

Push and Pull Factors for Selecting Spas, a Literature Review

Introduction

According to the International SPA Association (ISPA), there were more than 180 million spa visits during 2017, a record, and a 2.5% increase from 2015. Revenues increased even more to a record \$16.8 billion, a 3.1% increase. To meet growing demand for spa services, the total number of spas jumped to 21,260, an increase of 1.1%.

With more and more consumers focused on beauty and wellness, it is no surprise that the spa business is growing. Other trends positively impacting the spa business include a focus on natural and sustainable products and preference for experiences over products. A Euromonitor International 2017 global consumer trends survey found that nearly half (45%) of respondents and 39% of respondents aged 20-29 say that they prefer to spend their money on experiences rather than things. Meditation, yoga and clean eating are top activities of wellness-oriented consumers and this all bodes well for the spa industry.

On the other hand, many consumers who are focused on wellness have limited disposable income to spend on spa experiences, especially among the Millennial generation. When a spa or wellness center is not in the local area and the guest must travel to reach it, there is a higher overall cost and requires a stronger combination of motivations to reach that decision. To determine the best way to attract prospective spa customers, this paper will provide a review of push and pull factors for spas from the literature.

Motivation is based on customer value, the trade-off between the benefits received from the product or experience and the cost, in terms of money spent, time spent, inconvenience and risk. There are two ways that customer value has been evaluated in the literature; as a unidimensional where there is an overall perceived score or value to the product or service, or a multidimensional construct, where different factors are considered independently.

Push and pull definitions

Motivations can be classified into push and pull factors. Push factors are internal forces that motivate an individual or create a desire to have a spa experience and pull factors are spa destination attributes, which may include the facility, the treatments and classes available, the cuisine, the location, and any specialized focus on a philosophy, type of guest, diet or program.

Push and pull factors for wellness travel

Push factors for travel in general, which includes travel for wellness include escape (Crompton 1979; McGehee et al. 1996; Uysal and Jurowski 1993; Yoon and Uysal 2005), relaxation (Crompton 1979; Kozak 2002; McGehee et al. 1996), education (Crompton 1979; Yoon and Uysal 2005) and comfort (McGehee et al. 1996). In

addition, Hallab (2006) uncovered five push motivations for wellness travel specifically; healthy living, excitement, education, indulgence and escape. He also identified five pull motives; health and fitness, hygiene and the environment, history and nature, vigilance and health and arts and urban luxury.

Mak et al. (2009) identified five of his own push motivations, which include friendship and kinship, health and beauty, self-reward and indulgence, relaxation and relief and escape.

Konu and Laukkanen (2009) found seven push motivations and Azman and Chan (2010) identified three push and two pull motives, detailed in the table below.

Table 1 – Summary of identified push and pull motives for wellness travel

Citation	Pull motives	Push motives
Hallab (2006)	Health and fitness, hygiene and the environment, history and nature, vigilance and health and arts and urban luxury	Healthy living, excitement, education, indulgence and escape
Mak et al (2009)		Friendship and kinship, health and beauty, self-reward and indulgence, relaxation and relief and escape
Konu and Laukkanen (2009)		Self-development, healthy and physical activity, relation and escape, isolation and nostalgia, nature, autonomy and stimulation, and social status
Azman and Chan (2010)	Tangible resources (environment, atmosphere, decoration) and marketing image (affordability, availability and accessibility, range of treatments, professionalism)	Relax and pamper, distress/time out and rejuvenate/regeneration
ISPA Global Consumer Study (2008)	Gift certificate, friend/family recommendation, healthcare practitioner recommendation, complimentary products or bonus services, package, advertised sales, convenient appointment times	

Damijanić and Luk (2017) did a survey asking tourists at Croatia wellness hotels about their attitudes toward healthy lifestyle, perceived value, travel motives and respondent characteristics. To measure travel motives and perceived value, researchers used a five-point Likert scale (1= “strongly disagree to 5=”strongly

agree). They found that the top push factors were health trend, relaxation and award and novelty. The top pull factors were basic wellness, intangible wellness and extra wellness. Additional pull motives that relate specifically to the locale and facility include cultural and natural heritage, entertainment and recreation and landscape.

When relating push and pull factors to perceived customer value, relaxation and reward related to functional dimensions of customer value and health trend impacted both the perception of prestige and the perception of value for the money. When guests reported a motivation of extra wellness, they had a perception of prestige. Facility and personnel aspects like atmosphere and host-guest interaction also factored into the perception of value for the money.

Push and pull factors for spas

Trihas and Konstantarou conducted research on spas to determine spa goers' motives for visiting a luxurious resort spa in Elounda, Greece and the critical factors that spa goers look for when choosing a spa. Most of the respondents were experienced spa guests, with 80% having visited a spa before. Many of them go to local spas when not on vacation and participate in healthy activities at home.

When it came to push motives, spa goers 30.9% said that they agree or strongly agree that they prefer wellness activities when on vacation. They overwhelmingly identified stress relief/relaxation as a motivation (90.2%), followed by physical health (22.7%), beauty (12.2%) and anti-aging (4.9%) as motivations.

The most significant pull motives were cleanliness and maintenance, personnel hygiene and staff knowledge. Other top motives were personnel behavior and courtesy, quality of services and decoration/ambiance. The study found that the inclusion of the word "spa" in the name of the resort positively influences guests to choose that particular resort. Relatively low importance was placed on spa brand names and positive online reviews.

Cheung surveyed spa guests who had visited an American resort or hotel spa in the past two years via an online questionnaire.

Relatively speaking, spa visitors' push factors (internal motivations) were significantly more important in motivating them to visit the spa compared to pull factors, with a standard factor loading of 0.889 for push factors and 0.667 for pull factors.

Among the push factors, in the category relaxation & relief, "I visited this spa to refresh myself" was the top motivation (0.757), followed by in the health & beauty category, "I visited this spa to enhance my physical wellbeing" (0.726). In the self-reward & indulgence category, "I sought a pampering experience by visiting this spa" was next with 0.722 and then under relaxation & relief, "I visited this spa for relaxation and stress reduction" with 0.715.

In the push factors, the least important motivations were to indulge in a luxurious experience (0.576) and therapeutic reasons (0.632).

The most important pull factor was under the brand category, "I visited this spa because it offered my preferred treatment(s)" (0.725) and in the same category, "I visited this spa because it carried my preferred product line(s)" (0.700).

This result contradicts the results from Trihas and Konstantarou that found that brand was relatively unimportant. This may be a result of the fact that the Trihas and Konstantarou surveyed guests of a single destination spa and were focused more on its location and reputation, while Cheung's respondents had attended a variety of spas including those close to home and were choosing them more for regular beauty treatments.

The least important pull factor was in the convenience category, "I visited this spa because the appointment time(s) met my schedule and needs" (0.522), followed by "I visited this spa because of its brand name" in the brand category (0.544).

Female spa goers were more self-motivated (push factors) than male spa goers, and both genders were equally influenced by pull factors. Relative to other age groups, those 65 and older were less motivated by push factors. In regard to pull factors, the 35-46 age group was slightly less motivated than the other age groups (3.36 compared to 3.50 for 18-34; 3.66 for 47-65 and 3.52 for over 65).

When looking at educational level, those with an associate college degree were much more inclined to weigh push factors more heavily (5.80), and those with a doctorate degree were the least inclined (4.77). Spa goers with some college/university education were the most inclined to give importance to pull factors (3.80) followed by those with a masters degree (3.78). Those with a doctorate or "other" educational level gave the least importance to pull factors, 3.16 and 3.14, respectively.

The survey also asked respondents their occupation. Push factors resonated the most with chief executives (5.74), managers (5.53) and, interestingly, housewives (5.48). The occupations with the lowest push motivations were skilled/technical (4.53), retirees (4.84) and public administrators/officials (4.94).

Pull factors were most important to housewives (4.19), public administrators/officials (3.91) and chief executives (3.89). Pull motivations were the least important to other occupations (3.30), educators (3.57) and the self-employed (3.63).

The study found that higher motivations positively influenced their perceived service quality, which in turn influenced their satisfaction and propensity to speak positively of their experience. Although positive word of mouth did not result in

repurchase intention, it did positively impact motivating other people to go to the spa for the first time.

Conclusion

This data points spa operators to seek out highly motivated potential clients, especially those with strong push motivations, those actively looking for relaxation and stress reduction, beauty treatments and healthy living, since they are the most likely to become spa customers and influence others to do so. Groups that have strong push motivations are women in general, those under age 65, chief executives, managers and housewives.

To supplement, spa managers can highlight pull motivations, concentrating on brand treatments and other factors primarily when marketing to a local audience, and destination/facility/personnel factors when marketing to wellness tourists for upscale spa destinations. The spa's pristine cleanliness, attentive staff and design elements should also be prominently displayed in marketing materials. Men are more likely to be influenced by pull factors, along with housewives, public administrators/officials and chief executives.

Spa goers seem to not be motivated to visit the same spa again, but spa enthusiasts like to attend many different spas and to influence others to go to spas where they have had a positive personal experience. This suggests that spas will benefit from post-visit marketing to encourage visitors to recommend the spa to friends and family. It may also be beneficial for spas to do co-marketing to recent visitors, suggesting another spa, with perhaps compensation for each customer referral who visits the recommended spa.

It is possible that spa visitors are reluctant to go back to a spa they have visited already because they crave a different experience. More research can uncover if spas would benefit from changing up their offerings, by hosting unique events, changing décor in different areas and providing different services periodically to give visitors a reason to return again.

There is also an opportunity to investigate the importance of specific push and pull factors on local/day spas compared to destination spas and also to discover if the treatment prices and lodging prices are mitigating factors in push and pull motivations of spa goers.

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