult age group share similar thoughts with the people from the young age group in terms of prices. For instance, N mentions that:

"Even though this centre has high prices (in my opinion) for our average income, I think that it's the best place to go and relax (I went to other centres but the therapeutic qualities of the waters were not the same." –Marcelo (40-59)

For Marcelo, the quality of the services provided by the wellness destination are more important than the level of prices. While comparing his experience at the Aqua Lung wellness resort with other wellness centres, he found the former to have a higher amount of services and facilities offered. As it was aforementioned in the cases of previous interviewees, prices

seem to be ignored if the quality of services is high. Andreea also had a remark regarding the admission fee:

“the information that I firstly care about is the price, because if I am not well informed I might end up paying more than I should...and I also want to know what kind of sports can one do at a centre” -Andreea (40-59)

She felt that at Aqua star the fees are too high, especially for the majority of people. From her various answers we understood that she had a high income, but she still felt that the prices could be lowered: *“I consider that for the majority of people (including me) the prices are too high”* Andreea(40-59). However, she was getting out of a sauna before interviewing her and she was travelling together with her family. Even though she was not very satisfied that the Aqua Lung wellness centre was expensive, she still visited it because of the various services and facilities provided. She expressed a high interest in the thermal baths and throughout the interview she mentioned that a reason why she came was because *“...the curing effects of the thermal pools...”* -Andreea (40-59) pulled her towards this place. The relation between the quality of services and the price was again mentioned by Andreea:

“Generally, I am satisfied with their services, but the prices are a bit too high...and another thing-I like to come here when it is not rush hour” –Alexis (40-59)

In his opinion, he went to the Aqua Lung wellness resort because of the variety of services present there and he was pleased with what he found there. Regarding the prices, the interviewees belonging to the adult age group had a shared opinion with the ones from the young age group. As long as their stay at the wellness destination was, in their opinion, qualitative enough, the level of prices was not of a high interest. Another aspect highlighted by E is that within certain hours there was a high amount of people present at the wellness centre. Regarding that, he preferred to ignore those hours because he found the quality of the services offered to be high.

The old age group shared a similar perspective over the fees at the Aqua Lung wellness resort. Iacob commented about this matter that:

“Generally we are pleased by the services and facilities offered by the Aqua Lung wellness resort, but the prices are a bit high” –Iacob (60+)

Being pensioners, their highest interest was that they could gain advantage of various curative services at their destination. Throughout the interview, they did not accentuate the price aspect, but the fact that they were satisfied with what the wellness destination offered them. Arabela also highlighted this aspect:

“Before going on a wellness holiday, I am most interested about the services offered by the destination; its price is not that important” – Arabela (60+)

According to Arabela and Iacob, price is not emphasized, as their main interest relies in how well can they treat their illnesses at the wellness destination.

On an overall basis, the interviews belonging from every age group had a similar view over the prices, with minor differences. The agreed aspect was that the admission fees were high. However, every interviewee expressed that the services offered by the wellness centre were highly qualitative.

Another destination attribute which is considered to have the possibility to push tourists towards visiting a given wellness destination is the offer of sports activities at the wellness destination (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013). Regarding the answers of our interviewees regarding this factor, three respondents mentioned specifically their preferences in having sports facilities within the area of a wellness centre.

The young age group is represented by Cristina. He is an active person who practices sports regularly. He stated that:

“I like to know about the wellness resort if there is the possibility to do various physical activities with a specialized trainer” – Cristina (20-39)

For her, the main reason she went on a wellness holiday is because she is very interested in cosmetics, spa treatments and water activities. However, in the case the wellness destination complements their array of services with sports activities in the context of wellness, this could be a pull factor for Cristina. Moreover, those sports-related activities should be supervised by a professional. At the Aqua Lung wellness destination, Cristina also mentioned that she could practice activities within the gymnasium dimension, such as the possibility to play various sports in a natural environment and afterwards to go to spa treatments. When it comes to the attributes of a wellness centre, the presence of sports-related activities would represent a pull factor for her.

Regarding the adult age group, Ionut is an interviewee both interested in wellness activities (including saunas, thermal treatments, or swimming) and also likes active vacations and to practice a variety of sports. K mentioned that:

“...for me, the facilities that I can find here are enough, especially (..) the beach-volley court where I go and play if the weather is nice “

Strictly regarding the sports facilities, Ionut enjoys playing volley or tennis, as the wellness resort provides these facilities. Moreover, in the fitness gym he can be supervised and taught how to also maintain a fit body. For him, the presence of sports facilities represents a pull factor because he can diversify the wellness activities with others. Another interviewee from the adult age group is Damian (50-60). He said that every year he goes skiing and he considers that he is an active person. His opinion about the factor mentioned above is as follows:

” I expect that a wellness centre has (..) amenities designed for sports, as I like to combine the physical exercises in the water with physical exercises outside (in the fresh air)”

In terms of what he desires to find at the destination, the wellness resort offered various facilities where he could practice physical activities. Regarding the outdoor facilities, he had the possibility to practice various sports, whilst inside the wellness centre he could go to fitness gyms, or water-based exercises and be supervised by professionals. These pull factors from the destinations had a high impact on his stay, as he could combine wellness treatments with practicing his hobbies.

On a general basis, only two respondents from the adult age group and one from the young age group provided specific answers regarding their interest on practicing sports activities at the wellness destination. Therefore, it cannot generalize that a whole group of people is pulled towards this wellness destination by the motivational factor of *“the offer of sports activities at the wellness destination”*. Moreover, the analysis cannot provide concluded differences between age group motivations related to this matter. However, even though only three interviewees mentioned this aspect, it may not completely mean that other interviewees are not motivated to visit a wellness destination because of the sports-related activities present there. For instance, some of the other respondents mentioned that they go to fitness often, for example Helene, Jon, Timea, Arabela. What can be concluded regarding this

pull parameter is that the existence of sports-related facilities and services at a wellness destination might be able to act as an auxiliary pull factor in motivating tourists to visit it.

Another reason why tourists might be “pulled” towards visiting a wellness destination is represented by the attractiveness of the wellness treatments (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013).

Thermal treatments are a service offered by the Aqua Lung wellness resort and was stated by various interviewees. Regarding the young age group, the thermal treatments were seen as an important destination attribute. For instance, B stated that:

"I like going to the thermal baths especially because it gives me a good feeling to stay inside warm water, with a good company and when outside is cold and dark... it's the intimacy I like about it" -Arabela (20-39)

What was found most important about the thermal baths by Arabela is represented by the fact that they provide a cosy ambient. Her main interest about the thermal baths is not to treat diseases, but simply to experience them because they are present there. As a destination attribute, the thermal baths can both act as therapeutic and as an auxiliary attraction at the destination, because various tourists might be interested in experiencing them. J shared the same Arabela's opinion:

"I like a lot the thermal water and I enjoyed my time in it" – Michael (20-39)

In a similar way, her interest in the thermal waters is because she can complement the wellness facilities she goes to (spa treatments, saunas, massages) with something unique found at the destination. As mentioned in the previous push sub-chapter, most interviewees from the young age group was interested in the thermal baths just because they were present at the wellness destination. The pull motive found in this context is represented by the fact that an unique destination attribute exists there and various tourists might want to test it.

Moving on the adult and the old age generations, they were mainly interested in the thermal baths regarding their curative qualities. Most interviewees (such as Damian -40-59; Mariana and Cristino, 40-59, Fernando -40-59) tended to use the thermal baths because of the need to cure an existing illness. For them, this destination attribute was seen as a pull factor because the Aqua Lung wellness resort offered services in that matter. Regarding the thermal treatments, it could be argued that it is a pull factor through which the Aqua Lung wellness

resort motivates people to visit it. Every interviewee had knowledge about the existence of them, and even if mainly the adult and old age groups used them for their curative properties, the young age group was motivated to use them for the purpose of experiencing something new.

Another pull factor through which tourists might be motivated to visit the Aqua Lung wellness resort is represented by the variety of services offered by the wellness resort. One service is represented by the medical section named Aqua Medica. That section of the wellness centre is specialised on treating diseases through the help of the curative properties of the water. Moreover, various types of saunas and hydro massages are provided. For many interviewees, as it will be seen, it represents a pull factor. An interviewee who is interested in those procedures is S:

“I didn't use so far the services offered by Aqua Medica, but I plan to come back here in the future because I have back pain which needs to be treated” -Helene (20-39)

Even though she went to various saunas at the wellness destination, she strictly did not follow medical procedures in order to improve her back illnesses. For S, the fact that she can combine spa activities (for instance- cosmetic spa treatments) with health improving procedures at the same destination is an advantage. It can be stated that she was pulled, at least partly, by the services offered by the wellness resort. Timea is another tourist from the young age group. He stated that:

“...I also enjoy the thermal water as well, and I consider that Aqua Medica is a strong point for the resort, especially for persons like me who need different massage types.” Timea (20-39)

The variety of services offered by the wellness destination has a positive impact over Timea. Because of various health problems, she needs medical treatments. A reason why she visited the Aqua Lung wellness resort is because she could improve her health condition. Services such as the thermal therapy or professional massages drew her to visit this wellness centre. The general view about the variety of services from a wellness destination among the interviewees from the young age group is that it acts as a pull factor. They were motivated to visit this centre because of its high variety of services and facilities and because they want to maintain or improve their health.

Regarding the adult group, Meda needs constant medical attention. She said that:

"... [a wellness resort] ... also needs to be accessible because many old people (like me- and I have a bone fracture need special attention with going in the pools and so on" - Meda(40-59)

The reason why she visited this wellness centre is because she knew beforehand about the services offered at the destination. Therefore, she was "pulled" towards the destination by its attributes. Moreover, Fernando shared a similar opinion with Meda:

"I consider Aqua Medica definitely being a strong point for the centre..."-Fernando (40-59)

Regarding the old age group, it appeared that a similar opinion about the facilities and services offered by the destination resort is shared:

"I need to go to medical treatments (both short and long-term visits) and I am very interested in places that have good quality services in terms of medical procedures and both thermal and salt waters" -Laura (70-80)

Furthermore, L stated that she was following the services offered by the wellness centre during every day of her holiday because she needed to improve her health. Moreover, she was on a wellness holiday together with a friend and they were both taking advantage of what was provided by the Aqua Star wellness resort.

Regarding the services and facilities offered by the wellness destination, the sources where the information about the wellness resort is taken from is also very important. Before visiting any destination, B researches the internet regarding how other people think about a destination in order to find and compare other people's opinions over them: *"...therefore, reviews on on-line sites and feedback from other customers are very important to me" - Arabela(20-39).*

In connection to the aforementioned idea, the reviews are a great deal in shaping her perspective on a destination. Thus, having negative reviews or feedback about the services offered can be a real throwback for the centre. As of that, B is heavily influenced by word-of-mouth, especially by comments written on review websites. Moreover, another pull dimension can be represented by nutrition, especially for Arabela:

"Healthy food is an important element for me to find at a wellness centre due to the fact that I am very interested in nutrition and appearance" -Arabela (20-39). The food

available at a wellness centre can play an important role for the overall experience. She feels that a complete wellness package should contain elements that please the body both inside (healthy nutrition) outside (a variety of facilities available) and the mind (through a quiet surrounding environment). She was not very happy about the existing food at Aqua Star, which made her resume only to healthy drinks.

Another interviewee, Josh, stated that:

"In relation to what I would like to know before visiting a wellness centre, firstly I check online images and reviews, afterwards I check the price and lastly their range of activities. Visually, if it doesn't please my eyes I am not going;

It is understandable that the marketing image of a given SPA destination resort is very important to this participant, as it can be a great pull factor if she is pleased with the package.

However, there are certain problems signalled by Josh. For instance: *"If I were to compare this resort with one from Austria, for example, Aqua Star lacks quietness"* -Josh (20-39). From the intrinsic desire for recreation, the quietness is a possible pull factor that the resort lacks. Her opinion is somehow similar to the one of Arabela, who seeks intimacy.

"If I find all the information I need on the internet and the web site is well done, it means that also the wellness centre has to be good" -Michael (20-39).

Working as a TV operator, he is heavily influenced by what media provides in order to find the information needed. He associates a good website with a good service. Therefore, for him the marketing image of the resort can be a strong pull factor, in the case he finds what he is looking for from the website. Micheal also stressed the importance of the hot baths:

Participant Micehal is also a mother, and has similar expectations as participant Anna, as she shares her perspective about the features of a satisfying wellness centre for her.

"I want everything to be perfectly clean, quality of service, and the staff to be helpful" - Cristina (20-39). As we can see, the aspect of cleanness is again emphases, followed by the quality of services. Moreover, when asked about their general experience at the SPA resort, Cristina mentioned: *"We (me, my husband and the kids) have been to Aqua Star for a few times already and we don't have anything negative to say about the place"* *"the water is good, everything is clean, we like what we find there"* Cristina (20-39). Apparently, they have

no negative comments in connection to the specific place, which means that from her perspective, the aspects mentioned could be considered as pull factors.

“We have been to other centres from other cities, and we like it here more because of the bigger space, variety of facilities and services, the personnel were friendly with us” Cristina (20-39). She mentions the variety of facilities, thing which person G also said he likes about the place, thus we start to see patterns between the answers.

“before I visit a spa I am interested to know about the prices, opening hours and what activities can man do there, especially if we bring children” “For me it is very important that every family member has something to do” Cristina (20-39)

Out of the answers of interviewees Anna and Cristina, it seems that a wellness centre which wants to attract families with children, it is important to offer a variety of facilities and services, so it pleases the need of every family member.

Therefore, the previously mentioned pull factors are important in attracting tourists to visit the wellness destination. The destination attributes, the variety of facilities and services, the quality – price ratio and the sports-related activities were the main pull factors parameters studied in the analysis. Another result is that the thermal baths could be seen as a main destination attribute. Most of the interviewees mentioned they were either interested in going there or following treatments using thermal waters. The price was an aspect about which most interviewees

A last interviewee was represented by the manager of the wellness resort. He desired to share with us his statement about what is that they want to offer to their guests and the main attributes of the wellness centre. The manager of the Aqua Lung wellness resort is the person who knows best about the attributes of the destination. The reason why we, as researchers, are interested in those attributes is because they can be turned into pull factors. Therefore, they might have the role of potentially motivating tourists to visit the wellness centre.

Firstly, their management’s goal is to become the most known touristic attraction in the region, and they wish that their guests have a satisfying stay at the resort. Moreover, the management desires that the tourists can relax, disconnect from the outside world and relax while in a wellness holiday.

Regarding their competitive advantage and one of the main attractions of the destination, the thermal baths are a unique attraction in that region. This idea links to the theory of Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz (2013), which mentions about the fact that one of the attraction factors of the destination is represented by the natural condition of the destination. In this case, that condition is the thermal waters. In his opinion, other factors that could be considered pull factors are raise the attractiveness of the destination could be the following: a) a special feature is the sauna program they have – called *Sauna Masters*, as in Romania there are only two saunas of this kind; b) the nocturnal baths with various themes are also out of the ordinary services they put at the disposal of the guests. The nocturnal baths can be considered part of the pull factor: “*The attraction and uniqueness of some wellness treatments*” identified by (Medina-Munoz and Medina-Munoz, 2013: 528)

The manager also mentioned about the fact that they do not have a specific target they want to reach; their facilities and services are available towards every segment. This makes us, as researchers, understand that the services offered can act as pull factor for any tourist because everybody is welcomed. Throughout the interview, the seasonality came up for discussion to which he said: “*No matter what season and weather is outside, the guests can come any time they want*” and “*I consider that the visitors come to this place because we have the medical centre, the aqua park, the thermal waters, and a variety of saunas*” (wellness centre’s manager). As mentioned previously, he shared a number of facilities that might satisfy the guests’ needs and wants. In turn, these could be turned into external motivation factors which might determine the tourists to come and visit the place.

6.0 Conclusion

Wellness is a wide segment of tourism which is attracting more and more tourists every year and has a continuously growing economy (GWI, 2017). However, wellness tourism is still in the process of being better understood and can be further improved. The aim of this study was to identify the various motivations behind tourists’ decisions to visit a wellness resort from Romania. Besides, literature provided little information about differences in terms of motivations to visit a wellness resort between various age groups (Monteson and Singer 2004, Spafinder Wellness-State of Wellness Travel Report, 2015, Kucukusta and Guille 2014)., Therefore, the authors of this thesis desired to answer the following research questions:

What motivates tourists to visit a wellness resort?

Moreover, as literature provided few pieces of information regarding differences between age groups, the following research sub-question was contextualized:

What are the motivational differences behind various age groups for visiting a wellness resort?

In order to answer the research questions, the research used the motivational theories of the push and pull factors. The data collected was analysed by scrutinizing it through the theoretical lenses of each factor and its various dimensions.

Overall, the main reasons why the interviewees studied within this research went on a wellness holiday were: a) Personal motives, such as: *Escape, Relaxation, Health and Fitness and Social Interaction*; b) External motives, such as: *quality – price ratio, or specific destination attributes*.

Therefore, the analysis showed that there are a variety of intrinsic (motives that push a tourist towards visiting a wellness centre) and extrinsic (motives that pull a tourist to visit a given wellness centre) reasons why they people go on wellness holidays. A first destination attribute highlighted by the analysis is the price of the destination. Firstly, the tourists stated that the price needs to meet the level of quality found at a wellness resort. Even though that was a subjective measure, tourists agreed that the prices from the Aqua Lung wellness resort were high, especially in connection to the country's median income. However, they agreed that they would spend more money in order to go on a wellness holiday if they would receive a variety of services in exchange: such as different types of massage, helpful staff, various medical treatments, a range of facilities, sports amenities etc. This was the case at the Aqua Lung wellness resort. Regarding how tourists from different age groups (the young age group - between 20 and 39 years old; the adult age group – between 40 and 59 years old, and the old age group – between 60 and more years old) perceived the price aspect, it was from a similar perspective. Even though the prices were mentioned to be high, the interviewees stated that in comparison to other resorts they could take advantage of unique many facilities that were there. For instance, the Aqua Lung wellness resort exhibited pull factors, such as thermal baths and spa facilities which were used by most of the guests.

The attributes of the destination is another parameter of the pull factors which was scrutinized. The interviewees wanted the destination to meet specific requirements.

Cleanliness was an attribute mentioned by every tourist. No matter the age group or gender they belonged to, the analysis stated that the wellness destination had to be hygienic. Regarding the Aqua Lung wellness resort, only positive comments regarding cleanliness were stated. This is what tourists seek at a destination in the first place, and they found that while at their destination. Another attribute stated by various interviewees and previously analysed is represented by the existence of specific attractions at the destination. The thermal baths were seen very important because they were unique to the area where the Aqua Lung wellness resort is situated. Several interviewees visited this wellness destination mainly because they thought that sitting in thermal baths would cure various illnesses. Moreover, being able to go to various spa treatments and also sit in thermal baths motivated them to go on a wellness holiday at this destination. Regarding the age groups, the analysis showed that there are differences in terms of the reasons the tourists visited the Aqua Lung wellness resort. Tourists from the young age group were mainly motivated to go to spa treatments. This segment associated the thermal baths with health issues. Only one tourist whom we interviewed from the young segment stated he was going there only because he received medical advice to do so. The analysis showed that other people from the young segment preferred to mainly attend other activities and services offered by the destination, such as swimming pools, spa treatments or saunas. Regarding the adult age group, the tourists were mixing their stay by going to both spa treatments and thermal baths. Thus, medical advice or their knowledge that thermal baths are curative motivated adults to visit this wellness destination. Tourists from this age group were alternating this with spa treatments. Regarding gender differences, the analysis showed that men were mostly following medical advice when going to the thermal baths, while women were also going to spa treatments because they wanted to purify their bodies. Therefore, the analysis presented that women had an intrinsic desire to improve their aesthetics. The destination's attributes provided extrinsic facilities where they could satisfy their personal needs. Lastly, the old age group was mainly motivated in terms of destination attributes to visit a wellness centre because of its therapeutic and healing properties. This age group was mostly interested in following professional medical advice and going to specific procedures in order to cure illnesses and maintain their health.

In order to want to visit a wellness destination and to take advantage of the services in offers, tourists need to firstly be intrinsically motivated to go on wellness holidays. An important wish was to get away from the surrounding world and escape their daily lives. The tourists expressed their need to visit a wellness centre and be taken care by others. A wellness

resort provided the advantage of various services, such as massages or pools situated in a romantic setting. The nocturnal offers from the Aqua Lung wellness resort made them desire to escape towards a romantic environment. In those cases, tourists sought to fulfil intrinsic desires, and a wellness destination provided matching extrinsic services. For others, especially in the cases of young mothers, being in the presence of their family but going to spa treatments alone made them visit a wellness destination. The young age group was mainly pushed to escape their daily lives or stress because they could spend quality time with their families. They were motivated to go on a wellness holiday because it provided a wide array of services where they could completely forget about their mundane activities. Again, their intrinsic motivations were imagined as the activities which would be undertaken at a wellness resort. Moreover, tourists who were young mothers still felt the need to spend time alone but at the same time have their families nearby. The analysis showed that the adult age group, mostly represented by couples, wanted a getaway from their daily lives and go for a romantic getaway at a wellness destination.

Another dimension of the push factors was represented by the rest and relaxation push factors. Tourists were motivated to visit a wellness destination because they could fulfil those intrinsic needs in a place where they could go to activities that would both improve their health and offer them the opportunity to rest. And it was that wellness centre that had more needed services under one roof. For example, Jon said that he likes the fact that he can swim and go to the medical treatments he needs for his problem, and enjoy the sauna. All the interviews had more than one motive for going there, thus because of their various needs they chosen to go the particular place. The young age group was mostly motivated to visit a wellness centre because they could go to spa treatments. Moreover, the analysis showed that after their stay at the wellness destination, tourists experienced a boost of energy. Lastly, tourists exhibited their need to practice yoga and meditation in a wellbeing context. A shared thought between both women from the young and adult age groups was represented by their interest in cosmetics. The analysis displayed their need of rest and relaxation was fulfilled at the Aqua Lung wellness resort. This happened because they could go to various spa treatments which allegedly improved their physical appearance. Men from the adult age group mainly expressed their desire to sit in thermal baths, swim or go to the saunas. That would provide them with the rest and relaxation needed. Therefore, it can be stated that a wellness centre should provide to their guests a small haven where they can improve their physical and psychical conditions.

A wellness destination should also offer the possibility to socialise in a well-being context. The analysis exhibited that social interaction is an important motive why tourists go on a wellness holiday. Being able to energize, go to spa treatments or practice activities while in a group was important. The young age group highly emphasised the social context when they visit a wellness centre. Women from this age group were mostly travelling with friends who had mutual interests in wellness. The reason was because they could share their knowledge about the activities they were following. A negative aspect remarked at the Aqua Lung wellness resort by tourists from every age group was represented by a high level of surrounding noise. This can be turned into a suggestion because quiet areas could be built. By doing that, the visitors would feel that their need of being able to socialise without being troubled by others would be fulfilled. However, the analysis exhibited that even though a wellness destination might have some minuses, tourists would still visit it in the case the services offered are highly qualitative. The adult age group was also motivated to go on a wellness holiday because of their need of socializing. Group activities in a healthy context (such as the thermal baths or spa treatments) was highlighted as their most important motivation. Lastly, the analysis showed that the old age group was traveling mostly because of the social interaction push factor. A wellness holiday represented a place where they could cure various illnesses and maintain their health. However, if it was not for the social context, these tourists would not travel alone.

Lastly, the analysis presented that tourists are highly motivated to go on a wellness holiday for health and fitness reasons. Tourists from the adult and older age group expressed their interest in maintaining or improving their health. The young age group emphasized the need of maintaining a healthy body. The analysis showed that the young age group perceive various spa treatments, saunas or swimming as healthy and curative. A pattern seen among women from the young and adult age groups is that wellness activities are rejuvenating in the sense that they prevent diseases, maintain a fit aspect and offer a boost of energy. While moving on to the adult segment, tourists seemed more motivated to visit a wellness centre because of their interest in attending various wellness procedures. The analysis stated they mainly desired to cure various illnesses but also attend spa treatments. The old age group was mainly focused on curing illnesses and maintaining their health.

6.1 Contributions to the existent literature

The wellness tourism industry is continuously growing and the tourist needs are constantly increasing. Therefore, they need to be constantly nurtured. This research focused on exploring the motivations of tourists to visit a wellness centre in an Eastern-European country, namely Romania. A more in-depth knowledge about their motivations and needs while at the destination was provided.

On the other hand, the research highlighted the fact that certain tourists would ignore some issues while on their wellness holiday. For example, the study stated that certain disadvantages of a wellness destination, such as a high admission fee or being disturbed by others as a tourist could be overlooked if the quality of services strictly relating the spa and wellness activities is high enough.

Moreover, the study focused on exploring different motivations for going on a wellness holiday between three age groups. Differences between a young tourist segment (with ages between 20 and 39 years old), an adult tourist segment (40 years old and 59 years old) and an old tourist segment (60 and more years old) was provided.

6.2 Further research

The present research focused on a small number of tourists who was interested in visiting a wellness centre. The aim of the study was to offer a more in-depth analysis of the motives of tourists to visit a wellness centre, and also to compare those motives among three different age groups. There is a variety of questions left unstudied and unanswered. In this sub-chapter, other research paths which might be worth exploring will be presented.

Considering that the study focused on a wellness centre from Romania, the different motivations from various age groups could be further explored. Perhaps by using the travel career approach on a larger number of tourists which travelled to a higher number of wellness centres, a more in-depth study on tourist motivation could be offered. Moreover, it might be

interesting to understand how tourists from various age groups have developed their interest in wellness.

Another research could be conducted in order to study motivations between tourists from various countries. It would be interesting to conduct a comparative study on how tourists from different age groups who are living in different countries are motivated to go on a wellness holiday. Lastly, the supply side could be further studied.

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