

Operational Guidelines on Spa Tourism: Business Policy and Sustainability

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Abstract

This descriptive research aimed to evaluate the depth of services offered by spa establishments in Region VI and likewise made a comprehensive evaluation in the monitoring of the government policies as to its operation and maintenance that leads to the formulation of a system for compliance of these policies towards spa establishment creating Region VI a world class spa tourism destination. Specifically, it determined the profile of spas in Region VI in terms of: Type of Organization; Type of Business; Services Offered; No. of Years in Business; No. of Employees; No. of Clients/ Month; Average Clients Spending; and Clients Type: the extent of adherence to the standards of Department of Health of spa operation and maintenance across provinces in terms of; Clients Portfolio, Sanitation and Maintenance, Facilities and Amenities, Services and Staff Competency: the issues and concerns that often are experienced by Spa. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches with the use of various data gathering procedures and instruments such as survey techniques, documentary and interview techniques. The study has 384 respondents composed of owners of spa establishments, employees and clients. The study implemented stratified random sampling method in the administration of the survey instruments. The data quantitative were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical tool such as mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, rank tools, and inferential statistics using one way ANOVA. Results revealed that profile of spa and wellness establishments in Region VI in terms of Type of Organization, Type of Business, Services Offered, No. of years in Business, No. of Employees, No. of Clients/ month, Ave. Clients Spending and Clients Type, differs across provinces. Results revealed that the extent of compliance to government policies in terms of Client Folio is “ High ” and staff competency is “Low “. Based from the results the most prevalent issues and concerns that are often experienced by spa establishments in relation to their adherence to standards were management issues (personal conflicts) with prostitution and attitudes towards clients. With these findings the research was able to formulate a system compliance that will create Region VI a world class spa tourism destination.

INTRODUCTION

Wellness is about making healthy lifestyle choices and maintaining one’s well-being both physically and mentally. In recent years, more people around the world have begun to recognize the importance of wellness – a trend which has seen the value of the industry increase year -on-year. In 2013, the market size of the global wellness industry amounted to more than 3.4 million U. S. dollars. The various segments

making up the wellness industry are diverse and include, among others, healthy eating and weight loss, fitness, alternative medicine. Another industry commonly linked with wellness is the spa industry.

Spa, of course, is not a new amenity. Today’s spa descended from the ancient practice of bathing in hot spring and mineral waters. These date back as far as the Babylonians and the Greeks at least. Some claim that the origin of the

word “spa” comes from the Belgian town of spa. Known since Roman times for its soothing baths, other historian speculate that the word could be an acronym for the Latin phrase “sanitas per aquas” - which translate to help through water. In the 19th century, Europe’s great spa was destinations for the wealthy that went there to “take the waters”. Water treatments are still considered the heart of the spa experience in Europe while massages are by far the most popular spa treatment in America.

Reasons for seeking spa treatment range from medical reasons and pain relief to relaxation and stress relief. Or even just to indulge and pamper. Another segment of the wellness industry is wellness tourism. Wellness tourism is those travelling within their own country or to other parts of the world in order to carry out activities which may help them to improve their quality of life. Like the wellness industry itself, wellness tourism is more popular and its market size is forecast to reach approximately 680 billion U.S. dollars by 2017. Travellers who have experienced wellness tourism emphasize its positive effects on the mind. Its ability to reduce stress and its promotion of physical health.

Within the wellness tourism segment, lodging and transport contributed the largest amount to market size in 2012, with 93.4 billion and 91,8 billion U.S. dollars respectively. Other areas of wellness tourism include food and drink, shopping and activities and excursions. In a June 2014 survey, 70 percent of North American health travellers labeled healthy meals as an important factor in wellness vacations. Nature experiences and fitness activities also ranked among the most important aspects.

On the other hand, today’s spa is a center for healing and nourishing mind, body, and spirits. People go to spa for fitness, stress management, peace of mind, pampering and pleasure, and health and wellness. Spas offer a wide variety of techniques and services- traditional and modern, from the East and from the West- to meet the diverse needs of their clients: Swedish, Japanese Shiatsu, and Thai massage, European facial, acupuncture,

hypnotherapy, classes in nutrition, meditation, journaling, yoga and Tai Chi and much more.

For those reasons, wellness spa becomes an added attraction of the most renowned tourism destination in the world. That is why many spa and wellness centers have proliferated or mushroomed all over the area wherein tourism development is prominent.

However, we cannot deny the fact that with tourism development there is also the risk for socio cultural exchange as one of the negative impacts of these developments, like prostitution and sex tourism. This is also true with spa establishments because undeniably other from the usual offered, there are some wellness spas that are tolerating indecent practices with or without the knowledge of the operators. The spa became a venue for prostitution and some illicit activities.

Although, in Region VI the government has been taking actions to actively monitors the spa business, still there instances that they cannot control as such because of some illicit activities such as consented by their employees, clients and owners; which leads to discontinuance of the advocacy of promoting wellness, health and relaxation.

Thus, this study aimed to evaluate the depth of services offered by spa establishment in region VI and likewise made a comprehensive evaluation in the adherence to standards of the Department of Tourism as well as the Department of Health as to spa operation and maintenance that lead to the formulation of a business policy for sustainability towards creating Region VI as a world class spa tourism destination.

Statement of the Problem

The ultimate goal of this study was to evaluate the depth of services offered by spa establishment in Region VI and likewise make a comprehensive evaluation in the adherence to standards of the Department of Tourism as well as Department of Health as to its operation and maintenance that lead to the formulation of business policy towards sustainability and thus creating Region VI a world class spa and wellness tourism destination.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of spas in the region VI in terms of
 - 1.1 Types of Organization;
 - 1.2 Types of Business;
 - 1.3 Services Offered;
 - 1.4 Number of Years in the Business;
 - 1.5 Number of Employees;
 - 1.6 Number of Clients /Month;
 - 1.7 Average Clients Spending;
 - 1.8 Client Type;
2. What is the extent of adherence to the standards of the Department of Health and the Department of Tourism for spa and wellness operation and maintenance across provinces in terms of the following indicators?
 - 2.1 Client Portfolio;
 - 2.2 Sanitation and maintenance;
 - 2.3 Facilities and Amenities;
 - 2.4 Services;
 - 2.5 Staff Competency?
3. Are there significant differences to the extent of adherence to the standards of the Department of Health and Department of Tourism of the spa operation and maintenance across provinces in terms of the variables mention in SOP 2?
4. What are the gaps between DOH and DOT operational and maintenance guidelines for spa and wellness establishments in the areas mentioned in SOP 2?
5. What are the issues and concerns that often experienced by spa establishments in the relation to their adherence to standards of DOH and DOT?
6. What is the implication of the results and findings of the study in the formulation of a business policy for sustainability of spas in Region VI?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology implemented in the study. Specifically, this chapter presents the distribution of respondents, sampling and data

gathering techniques, the materials and instruments, the procedures of data analysis.

Research Design

This study aimed establish empirical data on the profile of the spa and wellness establishment in Region VI as well as the extent of their adherence to DOH and DOT standards in relation to operation and maintenance as mandated in the government rules and regulation. This will eventually lead to the formulation of a business policy towards sustainability that will enhance and promote the industry of becoming a world class spa and wellness destinations.

The study implemented quantitative and qualitative approaches with the use of various instruments and data gathering techniques such as ethnographic technique with the help of experts in the field, survey questionnaires, interview guide, and focus group discussion technique.

Respondents of the Study

Based on the given statement of the problem the study identified the following respondents and informants. For the profiling of the spa and wellness industry in Region VI, the study was able to get the data from fifty (50) spa and wellness establishment all over the region, represented by their respective owners.

For the second statement of the problem, which is to determine the extent of adherence to the standards of Department of Health and Department of Tourism in spa and wellness operations and maintenance, the respondents were the owners, masseurs, and clients of spa and wellness establishment from different provinces in Region VI.

To answer the focus group discussion questions, specifically on the issue and concerns that are often experienced by the spa and wellness establishments in relation to their adherence to the given standards by the DOH and DOT, the respondents that had been identified in the second statement of the problem were also considered.

Using the estimator formula as followed: Necessary Sample Size= (Z-score) *StdDev*(1-StdDev) / (margin of error) the total sample size was determined. The confidence interval level

was set as 95%, margin of error at ± 0.05 and the standard deviation was as its safest which 0.05 is. The Z score at 95% is given to be 1.96, substituting these values; the sample size derived was 384.

These numbers were then distributed to the different category of respondents using stratified random sample technique, with the provinces in the Region as the sub stratum. Table 1 below therefore show the distribution of respondents as a whole, across provinces and according to respondents category and Figure 2 and 3 present the distribution of respondents across provinces and according to category.

Conclusions

Based from the results and findings of the study the following conclusion were drawn.

1. As to the profile of the spas establishment in region VI are locally owned. It can be deduced that the businessmen or entrepreneurs outside of the region are not risk takers and would not want to venture in region VI. It can be construed that they avoid much business complications. It can also be concluded that although spa and wellness industry is a promising business yet they lack enthusiasm in promoting and marketing it because of the investment and procedure to undertake.

Types of Business; Spa establishments in region VI have varied business types, but majority are single owned. This affirms the conclusion above that spa owners are avoiding business risk and many complications in business.

According to service offered: Result may construed that the varied services of spa establishment mean competitiveness and aggressiveness of the operators.

No. of years in business: the spas in region VI have been operating from 1-11 years only which would mean as that most of the spas are still new in the business.

No. of Employees: There are more spa with more than ten employees than those with less than ten which can be interpreted that there are more big spas than small spas operating in region VI.

NO. of clients/ month: Since most spa in region VI have an average accumulated clients of more than 400 per month would mean as the spa business is very much promising in terms of growth and profit potential.

Ave. Client Spending / month: Since most spa in region VI have average client spending in a month of less than P350 which would mean as the spa business is very much promising in terms of growth and profit potential.

According to client type: Since spas in region VI cater to different clients such as domestic and foreign clients. It can be deduced that spa management / owners are adaptable and flexible to different clients suited to their needs.

2. The extent of adherence to standard of DOH of the spas maintenance across provinces in terms of Client Portfolio was perceived " High " by respondents across provinces. This simply means that the record of the spas were kept for the purpose of monitoring.

The extent of adherence to standard of DOH of the spas maintenance across provinces in terms of Client Portfolio was perceived " High " by respondents across provinces. This simply concludes that spas in region VI adhered to standards in terms of sanitation.

The extent of adherence to standard of DOH of the spas maintenance across provinces in terms of Facilities and Amenities Maintenance was perceived " High " by respondents across provinces, this simply concludes that the spas in region VI conformed to the standard given by the DOH and other government agencies.

The extent of adherence to standard of DOH of the spas maintenance across provinces in terms of services was perceived " High " by respondents across provinces, this simply concludes that in terms of services that spas in region VI have high quality service.

The extent of adherence to standard of DOH of the spas maintenance across provinces in terms of staff competency was perceived " Low " by respondents across provinces, This concludes that the staff are not competent based on the guidelines given by the DOH and other government agencies.

3. The extent to adherence to standard of DOH of spa operation and maintenance across provinces were not the same in terms of Client or portfolio? Likewise, other spas have their own methods or style of keep saying their client or portfolio.

Further, it is concluded that the extent of adherence to standards of DOH of spa operation and maintenance across provinces were almost similar in terms of sanitation. Also, spa establishments in region VI adhere to the standards of DOH in term of sanitation.

Furthermore, it is concluded that the extent of adherence to standards of DOH of spa operation and maintenance across provinces were also almost similar in terms of Facilities and Amenities Maintenance.

Even furthermore, it can be deduced that the extent of adherence to standard of DOH of spa operation and maintenance across provinces were not the same in terms of services and it was also concluded that other spa establishments offer better services than others.

Lastly, it can be surmised that the extent of adherence to standard of DOH spa operation and maintenance across provinces were not the same in terms of staff competency and other spa establishment have competent staff while others do not have.

4. The presence of gap within the client portfolio does not affect the operational of the spa establishment in region VI. This can be further be explained that the DOT mandates had been followed because client portfolio is one of the minimum, requirements for accreditation of spa establishments.
5. The most prevalent issues and concerns that are often experience by spa establishment in relation to other adherence to standards were management issues (personal conflict) with highest frequency, prostitution and attitudes towards clients. This simply concludes that there are really issues in the spa establishment relating to conflict with the management, prostitution and

attitudes towards clients that remain unspoken and unresolved which need to be given attention by the establishment and the government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and the conclusion delivered from the investigation the following recommendation was drawn:

1. Strengthen the promotion and marketing of the spa in order to attract more investors and improve the magnitude of business, increasing transaction in terms of quantity and clients spending. It was also recommended that capability building and training of staff must be pushed to promote staff competency for competitiveness of spa and wellness industry in the region.
2. Orient properly on the DOT and DOH operational guidelines all the spa establishments stakeholders such as the owners, workers, and clients. This will make them aware of and conscious of doing business in accordance with the said guidelines and requirements henceforth, elicit practices will be avoided if not eliminated.
3. Enforce strictly the rules and regulation of thee DOH and DOT to promote quality in the areas of client portfolio, sanitation, facilities and amenities maintenance, services and staff competency. This will ensure safety and sanitation of customers.
4. Impose the DOH rules and regulation on maintaining the records and files of the customers. this will help them cognizant of the health related concern of the clients of the spa establishments.
5. Resolve the business related issues particular on the existence of illicit activities injustice towards the employees especially in the issues of salaries and wages, issues in facilities and amenities, services, sanitation and staff competency. Likewise, corresponding monitoring done by DOH, DOT as well as DOLE and the

LGU's in the respective provinces to ensure the compliance and contribute to the leveling up in the service quality offered.

6. Adopt the proposed business policy for sustainability of the spa establishment in region VI. The suggested policy harmonized that the operational guidelines for spa business and performance of the DOH and DOT as government regulatory agencies.