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Sauna tourism in Fuengirola

Can you make a living with a sauna?

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ABSTRACT

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The backgrounds for the thesis idea came when I asked some Finnish Fuengirola residents "What do you think this city lacks?". The subject is largely unexplored and I think that there is a quite a bit of research to be done about this.

The aim of this thesis is to answer the question that are the Finnish travelers in Fuengirola, Spain interested in a better public sauna than the current offers available and how much they would be willing to pay for such a service, and also what is the maximum distance they would travel to get to such a service.

The focus will be mainly on the customer desires and on the current sauna offerings, and through this the thesis is able to map what kind of a sauna business would be profitable in Fuengirola.

The material includes a three books and some articles.

The conclusion – This thesis explores what the average Finnish consumer wants from a sauna experience in the town of Fuengirola, Spain. The study results were promising, and I believe that there could be space in the current market for a new type of sauna which would focus especially on women.

Keywords Sauna, wellness, entrepreneurship, fuengirola, spain

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Books

R. Bushnell, P. J. Sheldon, 2009, Wellness and Tourism: Mind, Body, Spirit, Place, Cognizant Communication Corporation

M. Smith, L. Puczkó, 2013, Health and Wellness tourism, Routledge

C. Voigt, C. Pforr, 2014, Wellness Tourism: A destination perspective, Routledge

Articles

Development of the Finnish sauna: <http://www.sauna.fi/in-english-2/development-of-the-finnish-sauna-2/>

WHO Glossary of terms http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HPR%20Glossary_New%20Terms.pdf

WHO Definition of Health <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>

Wikipedia Fuengirola <https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuengirola>

UEF: Sauna Health Benefits <https://www.uef.fi/in/-/runsas-saunominen-suojaa-miehia-sydankuolemilta>

Hotel News Now: Global report

<http://www.hotelnewsnow.com/Articles/20616/Brands-focus-on-health-and-wellness-in-design>

ITB World Travel Trends Report 2015-2016 http://www.itb-berlin.de/media/itbk/itbk_dl_all/itbk_dl_all_itbkongress/itbk_dl_all_itbkongress_itbkongress365/itbk_dl_all_itbkongress_itbkongress365_itblibrary/itbk_dl_all_itbkongress

[s_itbkongress365_itblibrary_studien/ITB_World_Travel_Trends_Report_2015_2016.pdf](https://www.itbkongress365_itblibrary_studien/ITB_World_Travel_Trends_Report_2015_2016.pdf)

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Anand Ballabh, 2005: Fundamentals of Tourism and Travel

<http://bieap.gov.in/Pdf/TTPaperIII.pdf>

Figures

Alternative Leisure Activities by Gender Within Country, R. Bushnell, P. J. Sheldon, 2009, Wellness and Tourism: Mind, Body, Spirit, Place, page 86

The Enhanced Push-Pull Model, C. Voigt, C. Pforr, 2014, Wellness Tourism: A destination perspective, page 53

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research thesis is mostly on identifying and specifying how much the average consumer values different areas of the sauna experience and how these reflect into the decision-making processes that result in the behaviour of a customer. This provides crucial information for entrepreneurs in terms of what they can do within their own domains to further facilitate customer satisfaction through better understanding of the customer behaviour.

The research study of this thesis is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research – the quantitative study explores the needs and wants of the consumers through a questionnaire that maps the current experiences and the future needs of the customer and the qualitative study is done through face to face interviews. The theoretical framework starts with the summary of wellness tourism in general, i.e. what people generally look for in wellness tourism and how wellness tourism is defined. The questionnaire and the interview answers are compared with the theoretical guidelines and this will provide valuable information about possible future developments for the wellness industry in Fuengirola.

The development potential is enormous, as preliminary questioning brought up the fact that people are very dissatisfied with the current sauna offerings of Fuengirola – there are only a few available. Every person questioned said the same thing: these saunas were too highly priced, all in a bad locations and that some even had minor pest problems – therefore this thesis seeks to pinpoint the most critical development areas in the sauna business and how to develop a competitive sauna business in Fuengirola.

The study includes both primary and secondary data, which was collected from books, websites, articles, interviews and observations. The conclusion of the thesis the whole research is reviewed. In it, the answers to the research questions will be analyzed and it will also evaluate the whole process of the thesis. Furthermore it will

provide suggestions and recommendations for future studies in this field.

RESEARCH SUBJECT AND QUESTION

The research subject of this thesis is “Sauna tourism in Fuengirola”. As the author of this thesis I have traveled in Fuengirola many times before in the last decade and have identified a clear need for a proper sauna, therefore the subject was not hard to find. After lots of research in Theseus and the internet, and after reading several articles and brainstorming with the supervising teacher, I finally concluded with this research subject.

The research questions of the study of this thesis are the following:

- 1) What amount of money would customers be willing to pay for a sauna session?

What is the maximum distance customers would be willing to travel for a sauna?

What kind of tourists are the primary segment for a sauna destination?

Does the sauna need to be an a building of its own, or is an indoor sauna sufficient?

What facilitating and augmenting services do the customers expect from a sauna establishment?

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim and the important focus of this thesis will be on understanding the motivations of customers who are seeking for sauna in Fuengirola. The secondary goal is to be an educational read for the reader.

Entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs in Spain may use this thesis to get an overview of what customers expect from a rental sauna. Especially companies specializing in Finnish tourists will get "a decisive edge" compared to competitors who have not read this thesis. Also the sauna industry will gain information of how to make better products for the tourism industry.

Customers seek relaxing environments, whether if they are business tourists or leisure tourists. Saunas and properly managed surroundings have a potential to boost the relaxedness and tranquility of any customer visiting such settings. The traditional saunas use large amounts of water and wood, and that may be a no-go sign for some eco-conscious travelers. However the average sauna customer does not think about the ecological effects in detail.

This study is here to map how much of the average customers value different areas of service of a sauna business, what they are willing to pay for a sauna they can rent, and what type should it be. I will also be mapping the services that the customers want out of the sauna; for example, catering and the need of facilitating and augmenting services. The aim of thesis is to be the ultimate guide for entrepreneurs in Fuengirola when it comes to saunas and what does the tourist expect from such experience. This thesis enables the entrepreneurs to gain insights and to maximise their financial gain.

RESEARCH METHODS

Because the main objective for the thesis is to identify the behaviour and the process of the Fuengirola residents and tourists interested in “sauna tourism” while at the same time developing an actual business plan for a sauna business that could flourish, this thesis will use a combination of a qualitative and a quantitative research methods. I believe that a combination of these methods is needed if one wants to understand the true motivators of sauna selection behavior criteria in potential customers to its fullest extent.

The research is done by seeking out traveller interviewees by posting advertisements on a few newspapers and websites. The advertisement states that it is not paid and would only help the author in his thesis argumentation. When someone contacted the given email on the advertisement, they will receive a questionnaire that they should fill in the next two weeks. As for the qualitative study I visited Fuengirola where I interviewed the persons who had contacted me – through email, Facebook or through the E-form format provided by the school.

I will also provide theory about potential segments, and history about the wellness field, but the research is more important than the theory as it is what matters, even if the theory is an essential part of this thesis, because the data from the questionnaire and the interviews determine the viability of entrepreneurship with a sauna in Fuengirola.

The tourist questionnaire and interviews

The questionnaire has questions about the backgrounds of the respondent, such as gender, age, whether they have visited Fuengirola, are they full-time residents or winter-time tourists, length of usual visit, whether they have been to a sauna in Fuengirola, distance they would be willing to travel for a sauna, are they willing to pay more for an proper outdoor sauna, are they be interested in a loyalty program, how they perceive the demand for saunas in the Fuengirola area and what kind of events would lure them to the sauna. The same questions were asked in the interviews

as open questions.

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND JUSTIFICATION

The main purpose and motivation of choosing this topic, was the personal interest in the field of entrepreneurship in the hospitality industry, especially in the sauna tourism industry. I believe that through deeper understanding of the topic future sauna entrepreneurs are able to see the financial benefits, possibilities and dangers that such an industry has in the town of Fuengirola.

I hope that there is some possibility of self-employment through this thesis.

Limitations of the study

This study is aimed at investigating what kind of a sauna experience Finnish residents and tourists of Fuengirola are after, where they would want such a sauna to be located and what they are willing to pay for it. The study is narrowed down to Fuengirola because a study trying to include Spain as a whole would not succeed, even if there are Finnish tourists all around Spain. For example, the Alacante area could also be a prime spot for this research, and I believe that the results of the thesis apply in that area too. Also, one must consider the fact that some Finns have no interest towards sauna, for example people who only stay in Fuengirola for a very short time and the heart-sick. The research concentrates on the customers' current interests and on the current customer behaviour.

WELLNESS THEORY

History of Wellness

Pursuit of wellness is an ancient tradition that dates back thousands of years. Outside the western cultures, wellness movement has a long history dating back thousands of years. Traditionally these wellness services were only available for the super-elite, the absolute pinnacles of society. The first wellness services were offered by the Indians to their royalty over 7000 years ago, in 5000 B.C. Egyptian pharaohs used cosmetics similar to used today. already in 3000 B.C. The Chinese were writing about wellness medicines in 1000 B.C, yet for many westerners traditional Chinese medicine is a “new and exotic” thing.

The first recordings of wellness in western writings dates back to 1700 B.C. Greek were bathing their greatest warriors in 700 B.C, while Persian princes were taking mudbaths just hundred years after that in 600 B.C. The Hebrews were enjoying the health benefits of the Dead Sea in 200 B.C in ritual baths they took. Thai massage has roots dating back to 100 B.C.

The Finnish sauna is thought to date back to about 1 A.D. Roman empire was the first historical empire that had devoted “tourist parties” in many wellness locations that they established, for example in Caracalla in Italy, Bath in England, Spa in Belgium and Baden-Baden in Germany. However, tourism in general back in the Roman times was an indulgence that only the most elite levels of the society could take part in, and many trips were actually focused on the shores of the Mediterranean sea instead of the more northern destinations. The Ottoman empire built Turkish baths in 800 A.D. and British knights were bathing in them during their bloody crusades through Europe in 1200 A.D.

The first written records of Finnish saunas are from 1000 A.D. In the 14th century the Italians developed the first shower in the baths of Bormio. By the 15th century the health concerns of public bathing increased dramatically because of the many contagious diseases ravaging Europe, such as the plague, leprosy and syphilis. Also,

the church started to condemn naked public bathing, this being one of the reasons that in some countries, for example Britain, there still a tendency to bathe partially clothed.

The renaissance era in the 16th century experienced a big increase in water therapy popularity, and in 1553 the first European Spa Directory was printed – it listed more than 200 spas around Europe. Many kings and queens started to recommend visiting spas in their kingdoms, some having a more national take on the subject where they would only recommend the spas inside their own country. In the late 18th century thalassotherapy (sea therapy) started gaining massive popularity in France, and generally this era is regarded as the birth of thalassotherapy.

The Swedish developed their massage techniques in the early 19th century to the level which they gained international fame. Around the same time virtually all travel guides in Europe were promoting wellness and health treatments from all around the world including destinations in the Caribbean, North Africa, Europe and Russia for the ordinary tourists.

General enthusiasm towards tourism increased, and especially active tourism saw a big popularity increase. By the start of 20th century soldiers of war and industrial workers were recommended to visit wellness resorts and the general public well recognized these treatments (Smith, Puczko 2013:20-22), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:75), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:23, 24, 25).

In Finland, soldiers wounded in Winter War during the World War II were offered spa rehabilitation, in which the state paid the costs (Smith, Puczko 2013:27)

Fire was an essential element of the spa experience starting from the Roman baths era, and afterwards many nations have had a focus in their spa culture for different kind of heated rooms – Turkish have their hamams, Russians got two types of different banyas and the Finns have their saunas. German and Austrian farmers were also using heated rooms for sweat bathing to ease their aching muscles after hard fieldwork in the 18th century.

However, for the Finns and the Russians, a sauna or a banya is an essential part for everyday life, and both cultures also hold a certain social aspect to these sweat

bathing places – with friends it is not uncommon that even a few alcoholic drinks are consumed (Smith, Puczko 2013:27,28).

In ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and India it was commonplace to use a variety of essential oils for massage, and for perfume – the first use of grapeseed oil dates back to 3200 B.C Egypt. The use of essential oils has only recently gained widespread popularity. (Smith, Puczko 2013:29).

As travel and tourism is becoming more widespread in the future, many services and products face “threat” of homogenisation where it will be increasingly difficult for the tourist to understand the differences between them. Some cases this might be even so severe that the future homogenisation will lead to identical products offered under many different labels, further increasing customer confusion. A company needs to be careful that it focuses on certain markets or segments and does not try to “have it all” (Smith, Puczko 2013:21), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:48, 298).

In the future there will be more cross-over and hybridization between different indigenous, traditional and contemporary western treatments, and we may see even new types of sauna pop up, for example: Feng Shui sauna, aromatherapy infrared sauna or essential oil smoke sauna. How short-lived such treatments are, only time will tell. (Smith, Puczko 2013:38)

Definition of Wellness

First of all, understanding wellness as a concept requires an ontological, philosophical approach due to the nature of vagueness and undefinability of the term (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:21, 122). Secondly, one should not expect to easily understand what wellness is about – while in the past people have got it easier by just focusing on the spa sector of wellness, in 2016 it is such a vast term that it would be foolish to expect any simple explanation. (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:307). Language-wise, the term wellness is a compound word consisting of two words, wellbeing and fitness (Smith, Puczko 2013:5) (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:6). In practice, wellness is a western construct even though it can be argued that all people strive for wellness regardless of their cultural

background. However the western culture values are such that lack wellness as a value, whereas many oriental cultures, for example, regard intrinsical wellness as something highly valued. Western civilization tends to focus more on the extrinsical happiness attainment through material goods, fame and attractiveness (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:23).

The definition is a living concept, and it could be argued that many things could be categorized under this term. There is a lot of controversy in literature how to define wellness (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:19, 37). Wellness is a diverse, multifaceted term that should be considered when discussing about the field. (Smith, Puczko, 2013:3), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:13, 100). In German language there is a plethora of terms and definitions for wellness tourism – English definition of the term is very limiting, even if it would be vague in many levels (Smith, Puczko, 2013:4,5). In some languages a good definition might not even exist, for example in Hebrew and Finnish (Smith, Puczko 2013:5), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:203, 204).

The wellness paradigm defines health as something that is a sum of many elements and is not only limited to the medical wellness view of physical part of wellbeing (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:20).

In the source literature one proposed definition of wellness tourism was defined as “A holistic mode of travel that integrates a quest for physical health, beauty, longevity and/or heightening of consciousness or spiritual awareness, and a connection with community, nature or the divine mystery”. The fact that wellness tourism can overlap with other tourism types is noted, and as such the term should be considered relative and prone to the readers own interpretation. In general, wellness tourism can be categorized into special interest tourism that can facilitate a deep feeling of belonging into a community where one can possibly communicate with likeminded individuals that share the same values in a temporary, but a meaningful setting. That being said, even if there can be a social aspect into wellness, the wellness itself is a individual achievement (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:11, 24, 93, 115).

The World Health Organisation defines wellness as “optimal state of health”, that includes physical, mental, social, spiritual and economical wellness with the

additional dimension of “feeling of expectations fulfillment” in different areas of life (WHO Glossary of Terms). Furthermore the definition of health by WHO is “A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (WHO Definition of Health).

Wellness is complex multi-level concept that can be the sum of lifestyle, physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, one's relationship to oneself, others and the environment. Wellness could therefore consist of all the things mentioned before, a balance of every aspect covered: general wellbeing, Quality of Life, happiness, holistic practice and spiritual beliefs.

Wellness tourism is an umbrella term that has four principles: First of all, it is multidimensional, secondly its research should be oriented towards identifying the causes of wellness instead of the causes of illness, third principle being that wellness is all about the balance, and last but not least – wellness is a relative, subjective or a perceptual term. Therefore, wellness is a more psychological, rather than physical state. Wellness comes together through a plethora of different components (Smith, Puczko 2013:54), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:119).

Wellness and health tourism are terms often used in a manner which could confuse the consumer. Wellness tourism is more preventative than curative, while health tourism focuses more on medical operations or cure aspects for already existing illnesses, diseases and other conditions. These two distinct tourism groups have some overlapping attributes but they have different motives. In general, wellness tourists tend to be more aware about health than others. They usually eat healthy, exercise and overall have healthier lifestyles than many ordinary tourists. Not every wellness holiday has a specific wellness focus – there can be indirect health benefits even if trip is not labeled as a wellness endeavour. (Smith, Puczko 2013:40), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:26, 208, 209).

Further confusion is caused by the fragmented, diverse nature of the wellness sector. Often the products offered by wellness tourism operators are not self-explanatory and even vague in their descriptions. The term can be used for a massive range of different products from spiritual retreats to nutrition courses to spa resort packages,

including a plethora of transformational adventures, meditation centres, life coaching holidays and even some surgeries are sometimes categorized under the term wellness tourism even if they would fit more under the health tourism umbrella. Even socks and cat food have been labeled as wellness products. No wonder the average person tends to get confused by the humongous amounts of offerings under one single term. Yet this broad definition might be actually a lifesaver for the industry, as a more limited specification could possibly do more harm than good because such more limited, strict definition would not be able to capture all the richness and diversity that the current very broad and vague definition of wellness offers. Therefore the defining the term has two sides to it, with both having their advantages and disadvantages, so the author prefers the broad definition, despite some occasional comprehension problems arising from the use of it. There would be room for some philosophical research here (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:5), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:22, 23). There are two dimensions to wellness tourism effects on life – the short-term and the long-term wellness. For example, someone might indulge in activities that give them a short-term experience of wellness, but that damage the same individual in the long-term. Therefore there is a difference of what is good for a person, and what seems good to a person (Smith, Puczko 2013:41).

Sauna tourism could be categorized as spa resort tourism or as health promotion tourism that has purpose-built facilities (Smith, Puczko, 2013:4), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:59,76). People seeking wellness are different from health tourists, as wellness tourists are seeking mainly prevention, while health tourists seek cures (Smith, Puczko 2013:5). Also health tourism literature tends to be viewed from a negative point of view focusing on illnesses, diseases, dangers and different health problems whereas wellness tourism literature tends to have a positive approach into the subject. That being said, one of the biggest problems with the wellness tourism is the lack of studies made about it. (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:13,14)

Self-regeneration and relaxation, education or indulgence have always been key components of a tourist experience. A study made among Taiwanese tourists showed that relaxation is the most important factor for vacation. Despite cultural differences,

the author believes that this is an universal truth amongst all tourists worldwide.

Tourists need to be in relatively good health – good enough to travel at least – and to have enough material affluency to not “break their bank” by traveling.

Wellness tourism is an active form of tourism which differs from the normal tourism that revolves around escapism because wellness tourists have a desire for enhanced wellness through their journey. Psychology studies could be applied to wellness tourism, and there is room for further studies here that overlap both psychology and wellness, and their links.

The length of the journey does not affect the outcome – even short wellness oriented trips have a long-lasting impact on the wellness tourists normal life, alleviating anxiety and depression amongst other psychophysiological benefits like reduction of stress hormones. Wellness tourists tend to seek out destinations that go beyond the limit of an ordinary experience, for example, through exceptional landscapes that make one feel small, yet connected to the universe. In short, wellness leisure equals health because it affects the individual on so many levels.

Not all wellness tourists are alike, of course. Some of them do have the same motivators as “normal” tourists, them being rest, relaxation and escapism instead of actually improving home life, but all wellness tourists share the same attributes of being self-aware, enhanced wellbeing-seekers that yearn for better health and increased happiness. The wellness tourists that are mainly seeking pleasure and relaxation do not make them less worthy compared to the more “hardcore” ones aiming for increased self-realisation and self-actualization as such process might still happen for these tourists that were not originally having such goals as objectives. However, as wellness is a relative and subjective concept, the needs of wellness tourists will always be in constant change, depending on their life-stages amongst other factors in their lives (Smith, Puczko 2013:9,10), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:14, 36, 39, 235), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:30).

It is unlikely that wellness traveling will contribute to all areas of ones wellness, and tourists limit what do they want from their trip – people seldom travel with “hardcore

wellness” as their mindset, that they would work so hard on it that it kind of loses its purpose.

People like to have some “cruise control” over their vacation pace, wellness cannot be forced on a person, they also need “off time” from the wellness activities to be able to absorb the surroundings, the teachings given, the exercises taken. In other words, a wellness vacation should not feel like a chore.

The definition and aims of wellness tourism have changed in the recent years. This is due to wellness tourism being such a multi-dimensional concept that is extremely hard to define, because it incorporates aspects from both physical and mental health, with the added dimensions of environmental and social factors. In the past people used to trust a “magic pill” or a surgery to give them a cure for a condition, while today those same segment groups want to prevent the illnesses and conditions in the first place through “self-prescribed” methods of wellness that often lack scientific research and instead rely on the persons' own belief into the methods' effectiveness (Smith, Puczko 2013:60).

There has been numerous attempts to find a new measure to supplement or replace the most traditional method of indicating quality of life, the Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP). GDP has been used for decades, but some new scholars would want to associate other values with a life-quality indicator, because GDP merely tells about the general level of financial income, not about the actual happiness of the individuals experience in their lives (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:26).

The tourism industry is extremely varied, but some of the most popular wellness tourism category types are body and face beauty treatments – for example facials and exfoliation, water-based and sweat bathing treatments and facilities – sauna being in this category, manual-pressure based and manipulative body-based therapies – massages and such, healthy nutrition and diet – detoxing and cooking classes, different exercises and fitness programs – ranging from Nordic walking to indoor aerobics, mind-body combined interventions – such as Tai Chi and Pilates, different meditation techniques, expressive therapies – dance therapy and drumming as examples, energy therapies – new age stuff like Reiki and astrology. Also some

educational activities can be included under the wellness industry if they are about stress management or similar life-altering topic that can be considered to enhance individuals wellbeing on an everyday level. (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:28, 29)

If one tried to define the wellness as a whole in one sentence, maybe the best definition would be “wellness is a journey, not a destination”. For many first-time wellness tourists the first trip is just an exciting step on a journey that can last a lifetime. That wellbeing that the tourist seeks from the location or a place through the trip they take part in, is actually rendered to the tourist by themselves, not the trip – the trip merely works as a catalyst. Another good, but ambiguous definition is that “wellness is an positive conceptualisation of health with focus on health promotion rather than cure”.

However, the above chapter is reflecting only the effort of the author to provide some crude definition to the term, because it can never be concluded that any one type of definition would be universally viable that everybody would agree on. (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:6, 83, 117), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:25,290).

Defining Quality of Life

The Quality of Life (QoL) term shows up in wellness literature a lot, because it is one of the key concepts that the wellness phenomenon affects. QoL is always somewhat of a subjective term and it varies by definition. Generally speaking, all wellness activities boost persons' QoL and the main motivator for majority of wellness tourists is to increase their QoL – the wellness tourism indulgence always has a positive short-term effect on a tourists' QoL but some QoL increasing components are carried out to the ordinary life also in the long-term outlook of wellness tourism experiences. Improved QoL is a major motivator for tourists all around the world to participate in different wellness activities.

Quality of Life is thought to compose of the following factors: Quality relationships, good housing, leisure, freedom from pain, financial security and a happy state of mind. Therefore QoL is more objective as a term than wellness, because it takes

account of many aspects of a person's life, rather than just their reaction to certain circumstances.

There are many different opinions of what does the QoL term consist of, and some scholars include person's perceptions, feelings and thoughts, even life expectancy and happy life years under the umbrella of the term. Consequently, there is no official meaning and over hundred definitions have been given in contemporary literature.

However, in general sense the key components to QoL in all definitions seem to be: the satisfaction with one's life, physical, mental, social and emotional health and their everyday environment. These components should be in relative balance for a good level of QoL, and it all boils down to the experience of the individual, because while one person might feel safe on a given neighbourhood, their neighbour might be scared to death next door – in other words, you might experience high QoL while the neighbour feels that they have a low QoL, live a luxury life and still experience low QoL (Smith, Puczko 2013:42, 43, 44), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:4, 21, 25, 30).

Sauna boosts the QoL of a person through its physical, psychological and social benefits, and it can be argued that cultures with affinity for sauna, such as Finns, Swedes, Danes, Norwegians and the Russians, enjoy bigger increase in QoL than of people that are not culturally affinite with saunas traditionally. On a general level, the QoL related and linked to tourism is an underresearched area of study, the QoL studies tend to be focused on safety and illnesses.

Furthermore, regarding studies about QoL, there is very little evidence about wellness tourism synergy with improved QoL, but the author of this thesis believes it is common sense that engaging in activities that make one happy will have a positive impact on the QoL of the said person – therefore the sauna experience must be able to deliver a feeling of wellness to the tourist, that the experience redeems its promises as a whole, leaving the customer satisfied.

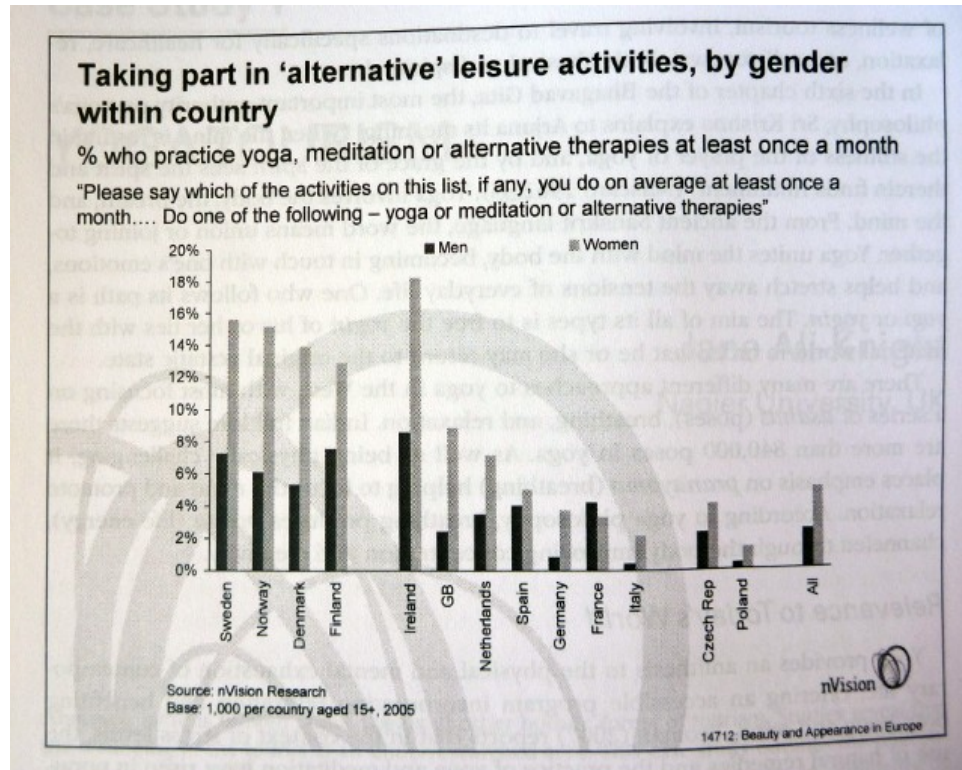
Also it should be noted that the Finnish sauna tourist might receive a bigger boost to their QoL from visiting a Finnish operated sauna destination, especially if the destination would remind of home circumstances, compared to other sauna types such

as a Turkish sauna due the cultural background (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:4, 32, 33, 35, 126), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:40, 101).

The need for wellness

Due recent developments in technology and media, we are now exposed to unrealistic beauty standards more than ever, and with the combined disintegration of communities, many people seek comfort from altering their bodies, changing their clothing style, buying useless products and generally having their desires given to them by different celebrities, hoping in vain that such actions will bring wellness to them.

Figure 1, Alternative Leisure Activities by Gender Within Country



Therefore, it can be argued that many personal identities of today have been constructed on a hollow base laid out by popular culture, and these people truly yearn for true wellness deep inside, because they are so drenched in superficial, fast-forward culture. The majority of the wellness tourists come from the developed nations which have a long history of secular cultures. This secularity in today's

society leads to an increase in need for physical, mental and spiritual comfort (Smith, Puczko 2013:71), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:20).

Some of these popular culture converts wake up to the reality and start to feel a need to escape the “rat race” of western civilization by “downsizing” or “downshifting” their lives voluntarily, because they are fed up with the amount of stress and materialism that is imposed to them in the western cultural environments. All this hatred against the “rat race culture” leads to increase in interest towards personal wellness, and these “rat race refugees” are a prime segment for wellness tourism. The desire for wellness has been on the increase ever since the first factories were put up in Europe.

Often as people get older and move into smaller homes or apartments, there is a lot of extra clutter that they need to get rid of, but the “downsizing” or “downshifting” is usually done by much younger people that do not have such space limitations (Smith, Puczko 2013:71,72), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:25).

There has been an explosive growth in media consumerism during the recent years throughout the popularisation of smartphones. People surf the net longer and more often than never before in human history, and many of them have almost intimate relationship with their mobile devices, even on holiday. Many destinations start to cater for these technology addicts, creating virtual, simulated worlds to explore either on destination or through the internet. Therefore the visitor can be anywhere in the world and their thirst for escapism and entertainment is guaranteed to be quenched (Smith, Puczko 2013:73,74)

Life expectancy is on the rise for many western nations, and this creates an constant increase of people who are a wellness tourism segment due people wanting to stay healthy and fit as they age – the older you get, the longer you want to live and the fear of death is a natural thing. Several studies have shown that if one does not take vacations from work, they have two times higher risk of myocardial infarction or coronary death. On top of that, sauna offers coronary health benefits that have been scientifically proven by the studies of University of Eastern Finland. This should provide some competitive edge over other wellness services that offer relaxation.

(Smith, Puczko 2013:75), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:41), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:299)
(UEF: Sauna Health Benefits).

One of the biggest drives behind the wellness tourism phenomenon is the personal fulfilment factor that is a big motivator for many. Lifestyle purchases are becoming more common, because people's reserves of time are low but high on money and according to studies wellness tourists are spending nearly 150% more on their vacations than a “normal” tourist. Besides, it is easier to buy a short stint of wellness to enjoy some personal indulgence than to make life-altering changes into your everyday life. Given that wellness tourists are typically from higher socioeconomic groups that may endure higher stress levels in their fields of work than the “normal” leisure tourist, it is only natural that they spend more on their travels (Smith, Puczko 2013:78), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:103), (Hotel News Now: Global report).

In some countries there are long traditions of natural wellness methods, and to them the wellness hype of the west may seem funny. For the westerners these countries may seem intriguing as the treatments and wellness methods they offer might already be thousands of years old, but new to the western wellness tourist – even the most seldom-travelling tourist recognizes the word “wellness” even if they are not entirely sure what does it mean. It can be argued that every Finnish tourist knows the word “sauna” even if it would not specify what kind of a sauna it is, and that visiting a sauna is somewhat of a cultural tradition of the Finns (Smith, Puczko 2013:79).

We are facing the start of a wellness revolution because people are eager to reshape their lives on multiple fronts: This phenomenon could be dubbed the “wellness wave”. The sauna wellness is a good method to surf on top of this waves' crest, as it is such an easy-to-indulge method, compared to many other forms of wellness, giving an instant feeling of wellbeing not unlike any other wellness method.

Sauna wellness is something that goes beyond a regular spa experience, it allows people to rapidly reach higher levels of physical and mental, even emotional wellness.

On a global level, there are multiple megatrends that contribute to the wellness tourism popularity. Increased health consciousness is one that has been on the rise since the

1960's, compounded by the pace of life acceleration. At the same time the trend of inconspicuous consumption has been on the rise, and it is fashionable now to limit your consumption and be modest about it rather than splurging “all-out” style in decadence. Individualisation creates its own stir into the mix as does the increase in people who are on a quest for spirituality, these two being heavily linked. Ageing populations is also a big contributor to the popularity of wellness, as the baby boomers are starting to be elderly. The United States and the Arabian countries had the highest growth in wellness tourism sector during the past year 2015-2016 (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:5,6,7), (ITB World Travel Trends Report 2015-2016)

Traditionally wellness has been viewed through a “spa resort” lens, but in the last few decades it has become so much more due extreme diversification facilitated by technological advancements and mix of cultures worldwide. The forces of change never sleep. Currently wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing academic research areas (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:4), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:7, 51).

Sauna culture

In the Finnish culture the sauna is an essential component of life. It could be therefore argued that the Finns have an innate cultural preposition towards wellness, as saunas are found from almost every home, the ones that lack a sauna usually have a sauna nearby, giving virtually all people unlimited access to a sauna (Smith, Puczko 2013:6).

Sauna is also a core cultural wellness product, comparable to Japanese onsen, the Turkish steam baths or Thai massage. It is bound to be identified as an “country of origin” product all around the world. Sauna represents the pinnacle for relaxation in the Finnish cultural context (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:5, 109, 224).

Sauna tourism leads to social leisure benefits for the tourist through strengthening of social bonds with friends and family. For some cultures, like the Finnish, warmth is a healing factor, and sauna offers plenty of this. (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:40, 109).

Culturally the sauna has belonged to the Finns – this is not something that has been just allocated to them, quite the opposite, they have kind of negotiated for it through practical experiences, as in the ancient Finnish past it contributed to survival. In this sense, going to a sauna is filling a “deficit” for the Finnish tourist as it adds something to their life or vacation in Spain and due the hot nature of weather specially during the summer months, and cool temperatures in the winter time, sauna could even be considered to be a utilitarian activity (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:116, 232, 233).

If the sauna would be combined with different alternative therapies, maybe this kind of combination could have an impact on the Finnish thinking of the concept of sauna to be more open about different things (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:203)

If one thinks of culture as an onion with different layers, the sauna is on the outermost layer. It is not something that is gravely necessary, but it still is a crucial part of the Finnish cultural identity, because of the Finns exceedingly long history with this type of wellness structure that their ancestors invented. (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:100)

DEFINITION OF A TOURISM PRODUCT

“A tourism product can be defined as the sum of the physical and psychological satisfaction it provides to tourists during their travelling en route to the destination.” (Ballabh, 2005:170)

I think that this is a fitting description of a tourism product, because the meaning of destination can be argued to be, in this case, wellness. The sauna is the vessel that carries the tourist away from his physical exhaustion and rejuvenates his spirits, and thus a feeling of wellness fills him – after a sauna session the tourist feels good, both physically and psychologically.

DEFINITION OF A SAUNA PRODUCT

The product core would be the sauna itself. The facilitating products and services would be the catering and the pick-up service. Augmenting products and services

would be the local ingredients in the catering, the green energy used by the sauna itself and the different treatments and the activities offered (Smith, Puczko 2013:207).

Wellness tourism needs to give the tourists what they are aching for – clearer products and labels that can be comprehended better by the consumers without confusion. The main reason for a sauna destination development in Fuengirola would be business development motivators, due the lack of such service for a such big segment – 15,000 to 20,000 permanent or semipermanent residents. Such big segment without saunas of their own could want to modify their lifestyle with a sauna, especially in the colder months of the Spanish winter (Smith, Puczko 2013:83, 200), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:221),(Wikipedia Fuengirola).

Sauna has different meanings for different people. For many central and southern Europeans the concept of sauna is very alien and distant, because of the warm climates these countries enjoy – in majority of these countries, gyms and wellness resorts are the only places where one can find “non-sexual” saunas. Often the public saunas are men-only with “toyboys” for rent, this is the case in Barcelona, Spain, for example.

Finnish people view sauna as a social gathering place where you can go with your friends, or to socialize with random, same-sex people in a non-sexual way. For the Finns, relaxation is the primary objective of going to a sauna, with health and hygiene being the secondary and tertiary interests. This is in line with the objectives of wellness, which focuses on the balance of body, mind and spirit. Even though sauna itself is not a spiritual place, it is treated with respect, and some people believe in the old pagan belief that there is a “spirit” living in each sauna which should not be angered. In general, Finnish people are the most important segment for a sauna tourism destination (Smith, Puczko 2013:84).

Within the sauna tourists there are direct and indirect service users, for example if a group of friends attend a sauna – some of them only come for the physical relaxation as a direct use, but are fully reinvigorated in the process due combination of the

physical part and the social interaction, so they enjoy the indirect benefit of the mental healing part, and depending on the nature of their conversations, some may even have a spiritual level experience through sauna. Some of these group members could only go with the group because of the social aspect – their direct use – and get the physical benefits as an indirect benefit. Native Americans have practiced social, spiritual healing sauna sessions traditionally for centuries.

Sauna tourists can also be categorized into “casual” and “devoted” sauna tourists, with the casuals only coming in occasionally, with their friends or families, while devotees want to have at least a certain amount of saunas per week or per month, depending on the tourist.

For the casuals the direct motivation might be to feel culturally connected to their native country and for the devoted the motivation might be to physically detoxify through intense sweating – this segment also could enjoy higher temperature saunas and they might throw water on the sauna stove rocks more often. However it must be noted that motivations for visiting a sauna can vary greatly according to the age, nationality, lifestyle or gender of the visitor. Stress relief and relaxation seem to be big motivators (Smith, Puczko 2013:85, 262).

The four key elements of a sauna experience are: to relax (e.g. stress management, muscle relaxation), to reflect (e.g. talk about current topics with your family or community members), to revitalize (e.g. feel re-energized through the detoxification and relaxation) and to rejoice (e.g. feel happy through physical cleaning and cultural interaction).

Considering these elements, I ponder that what is the best method of pricing – if charged by the hour, such method may intervene with the relaxation element as the tourists' sense of time blurs as they are living in a regressive timelessness on their holiday and they do not want to stress about such petty things as time during their sauna experience, but if charged beforehand for a certain amount of hours, the same concept of regressive timelessness might make the tourist forget about that time limit

and exceed their original set time, creating possibly a very problematic situation where a new group of customers would arrive to the sauna, and as cleaning of the facilities should to be done beforehand, while the overstayed group should be still given time to get out of the sauna without a hurry, the situation would give a negative impact to the experience for both parties.

I believe that categorizing the sauna under wellness is the best way to have a category for it, as it could be put under health tourism by some scholars, but sauna tourism has more attributes of wellness than health, and the health benefits – such as coronary health benefits - it provides are largely retroactive, not immediate, hence why he believes that wellness tourism category is more fitting than putting such tourism in the health tourism category.

Sauna tourism has some attributes from the health tourism side that are mainly preventative, but more from the side of wellness tourism, such as connecting with community and relaxation. Also, sauna tourism is basically dependent on the fact that not all Fuengirola Finns build their own saunas because if they did, the business would become impossible to run profitably. It could be argued that sauna is a curative resource or an asset. (Smith, Puczko 2013:85, 86) (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:9, 10, 80, 132, 133).

Yoga is another form of wellness tourism that could be a good accompanying form of wellness for a sauna destination. The professional yoga practitioners tend to go for destinations like India, but Fuengirola could have some draw for beginners and intermediate yogis. Most yoga tourists are highly educated females who are spiritual but not religious. Yoga tourists often are interested in organic vegetarian or vegan, so there could be great interest in the combined product of yoga, sauna and organic nutrition. This needs to be researched (Smith, Puczko 2013:95, 147, 148).

The internet is very important for many people, but tourists seldom want to use their phones internet connectivity abroad because of fears of mystery charges. Therefore a WiFi connection would be beneficial for a sauna destination, and would increase its

appeal, especially for younger people and tech-savvy persons (Smith, Puczko 2013:266).

Tourists often have difficulties in identifying what a certain wellness service offers. This highlights a key problem in current wellness products – the product itself should be more clearly defined so that the customer can make more informed decisions. (Smith, Puczko 2013:8)

Traditionally the saunas in Finland have separated men and women. In all Nordic countries sauna is an integral part of normal life, but in Finland it is considered to be an essential part of everyday life, and is not viewed as a luxury – it is something that everyone must have at access to. Relaxation is everyones' right and with relaxed people you can have a better society.

Cold-water bathing is a popular Finnish activity that is combined with sauna. It helps in muscle relaxation, it reduces blood pressure, decreases rheumatic symptoms and strengthens the immune system. These are beneficial for everybody, regardless of age. In a overseas sauna destination like Fuengirola, it could be beneficial to have a cold-water pool for the Finns, and the author believes this could be especially popular during the hotter months (Smith, Puczko 2013:112,113).

In the modern society societies tend to be non-existent, they have been shattered through intense fragmentation and dislocation that has happened due traditional communities being broken apart through modern living conditions, lack of physical interaction and the individualism of western cultures.

Electronic communities and societies are starting to replace these structures, for example, Facebook and Twitter, amongst a plethora of different interest groups specific internet forums are taking the place of traditional ways to communicate and socialise. People seek new ways to connect, and there is a plethora of phone apps that are helping people to establish small community groups and societies.

Many people seek social interaction and feeling of belonging to something by joining “aesthetic communities”, that can be groups for their favourite band or a TV show on Facebook, or by following a popular yogist or a celebrity organic chef Twitter account, because most people tend to have an intense, almost obsession-level need to “belong” to somewhere or to something, and tend to have a strong need for familiarity, continuity and security to their surroundings. For many, joining these groups is not such a big deal, but people tend to identify themselves through these – when they go out and hear someone name a band or an artist, they can mention that they follow them in social media and gain a sense of belonging.

These virtual communities bring a sense of familiar surroundings that have continuity with their other aspects of life, and it therefore gives a certain sense of security they knowingly or unknowingly seek. To put things in perspective, one might feel disconnected from their local surroundings if they don't know their neighbours, for example.

A few centuries ago the thought of distant, new lands were equally alien concept as a close community is now for the layman in this modern society. The layer of anonymity what people enjoy in their online lives is starting to penetrate deeper into the everyday behaviour of people. Multiple modern authors reflect on the facts that a most people feel disconnected from their communities. Sauna tourism contributes to social cohesion and empowerment, exactly the things that people are lacking (Smith, Puczko 2013:69, 70), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:29).

A manager needs to manage the place on multiple levels, starting from the more menial jobs of cleaning, serving and answering questions to motivate, do marketing and collaborate with certain experts that have the skills that they do not possess – for example, web development.

Demand sets the bar for success – a business needs at least 50% of its demand to be available locally, otherwise it is doomed to fail, no matter how good the product is or how clever the marketing campaigns are (Smith, Puczko 2013:269)

Green energy from ecological sources should be used as the saunas power source, as trees are scarce in Spain, and there is no downsides to using green eco-energy – even the tourists that are not so interested in environmental values can still appreciate the added value it creates for the sauna product.

Wellness tourism operators should be more keen on using renewable, sustainable energy sources than other tourism types, as paradoxically wellness tourism operations tend to consume more energy than many other tourism types – for example a spa tourist would use considerably more energy and water on their vacation than an another tourist that only came to lay on a beach, for example (Smith, Puczko 2013:272), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009: 12, 106).

The majority of the green eco-energy could be bought, but it could be supplemented with on-site solar panels to bring the green energy to be physically visible, creating a further illusion and confusion about where the energy comes from. Through logical thinking the customer would not be able to determine how much of the green eco-energy is produced on-site and how much off-site.

Water conservation methods should be also considered, given that Spain is a relatively dry country with majority of rainfall occurring during the spring, and this sustainability can also be used as an advantage in marketing, because sustainability and wellness should go hand in hand.

Also a further added value thing could be that some of the revenue – 10% for example – could be spent on a charity that would touch as much people as possible, say, a disabled childrens help fund, cancer fund or a similar high-emotional value charity. This would make people feel good about their purchase and would encourage repeat customer behaviour in some people.

Considering the sustainability values, some customers could be interested in a concept where a certain amount of spent money or visitations would ensure trees to be planted as a method to make the visit more carbon neutral. Such practice would

merely be a symbolic thing, but could create some extra value for the service as a whole for some people. (Smith, Puczko 2013:273, 274), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:32, 303).

All in all, the above suggestions for different methods of increasing competitiveness aim to improve the sauna destinations desirability in the eyes of the possible sauna tourists, to lure in the maximum amount of “fence-sitters” along with the more traditional sauna customers, as any good destination must have high level of competitiveness, otherwise the business is doomed to fail.

As competitiveness is both a relative and a multi-dimensional concept, it may be hard to grasp, but simply put a competitive destination is one which offers same things as its competitors with added benefits that add value to the customer while maintaining a market position relative to competitors – kind of more destination per same money spent while the business is still in the same segment as the competing similar companies. As it is such a multi-faceted concept, a business can only maintain it for a certain amount of time before they need to do check-ups and updates on their service profile to keep the business competitive, it is not something a company attains once and then they can just lay back and stop worrying. The business owner should always be vigilant to maintain the gained competitive advantage once it is gained, in order to stay victorious over other similar destinations in the long run. There is no single miracle way of making a destination competitive (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:45, 46, 47, 49, 292, 302, 303).

Nutrition

Through the relatively recent popularisation of healthy eating, people are exposed more to TV programs, newspaper articles and books revolving around this phenomenon. Often these outlets of information stress organic food produce, implying that many toxins can be de-toxified through changes in diet and eating habits.

Detox diets main objective is to minimise or completely eliminate the amount of chemicals and toxins ingested with different food items, and usually has a secondary

objective of increasing the vitamin, antioxidant and fibre intake which help your body in the detoxification process. Many detox programs and centres offer either organic vegan or vegetarian food, with different plans to suit either detox, weight loss or just generally more healthier lifestyle (Smith, Puczko 2013:66), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:92).

I believe that some of the sauna tourists could be interested in homemade organic food, because sauna is also a tool that aids in detoxification. A sauna destination could offer “detox days” that would combine sauna and a healthy meal, customers having an option to eat the food before or after sauna. Also, tourists on vacation do not want to stress about making food, hence why there could be interest in such catering service (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:131).

The wellness tourist

Wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing forms of tourism worldwide and it is estimated to become the world's biggest industry by 2022, so there is a enormous demand for definitions, including definition of an average wellness tourist. While for some tourist segments such categorization might be easy, all kinds of people are interested in wellness tourism, and it is therefore very hard to define a “normal” wellness tourist, but because this is a research paper, an effort must be made.

There are some “hardcore wellness” tourists, but majority of the wellness tourists are only interested in some parts of the wellness phenomenon, not a full renewal of the body, mind and spirit. Ordinary wellness tourists might be okay by just getting two out of those three, instead of trying to hit the full jackpot. For example, if a wellness tourist comes for a yoga class on the beach, they might not be interested in visiting a spiritual place in the nearby mountains, even if their timetables and schedule would allow such multi-level wellness visit, and vice versa, the guy contemplating deep spiritual stuff at that said mountain destination might not be into beaches, let alone yoga, or a combination of these two.

Therefore, for tourism operators there is basically no point to try to cover all aspects of wellness, and are better off focusing on certain segments – creating a higher level service for its customers in the process (Smith, Puczko 2013:58).

The most popular and biggest categories of wellness tourism are; Active tourism, Ayurvedic tourism, Destination spa, Detox, Holistic wellness, Pampering, Thalassotherapy, Thermal and Yoga tourism. As majority of the wellness tourists tend to focus only on a few of these areas, too broad segmenting should be avoided. Precise segmenting is a key element to maximise customer yield from advertising, so the sauna tourism advertisements should therefore be aimed at the largest segments there are; The middle-age Finns and the elderly Finns. For them there could be two products available, normal sauna sessions and detox type whole-day “treatments” with healthy nutrition. (Smith, Puczko 2013:59).

Studies show that majority of the wellness tourists are over 30 years old, and most are female – about four in five wellness tourists are women. The amount of men and young people are relatively low. In general women have throughout history been more interested about physical appearance, weight, make-up and haircare than men. This is because women tend to be more social and therefore they experience more social pressure than men.

Of the women that use wellness services, many are working mothers, who have little time to spare for pampering themselves or to focus on their own wellbeing. They therefore are a good segment for wellness services and treatments, as they are the ideal “time-poor, cash-rich” persons described earlier in this thesis.

However men should not be overlooked in the wellness products and advertising, as the key problem is that many of these products and services are labelled as something for women. The problem is a labelling and image problem, not that men would not be interested in wellness. The main aim in advertising for men should be relaxation and stress relief, instead of other focuses. This segment tends to have equal spending power compared to women, but traditional wellness marketing tactics are not so

effective, the advertisements for men need to be done in a way that differs from the “traditional”.

Young people can be lured in with certain keywords, as wellness destinations should be careful not to brand themselves as places for “old people” - some of the keywords for younger generations could be “chill”, “fun escape” or “party detox”, even “rehab” as many celebrities are nowadays detoxing themselves after indulging in a party lifestyle for extended periods of time. Generally this segment has less spending power, but more free time.

In a wellness tourism segmentation study done in eastern Finland, they found seven segments, of which two could be considered as prime targets for sauna tourism: “Careless of holistic wellbeing” segment, who are mostly men under 35 years old, and “Work and health-orientated nature people”, who are mostly 35-44 year old women. The latter also has a interest for healthy nutrition (Smith, Puczko 2013:134, 135, 136, 140, 143), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:3).

Escapism, rest, relaxation, meeting like-minded people and forming communities are motivating factors for many wellness tourists regardless of nationality. The longer a tourist spends in a destination away from her home, the greater the need for other, additional experiences grows. It can therefore be argued that the longer a Finnish tourist is away from Finland, the bigger is their desire to go into a sauna. This idea can be stretched out further – that the longtime residents, and permanent residents of Fuengirola are the most auspicious segment for a sauna destination (Smith, Puczko 2013:142)

A wellness destination must be able provide the first-time goer with positive, trustworthy experiences to turn them into repeat customers, and for those people that are “out of segment”, incentives should be offered to become customers, such as discounts. (Smith, Puczko 2013:152)

A sauna destination development to Fuengirola would be so called spontaneous

development, because such destination development is not outlined in any official tourism plan, and it would be developed by the entrepreneur itself. As such market driven field of business where the public sector has a minimal role, another term that fits is organic development. This approach has more risk elements than so-called integrated development, but it would be the only way to develop such a special destination as the Fuengirola tourism authorities do not see Finnish as big enough tourist segment (Smith, Puczko 2013:156, 164).

It should be researched that is Feng Shui important to sauna tourists, and how much interest there would be for vegan or vegetarian events, and what is the real demand for “ordinary” sausage barbeque and beer -type of sauna evening events. The service portfolio needs to cover all bases, something for everybody, without confusing the customer base too much (Smith, Puczko 2013:90, 174).

Organic destinations can flourish, if they offer an alternative service that has big enough customer base which to draw from. Such a destination has to be careful that it does not limit itself with self-imposed regulations too much because it can become too niche if it only serves a “certain kind” of a customer. Therefore all possible segments should be mapped to get insight in what to focus on (Smith, Puczko 2013:175).

Atmosphere is an important element in a sauna destination. It cannot be stressed enough how paramount it is to create a right kind of an environment, because no matter if the service is top notch if the surroundings and the environment is not hospitable and such that make you feel relaxed. If the customer cannot relax, they cannot enjoy themselves. This relaxing atmosphere can be created with proper use of design, colour, discrete lighting, green areas and views provided by a good location.

The general attitude and manners of staff should be relaxing and pleasant. The outfits of staff should not be too formal, as the whole image of relaxing destination could be ruined for some tourists if the staff wore, for example, a suit and a tie, reminding the tourist of their office job, or their boss. That being said, the staff should wear

uniforms that give a message of professionalism. Proper training is also a crucial factor to ensure customer satisfaction.

The facilities should clean, this cannot be stressed enough – due the naked nature of the activity, diseases and bacteria can be transmitted very fast if proper hygieny procedures are not followed. A large number of customers could have problems if the cleaning is done properly. Also the facilities could be equipped with colour changing lights that could be adjusted to the customers' needs, along with a sound system that the customer could use to play music of their choice.

Proper translation should be given to non-Finnish tourists, so they are not puzzled by the different things in the sauna environment, and they need to be explained that one should be naked in the sauna if possible. If they are a mixed group, tell them to use towels but that swimsuits and similar outfits are unhygienic and not recommended. Nudity should not be a requirement, but preferred due the hygiene reasons, but some cultures can experience nudity as extremely embarrassing. Customers of course could ultimately choose whatever they wear or would not wear in the sauna, as it will get cleaned in any case but they should be informed about the health factors so they can make informed decisions (Smith, Puczko 2013:180, 181, 182, 183), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:12, 118), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:38).

It should be noted that due the lack of consistency and overlaps between the definitions of health and wellness tourism, it is extremely hard to gather reliable economic data on the economic impacts of wellness tourism. Therefore it is impossible to give any solid figures on the global size of wellness tourism, as it varies by definition of wellness. (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:4)

Impacts of a sauna destination

Three major impact groups can be identified in tourism – economic, socio-cultural and environmental. A sauna destination has parts of all three, of course.

The employment impact would be relatively low or non-existent. While the sauna

destination would not employ a lot of people, only the entrepreneur himself to start with, there would be some local impact through the option of employing a chef occasionally for bigger caterings. For the smaller ones the entrepreneur would do it by himself.

The economic impact would be medium-low to medium level, due the service intensiveness of the business. Also the business would generate an economic impact on a general level for the area in general, as relatively good financial standing having Finnish tourists would more interested in the area and would be more keen to choose Fuengirola as a destination.

Socio-cultural impact would be medium-high to high, because it would facilitate Finnish peoples' social gatherings, and generally bring the Finnish community of Fuengirola together at a whole new level that has not been experienced in the city ever before due sauna being an essential part of the cultural macro-environment of the Finns. It would become an important place of Finnish cultural heritage in whole of Costa Del Sol region.

When it comes to the community a sauna destination in Fuengirola could be used for all kind of social community gatherings, ranging from regular sauna nights to all kinds of healthy detox camps, yoga saunas, cold-water-dipping clubs to all kinds of sports events special saunas with some projector displaying the matches on a screen, and even such extremes as cold-water pool clubs where the cold-water pool enthusiasts could get together. (Smith, Puczko 2013:156, 157, 158, 159, 160)

Ideal location

Thalassotherapy could be combined with sauna in the form of mudwraps in the sauna, increasing their effectiveness. Also, sauna by the sea could have some aspects that are the same with thalassotherapy definition, mainly therapeutic location by the sea, low allergen and clean sea air and exposure to a marine climate, of which the latter would be present in all of Fuengirola and surrounding region. The benefits of such climates

have been known for centuries.

I think that there are three possible locations for a sauna in or near Fuengirola, one being near the sea in Fuengirola, one being near or in the Finnish-dominated suburb of Los Boliches and the mountain destination being on the hills of Mijas, just a five-minute bus ride up the hill from Fuengirola. This needs to be researched that what do the customers think as the best place, and that would they be willing to pay more for a seaside or a mountain location

With the above consideration, the ease of access becomes a key subject. While the Mijas sauna could possibly have great views, logistically it would also be hardest to get to, with the second hardest being near the sea in Fuengirola, easiest transportation options being to the Los Boliches location. Good location is such that it is relatively easy to access while being cheap to get to. This being said, the real estate prices are higher in easier to access locations and this would be reflected in the prices if one would establish a sauna in such locations (Smith, Puczko 2013:90, 115, 172), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:30, 31, 49).

Marketing of a sauna destination

The nature of the product is a wellness spa product. The main target is the Finnish population of Fuengirola, while secondary targets would be the Nordic population of Fuengirola. Sauna as a relaxation modality supply product is a superstructure that can be integrated into the Fuengirola tourism distribution channels with relative ease, as there is ample customer base ready to be tapped into.

The stage of the product would be in the budding stage, where there is already a established need for the product but no proper service providers. The situation would be such that they would be the the only company offering a quality on-site sauna which faces competition from the few public saunas available and Kiesus's portable rental saunas, but the latter is aimed at a whole different segment altogether.

Budget for the promotional strategy would be minimal, and would include Facebook,

google and newspaper ads all directed to potential sauna audience accurately as possible, along with face-to-face promoting on the streets of Fuengirola because first-hand experiences are extremely important when one wants to alter the perceptions of people. Meeting the entrepreneur himself promoting the business can therefore be a “turning point” in a positive sense for many could-be-customers (Smith, Puczko 2013:204), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:104, 105), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:54).

Successful branding is crucial to be able to succeed in the tourism business. Often wellness tourism businesses make grave mistakes in the design of a logo or a slogan, that people don't even consider to be taken seriously. One should stay simple and true in these designs so that those values and visions can be successfully carried out into the tourist experience.

One viewpoint that must be mentioned is the philosophical question of “Can a Finnish sauna in Spain be authentic, especially if paired up with non-traditional treatments and other additional services” - this requires research (Smith, Puczko 2013:211), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:223).

Theming of a destination is also one critical success factor, which is often combined with the above-mentioned branding. I had the idea of having a “southern Ostrobothian theme”, which would mainly be visible in a salmiac pattern inspired logo, me wearing traditional southern Ostrobothian outfit, complete with a knife belt that is a traditional part of the outfit when dealing with customers, and talk in “wide-style” southern Ostrobothnian dialect when dealing with the Finnish customers. This would help to bring in a “wow!” factor into the tourist experience, because it would create a special experience, a lasting memory into the minds of the customers because the host would not be “just another normal customer service oriented guy” but rather something that positively stands out with a special way of dealing with the customers (Smith, Puczko 2013:217, 264)

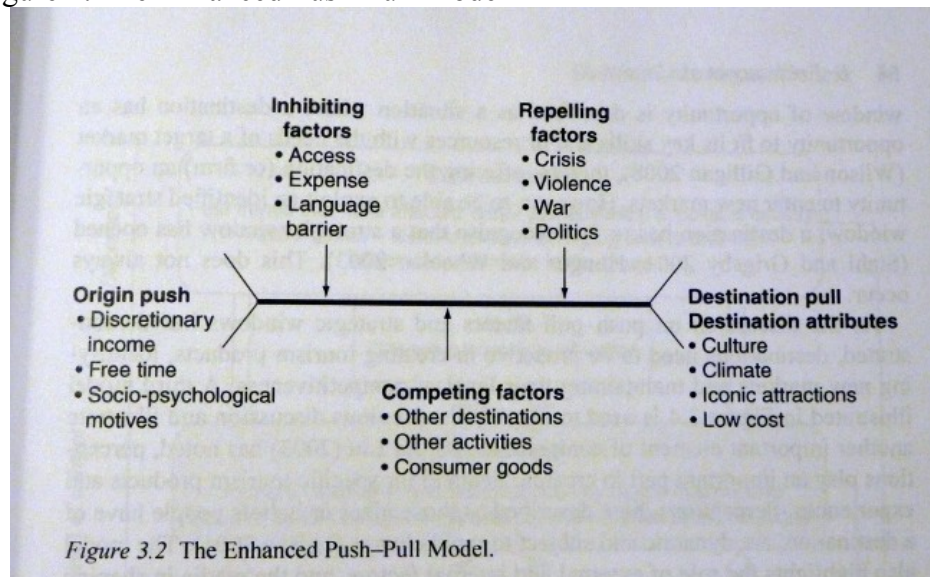
Generally the advertisements would be all-welcoming, but especially on social media the advertisements would be directed to Finnish tourists. These advertisements should

aim to message that they can satisfy a cultural desire through indulging with the services the sauna destination offers, and that sauna offers a relaxation method with real benefits that have been scientifically proven and as such it is not just a hedonistic way of indulging oneself for just egoistic reasons – on average people who go to sauna 4-7 times a week were 63% less likely to die in a heart attack, with further benefits from staying in sauna roughly 20 minutes, as it further decreased the cardiac death possibility by 52% compared to people who only spent 10 minutes in a sauna per session.

There could be different packages available with some room for customisation, not too much to confuse the tourist but enough to give a picture of a rigid product, because wellness tourists are not keen on buying products they cannot customize.

The advertisements should also make use of the push-pull model that is widely known as a product selling tool which can help to identify the key segments, dangers, push and pull factors, to maximise the impact on the target demographic and to get the most out of such investment as advertisements are not free.

Figure 2: The Enhanced Push-Pull Model



When a tourist would arrive to the destination they would have a short orientation, where they would be told where everything is, and how everything works, and then

ask if they would have any questions, give my contact details and leave the premises for the time they have reserved the sauna for, while still being in a nearby location in case of emergencies. A bit after their reservation end time has passed, I'd show up hollering are everybody properly dressed, and then ask how it was and inquire if they would like to make a subsequent booking – there would be a discount for such (Smith, Puczko 2013:223), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:220), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:39, 299), (UEF: Sauna Health Benefits).

Smartphones are found from almost every pocket today, almost everybody has one except the elderly. Therefore for successful sauna business it would be important to have a “sauna application”, through which you could check the availability of the sauna, make reservations, and once in the sauna, control lighting and the stove of the sauna, for example. This is exactly the new kind of product people expect in this era of technology. That being said, a proper smartphone friendly website would be an important tool for marketing, general online visibility and to accommodate those people who do not own a smartphone. Social media site presence should also be developed to a high degree, and weekly posts should be made that would highlight important events (Smith, Puczko 2013:231, 275), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:112).

For the repeat customers, there would be loyal customer cards for the elderly as not all of them not keen on technology and of course, all the sauna application users would be able to enjoy these loyalty benefits straight away after their first reservation. Benefits could include small, but increasing discounts on subsequent reservations, and after a certain amount of reservations, maybe some free drinks or food (Smith, Puczko 2013:260).

Without an effective marketing strategy even the most special product and destination cannot succeed. Therefore, an effective marketing strategy is vitally important if one wants to triumph in business, and I think I have introduced some very good approaches onto the subject, even if some of these may seem novel from a “traditional” marketing point of view. One of the main reasons of marketing a sauna

destination is to make the sauna marketing distinctive from the other saunas of the area and that a cluster of wellness is more attractive than just a sauna so the business model should include more than just the sauna core product with no extra services (Smith, Puczko 2013:249, 283), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:106)

Cluster is also a key word for co-operation with other companies. Core competency can be increased by working together in cluster networks of cooperating firms. When such strategies are employed, the network's customers benefit as much as the network's companies because the cooperative core competency advantage is greater than any individual companies and these kinds of network's participant companies also benefit from the fact that they do not need to waste their resources on trying to do it all, instead they can focus on what they do good and let rest of the network take on roles and services that cannot be covered by one company.

However, this kind of a collaborative approach to business is hard to execute in practice because there are many conflicting interests, lack of time, managerial capabilities and leadership, general disagreements about who does what and the two most common obstacles in for co-operation: mistrust and envy. As such co-operation is a “pipe dream” for an ordinary company, the Destination Management Organisations (DMO) play a fundamental role in facilitating such teamplay, but as the DMO's main focuses are general promotion of tourism, they cannot get involved too much into specifics considering such company clusters – still, it is a possibility but due cultural and linguistic barriers it might be too much work for each party involved. There are more bad than good examples of co-operation, even if the industry is highly fragmented and would benefit noticeably from increase in business cooperation. (Voigt, Pforr, 2014: 45, 46, 47, 49, 117, 118, 296, 297)

Sauna wellness customer segments

The sauna tourism segments could be categorized into three groups by nationality – Core, which would consist of Finns, Mid-Level, which would consist of rest of the Nordic countries, and Periphery, which would consist of the local Spaniards and other

nationalities (Smith, Puczko 2013:144).

On a global scale, people who have wellness as a sole purpose or a motivator only account for 13 percent of the total amount of wellness trips, and they only account for 16 percent of total money spent. This group can also be called primary wellness tourists. As we can see from the percentage, this group is very small, and they do not spend much more on wellness than secondary wellness tourists.

What is a secondary wellness tourist? They are people who participate in wellness experiences and generally seek to improve their wellness but that do not travel solely because of these motivations. Majority of the wellness tourists fall into this category, global average being 87 percent of the trips being taken with such secondary wellness tourists and 84 percent of money received by the industry is from this segment. In other words, this is the lifeforce of the wellness industry.

Some sauna tourists could be viewed as being “fencesitters” for some holistic tourist activities, if combined with the sauna to be one product – for example, the cold-water baths mentioned earlier in this paper, or the also-mentioned mudwraps, they could “jump off the fence” and indulge themselves by participating. This needs further research (Smith, Puczko 2013:146), (Global Wellness Institute: Statistics & Facts).

Aging baby boomers are a prime segment for a sauna wellness operation. Younger and elderly people are good segments too, as especially the elderly seek health, but the aging baby boomers are the single biggest segment and as such a business should focus on them as they have the most purchasing power (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:5).

Additional services

Facilitating products and services

Facilitating product would be the sauna itself and the shower area, and the facilitating service would be renting of the sauna.

Augmenting products and services

There could be both women-only nights and men-only nights that could be advertised in proper magazines for both segments – on mens magazines for men, in female interest magazines for women, with the occasional ad for both in travel magazines. Men-only nights could be themed more towards relaxation, while women-only nights could have some easy cooking classes on site, yoga, and some short nutrition lectures to mix with the regular sauna activity (Smith, Puczko 2013:221, 222).

Corporate clients could be offered packages for business get-togethers and staff nights, where there could be some pre-planned bonding activities, like some small team games – for example petanque – which would strengthen the “team spirit” of the companies' employees and associates, along with the benefit of stress relief (Smith, Puczko 2013:264), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009:76)

I could also to invent a certain brand of “sauneness”, which would be a combination of the wholesome sauna experience combined with nutrition and mindfulness or meditation exercises, as these kind of exercises can help to alleviate negative emotions and depression, promoting feelings of happiness.

This could be the “alternative living” brand of the sauna, which would basically be held on certain dates – say, fortnightly or once a month as an “Transformative Sauna” event. On a greater scale, and utilizing a core competency network scheme the Fuengirola wellness businesses could coordinate a Fuengirola Wellness Week as a week-long event that would benefit everybody, not just one sauna wellness business. (Smith, Puczko 2013:243), (Bushnell, Sheldon 2009: 71, 72, 117, 118, 197)

Also a “Raw Sauna” event could be held every now and then, which would combine nutrition lectures with raw local foods, which include raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, eggs, fish, and even meat. These raw ingredients help in detoxifying the body, and combined with the detoxifying properties of a sauna, this could be a real detox bomb that could be marketed to many health-aware people and maybe even to some

party people, so the best date for such event could be on some Sunday? “Come to anti-age and recover from your weekend in a good company to a traditional finnish sauna enjoying some anti-oxidant rich foods sourced from local farmers.” (Smith, Puczko 2013:246, 265), (Voigt, Pforr, 2014:79).

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

For the research study of this thesis a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods was chosen. The questionnaire itself has seventeen actual questions, with an additional field for filling some contact information in order to participate in an lottery which has small prizes to encourage people to answer. In the quantitative study the questionnaire has eleven multiple choice questions, with six open questions to support or to further specify the answers given in the choices. For the qualitative study, people are interviewed with the same questions, but all of the questions are asked in an open format, which the interviewee can answer in any way he or she wanted. The questions are based in the theory, with a few supporting questions like “Estimate the demand for sauna in Fuengirola on the scale of 1 to 5, five being the highest”.

The questionnaire link is posted to three different Facebook groups that focus on the Fuengirola or Costa del Sol area, which have roughly 15,000 members in total. Also, the questionnaire is advertised once with a small text advertisement in the Finnish-operated Fuengirola newspaper “Suomalainen Espanjassa”. The Facebook posts also mentions the possibility for an interview. Also the same information is posted on two internet forums, Pallontallaajat and Espanja.com.

Considering that there are no official statistics about the actual number of Finns residing in the Costa del Sol / Fuengirola area, it is hard to say how concrete the results are, but the unofficial estimations about the number of Finns residing in the area either part-time or full-time (e.g. how much of a year they spend in the area in total) are usually between 15,000 to 30,000. If taking a moderate approach to these

unofficial estimations and estimate the actual part-time and full-time Finnish residents, the total number of being around 20,000 and also consider the fact that some Finns do not like going to sauna, the actual segment that could be considered as “possible sauna customers”, the size of the segment is about 10,000 persons. Therefore, the 103 answers to the quantitative study can be seen as representing 1% of the total customer base, and the qualitative with its 11 answers can be seen as representing 0.1% of the total customer base.

The questionnaire takes about four minutes to fill out on average, and the interviews took roughly 15 minutes to complete. There were several individuals who submitted the questionnaire answers multiple times, but the duplicate submissions were deleted. The total amount of questionnaire answers was 112, so there was nine duplicates.

The research results can be argued to be skewed because of the uneven ratio of men to women. Of the quantitative study participants, almost 75% of respondents were women. In the qualitative study the same biased offset of genders prevailed, with the vast majority of almost 90% of answers coming from women. I think that this is because women in general are more eager to take part in questionnaires and are generally more interested in wellness, not that the men would not be interested in such a product/service.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Quantitative questionnaire analysis

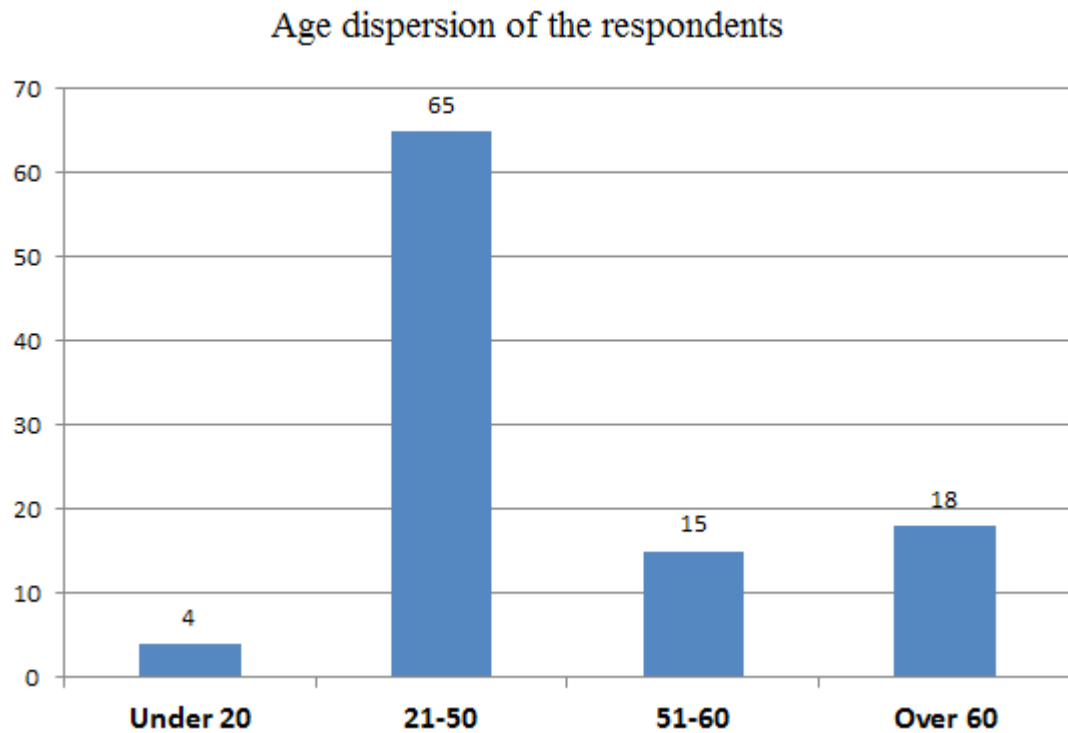
The questions were categorized in two groups: Background information and Customer behavior.

There were only two background questions, as the author did not want respondents to feel that their privacy is being compromised. They were:

“Age”

From the figure 3 we can see that majority of the respondents are between 21 to 50 years old. This age group is in their prime working age and they have a lot of disposable income.

Figure 3 “Quantitative age dispersion”

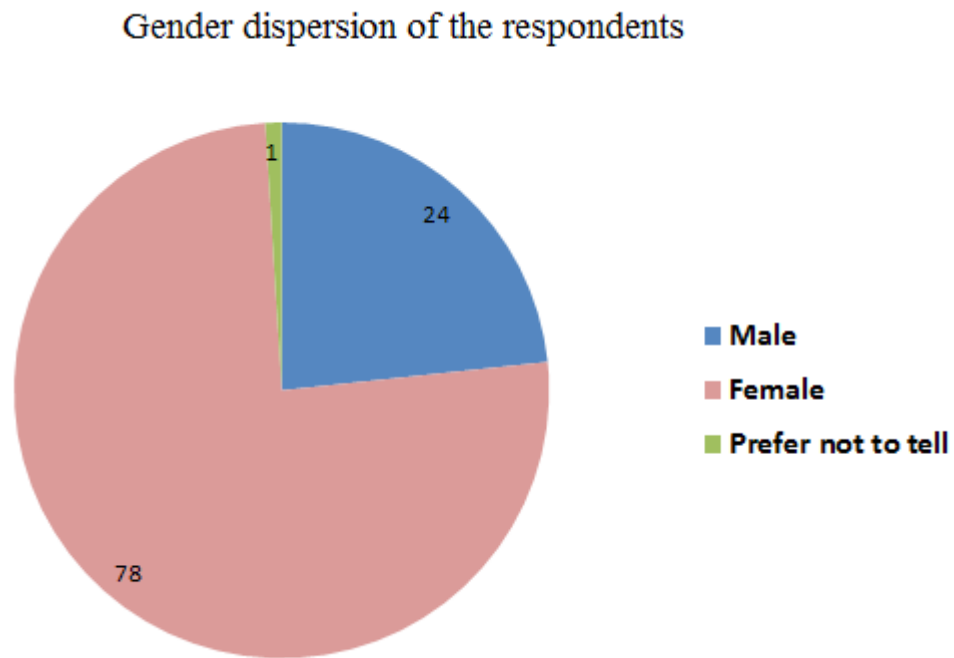


“Gender”

- “Male
- “Female”
- “I don’t want to tell”

It is clear from the figure 4 that majority of the respondents were women. Therefore it can be argued that the results are skewed and biased.

Figure 4 “Quantitative gender dispersion”



The main section of the questionnaire was the customer behavior part, which outlines answers for the most critical part of this thesis – the research questions. The questions asked in this section of the questionnaire were:

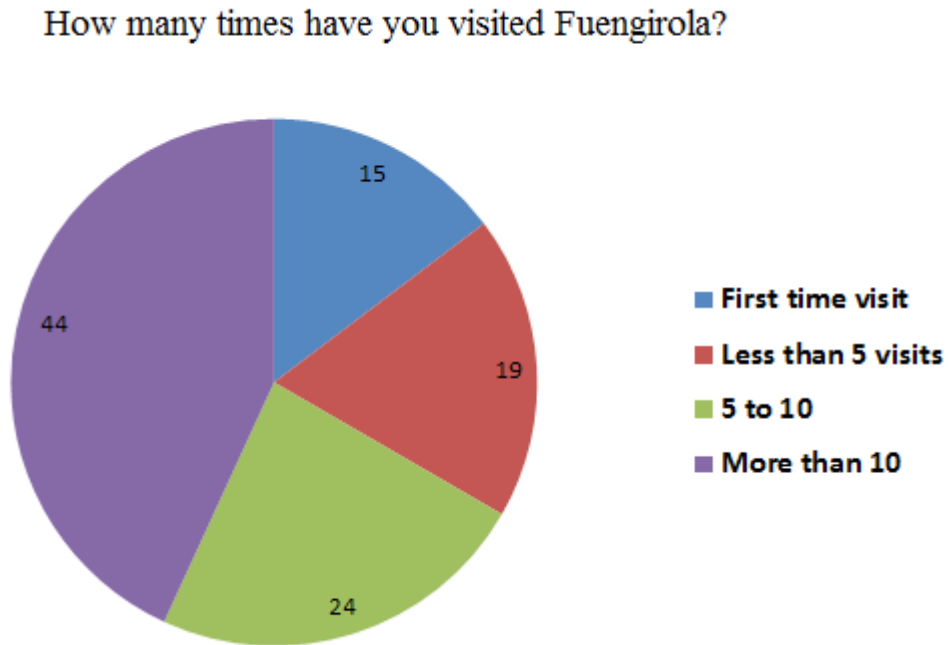
“How many times you have visited Fuengirola?”

- “This is the first time”
- “Less than 5 times”

- "5 to 10 times"
- "Over 10 times"

Figure 5 shows that almost half of the total respondents have a long history of visiting Fuengirola, and that the vast majority can be considered as being repeat visitors.

Figure 5 "How many times have you visited Fuengirola"

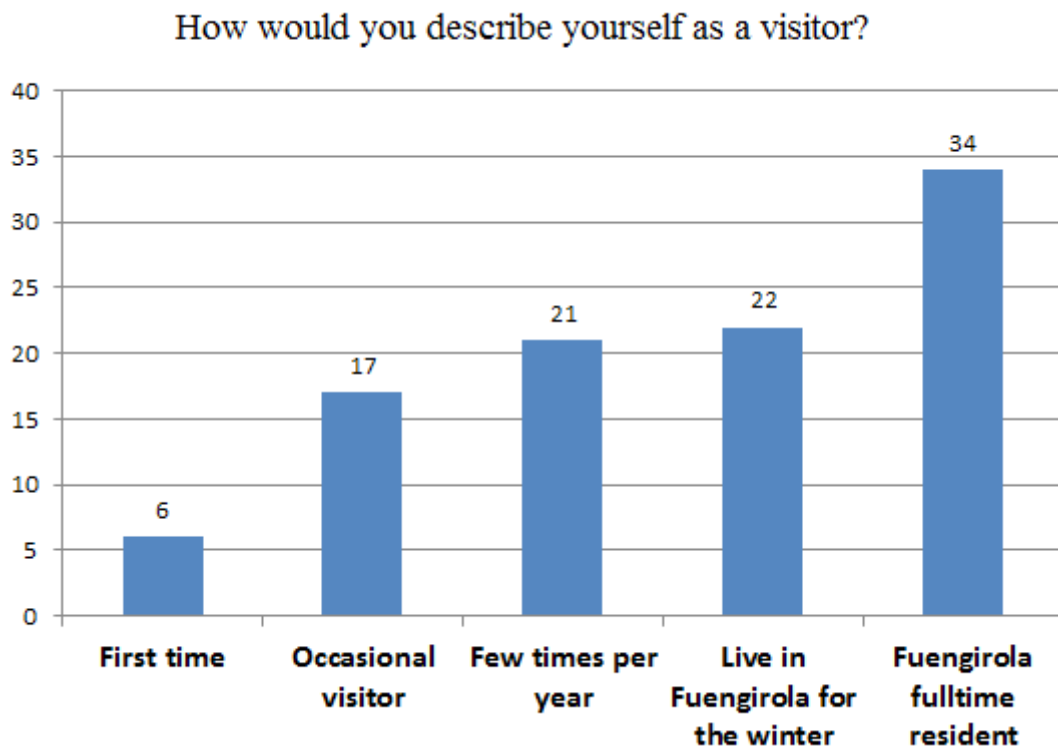


"How would you describe yourself as a visitor?"

- “First time visitor”
- “Occasional visitor”
- “I visit few times every year staying 1-2 weeks per time”
- “I live in Fuengirola during the winter”
- “I live permanently in Fuengirola”

Figure 6 illustrates the fact that there is a large group of fulltime residents and a considerable number of people who move to Fuengirola for the winter and a good amount of tourists that come many times a year to spend time there.

Figure 6 “How would you describe yourself as a visitor?”



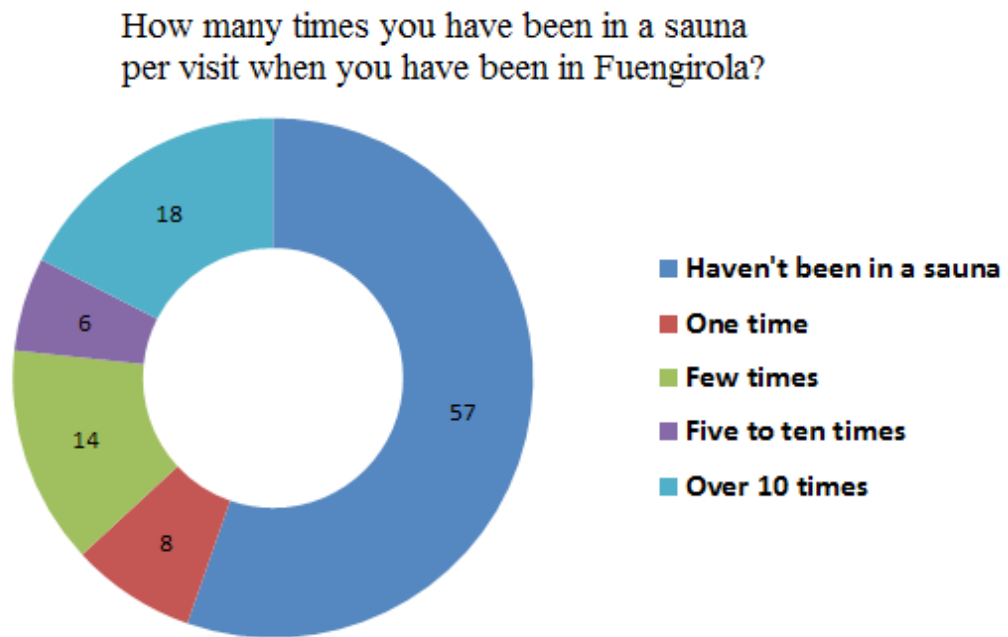
“How many times you have been in a sauna per visit when you have been in Fuengirola?”

- “Not even once”
- “One time”
- “A few times”

- “5-10 times”
- “More than 10 times”

From figure 7 two things can be concluded; First of all, most of the respondents have not been in a sauna at all, and that there still is a considerable amount of people who have visited a sauna – roughly 30% have been in a sauna in Fuengirola more than one time.

Figure 7 “How many times have you been in a sauna when you have been in Fuengirola”



“If you have not been in a sauna at all or only a few times, why you have not gone more often?”

This was an open question, so the answers are vary a lot and therefore, are unsuitable for making a chart of. Many answers state that it is too warm in Spain for them to feel a need for a sauna. Some feel that the current saunas are badly situated or overpriced, that the price does meet the quality. Women seem to feel that the saunas that are available have chosen men as their main target group as women tend to get the leftover niche slots for what it comes to public sauna schedule rotation – men get evenings, so if you are a woman and do not feel like going to a sauna during the day, they have no service availability as the schedules are rigid and have not been changed in years.

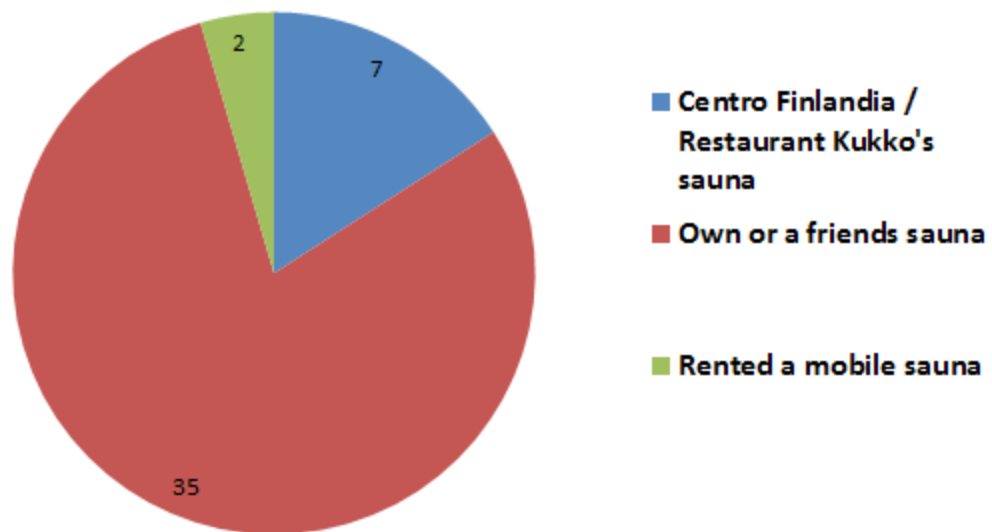
“Where have you been in a sauna if you have visited one?”

- “Restaurant Kukko’s sauna”
- “I have rented a mobile sauna”
- “In my own or in a friend’s sauna”

Figure 8 shows the fact that many of the sauna visitors that have been into a sauna, have their own saunas or a friend’s sauna. Very few have visited a public sauna, and only a handful of people have rented a mobile sauna for their use.

Figure 8 “Where have you been in a sauna if you have visited one?”

Where have you been in a sauna if you have visited one?



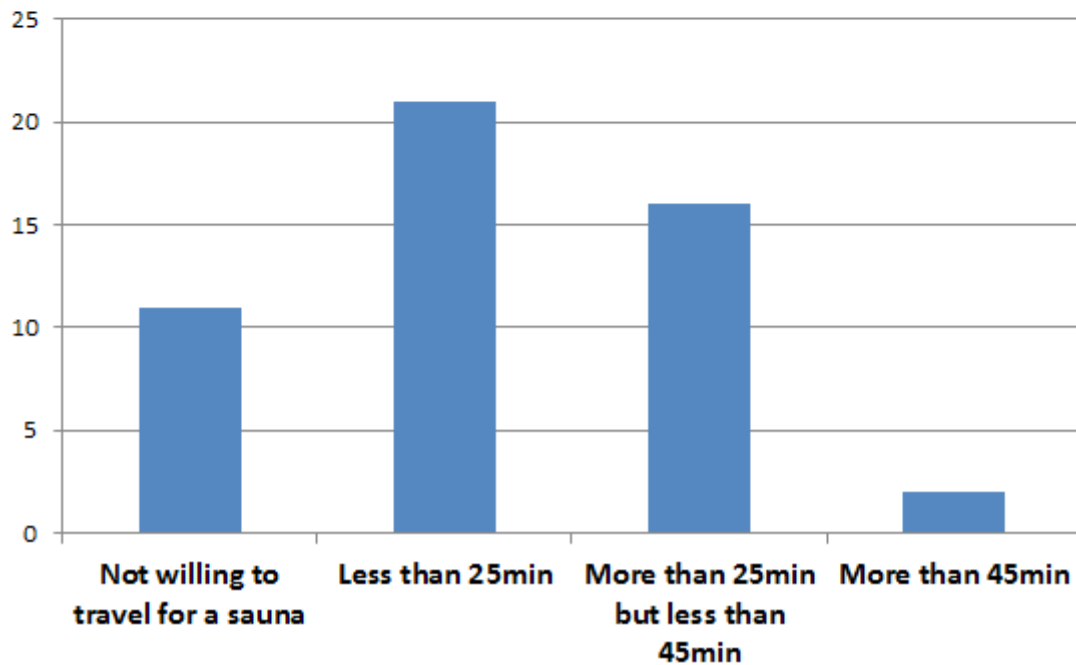
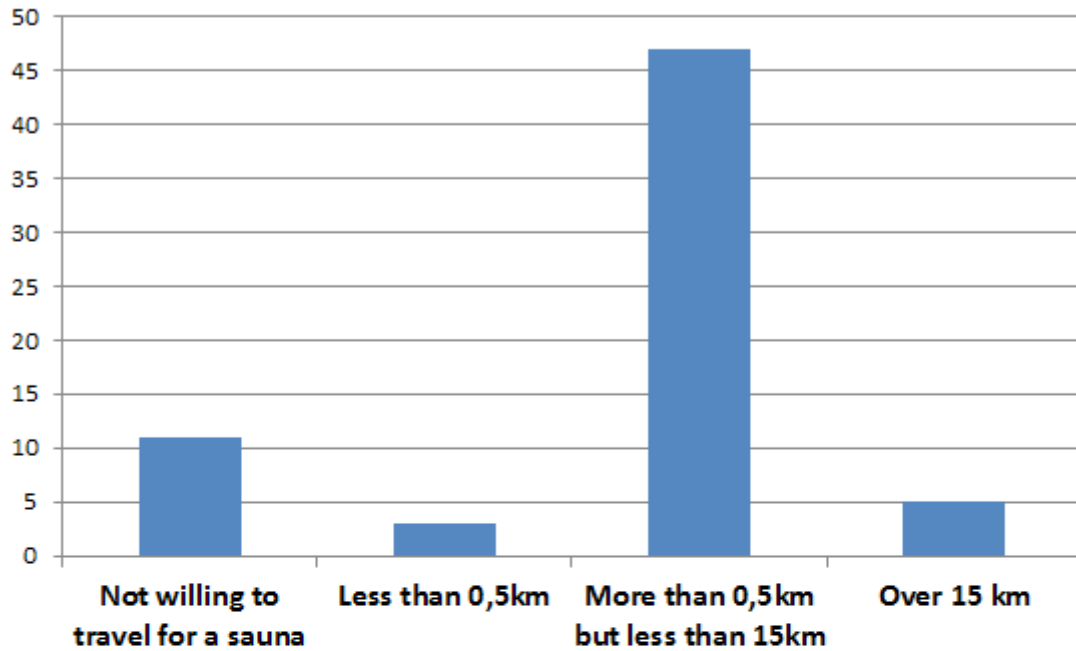
“What is the maximum distance or time that you are prepared to travel for a sauna?”

From the figures 9 and 10 we can see that most of the respondents feel that 500m to 15km is the maximum distance to travel for a sauna. In terms of minutes, there are two large groups – the ones willing to travel less than 25 minutes and the ones that are willing to travel up to 45mins for a sauna. These results correlate well with the fact that it would be cheapest to put such a sauna operation to the hills of the nearby village of Mijas, which is situated roughly 7km from Fuengirola, and there is a bus

line that goes there every 20 minutes and it takes roughly 10 minutes to reach Mijas from Fuengirola.

Figure 9 and 10 “Maximum time & Distance you are willing to travel for a sauna?”

What is the maximum distance or time that you are prepared to travel for a sauna?

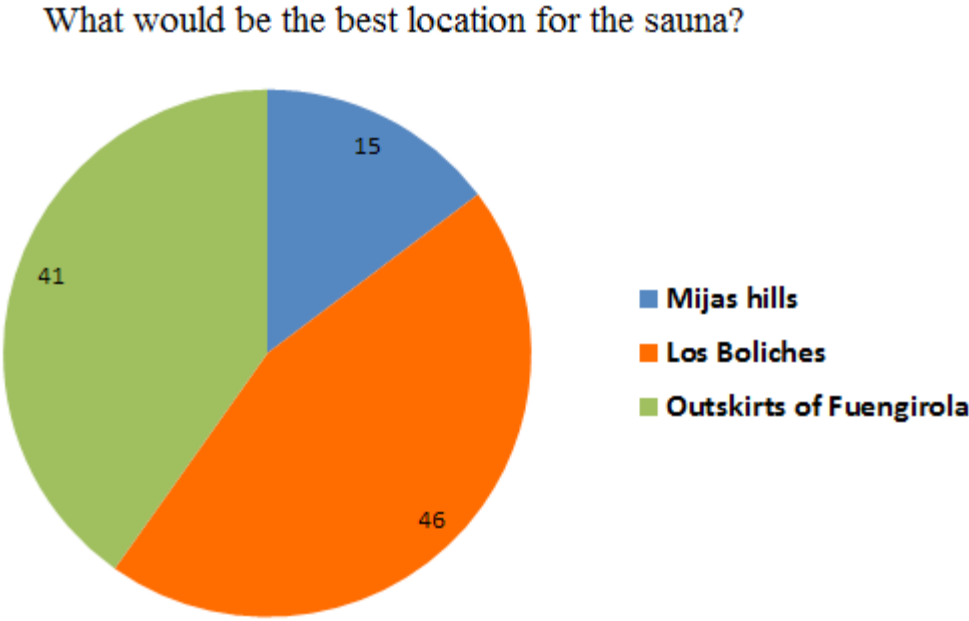


“From the following options which would be the best place that would be situated within a bearable distance and would be sufficient for your requirements?”

- “Mijas hills”
- “In Fuengirola, in Los Boliches”
- “In the outskirts of Fuengirola”

Figure 11 shows that while the Los Boliches area is the main Finnish “hub” in the city of Fuengirola, the majority of the respondents would not want the sauna to be situated there.

Figure 11 “Best location for a sauna”

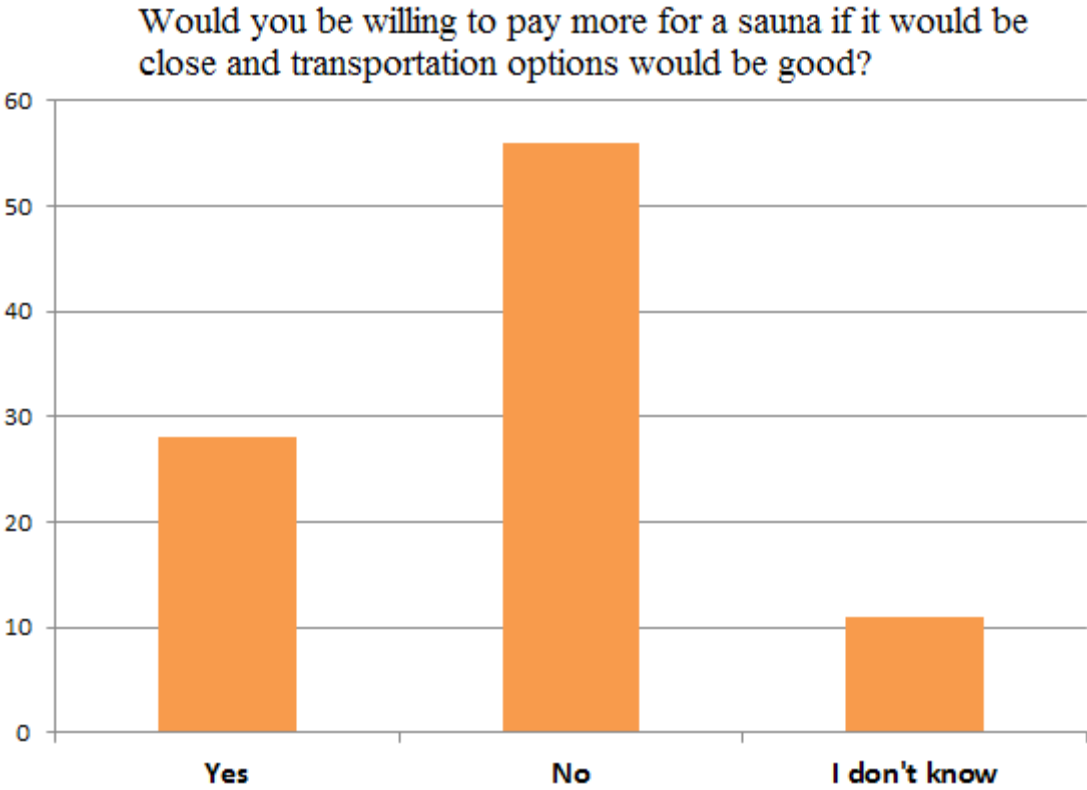


“Would you be willing to pay for more a sauna if it was close and transportation options would be good (e.g. Los Boliches)”

- “Yes”
- “No”
- “I don’t know”

Figure 12 shows the sad fact that the respondents want a cheap sauna. They are not willing to pay more, even if the accessibility would be better. This result is in slight conflict with the above result of ideal location. People seem to want a cheap sauna that is easy to get to. While this is understandable, it may be impossible to achieve as the nearer you are to the shore (and Los Boliches), the real estate prices are higher. It would be near impossible to build a sauna facility there and keep the prices low. Many answers were also others than the given options, ranging from “It depends on the quality of the sauna and other matters” to “It depends on the price”

Figure 12 “Would you pay more if the sauna would be close”

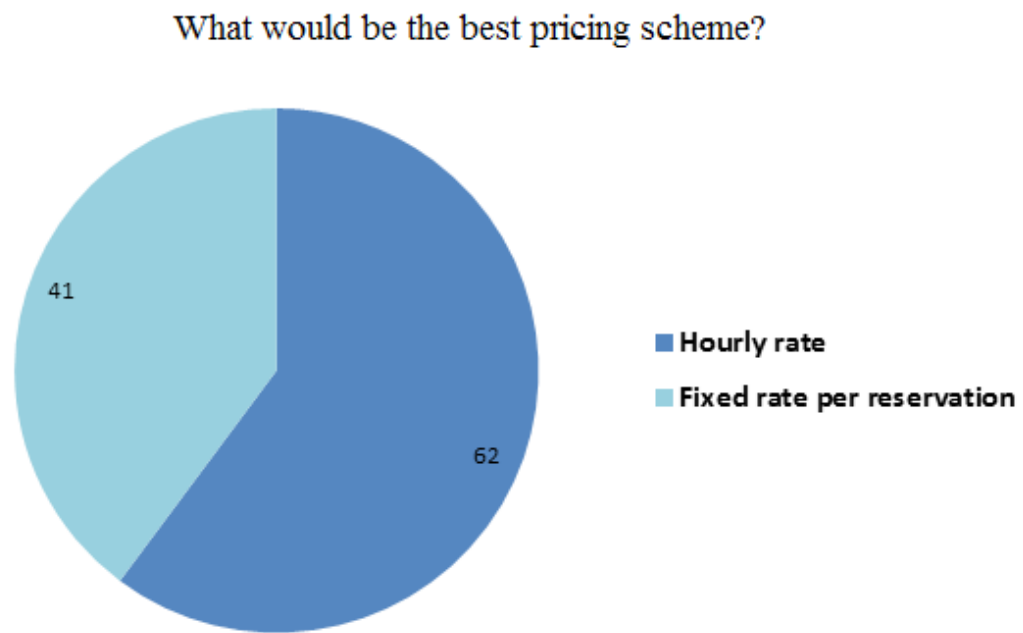


“What would be the best pricing scheme”

- “Hourly rate by hours”
- “Fixed price for a reservation (e.g. 3-4 hour reservation)”

The respondents seem to want an hourly rate instead of a fixed rate per reservation. This was to be expected as most people do not spend more than one hour in a sauna.

Figure 13 “What would be the best pricing scheme”

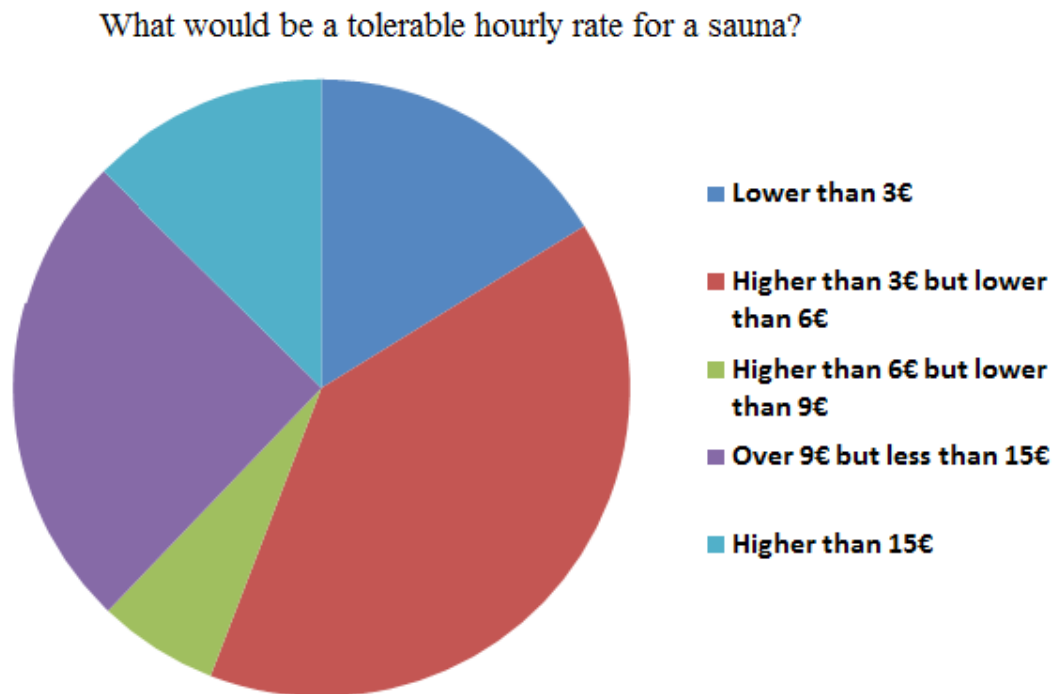


“What would be an tolerable hourly rate for a sauna?”

The average sum in the answers to this question was 8,5€ per hour. The chart shows how large portion of the respondents answered in the range from 1€ to 8-9€. While on the preferred days like Friday, Saturday and maybe Wednesday, a cheaper price could do, the general minimum price for such hour in a sauna should be around the average,

which would suit the largest group, pictured here with the red colour, even if it is on the extreme end of their willingness to pay.

Figure 14 “Tolerable hourly rate”

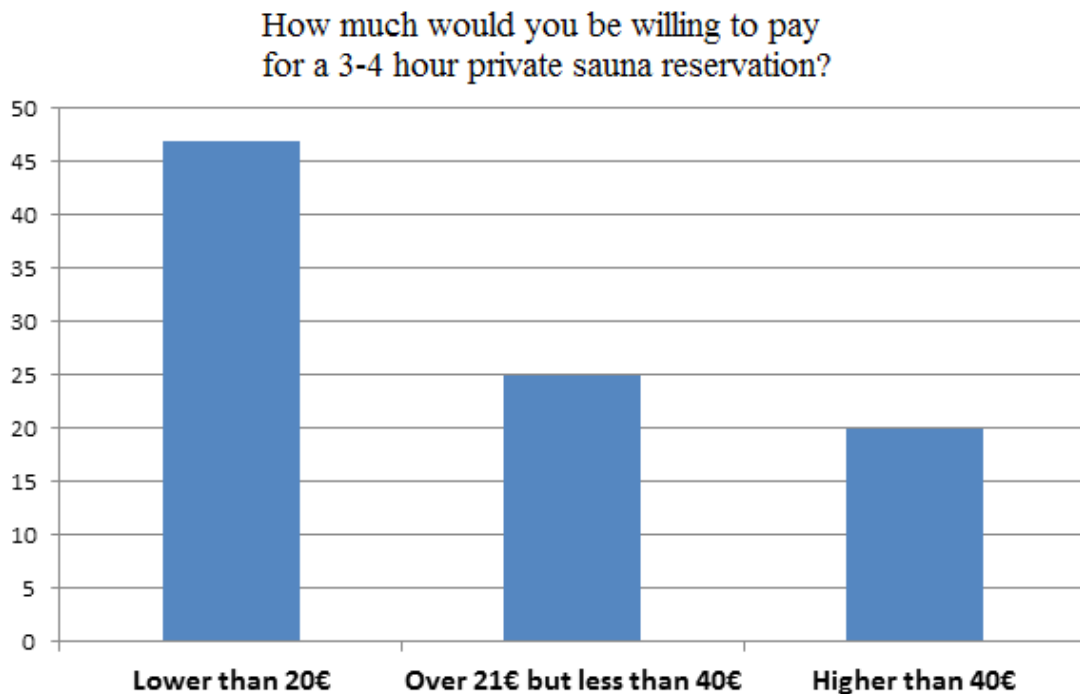


“What would be an tolerable rate for a fixed 3-4 hour reservation?”

The reader can easily observe that a lot of people seem to want an extremely cheap sauna. If the price would be 20€ or less, costs could barely be covered, and after the expenses the entrepreneur should still be able to pay a salary to himself. At 20€ the hourly rate is around 5 euros, and if the group is, for example, a family of five, that

means that hourly rate for those private reservations would be only 1€ per person. The answers to this question especially led me to think that someone has been answering “as a joke”, or that a mistake was made in the question itself – maybe it was too unclear for some people that this question asked that how much would they be willing to pay in total to have the sauna for 3-4 hours privately for their own use. Some people had answered even low as 3€. The calculated average was 28€.

Figure 15 “Tolerable rate for a private reservation”



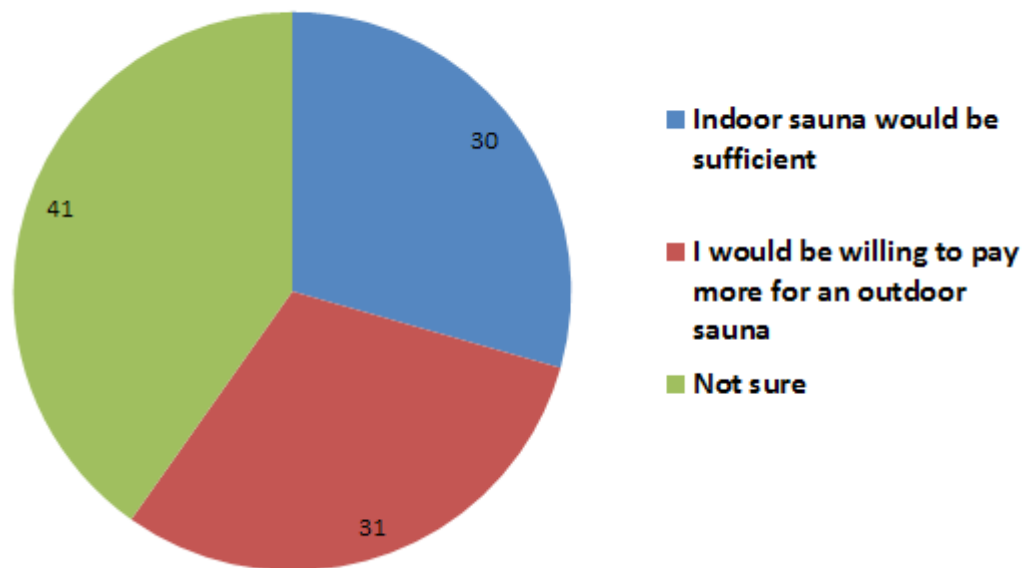
“Would an indoor sauna be okay for your needs, or would you be willing to pay more for an separate outdoor sauna?”

- “Cheaper is better so indoor sauna is OK”
- “Price does not matter, outdoor sauna is better”
- “I don’t know”

This question shows that people are not sure about whether they would be willing to pay more for an separate outdoor sauna. The rest of the answers are divided almost half and half to the “Yes I’d be willing” and “No, indoor sauna is sufficient”, but I believe that many of the “Not sure” answers could be converted into “Yes, I’d be willing” if the location would be good.

Figure 16 “Indoor or outdoor sauna”

Would you be willing to pay more for a separate outdoor sauna or would you rather have an indoor sauna?



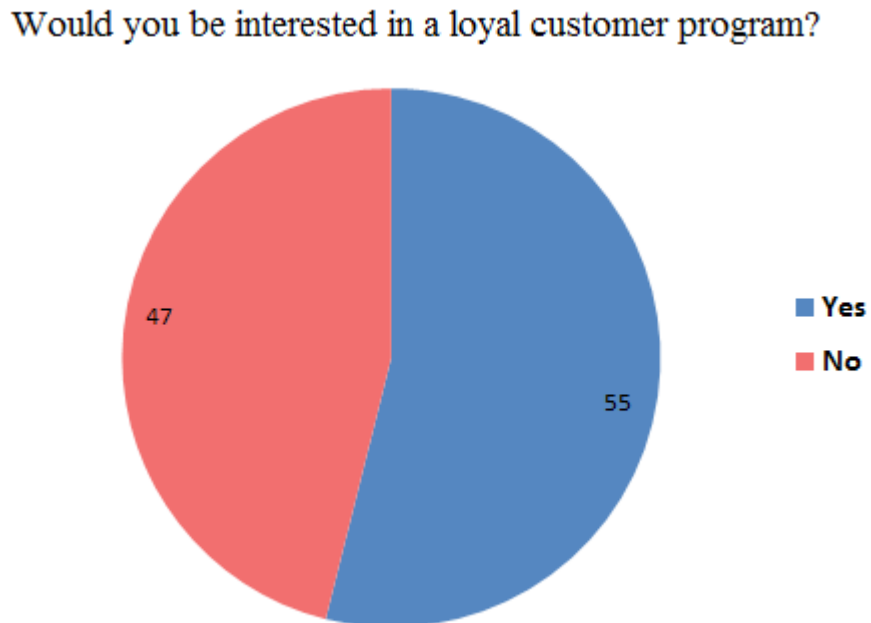
“Would you be interested in a loyal customer program which would give you discounts for subsequent reservations?”

- “Yes”
- “No”

Here we see that for a small majority, a customer loyalty program is something they would like to partake in. However, almost half of the respondents have answered

“No”, which may be because the benefits of such program were undefined. I believe that some of the “No” answers could be converted to “Yes” if the customer loyalty program would offer significant benefits.

Figure 17 “Loyal customer program”



“What kind of events would entice you to come to the sauna? E.g. Nutrition-theme, sports theme, mens’ or womens nights, some other event, what?”

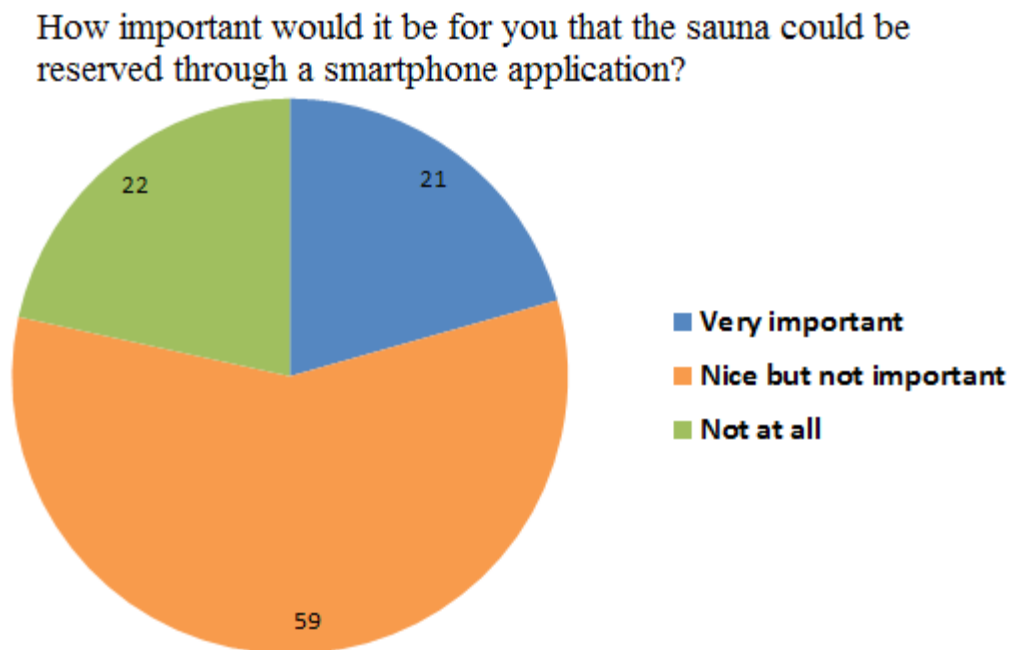
Given the female bias in the respondents, the answers to this questions were almost all along the same lines. Women’s nights, beauty care nights, massage nights and nutrition events all got dozens of mentions. This question also yielded some very interesting, “far out” ideas, such as “Sauna Blues Band night”, “Craft beer night” and “Birch branch night”. There were mentions about “Sauna yoga events” that the author discussed in the theoretical study, along with more traditional events such as “A drinking night”, a “Sports night”, “Open barbeque night” and a “After jog/exercise sauna”. A pool or a jacuzzi was also mentioned in roughly ten comments.

“How important would it be for you that the sauna could be reserved through a smartphone application?”

- “Very important”
- “It would be nice, but not so important”
- “Not important at all”

For the respondents, it does not seem that important to have a smartphone application. I believe it is because sauna reservations are often done spontaneously, so people do not need a separate program for such occasions, instead they can browse the internet with their phone and make a reservation through a website or just by a phonecall.

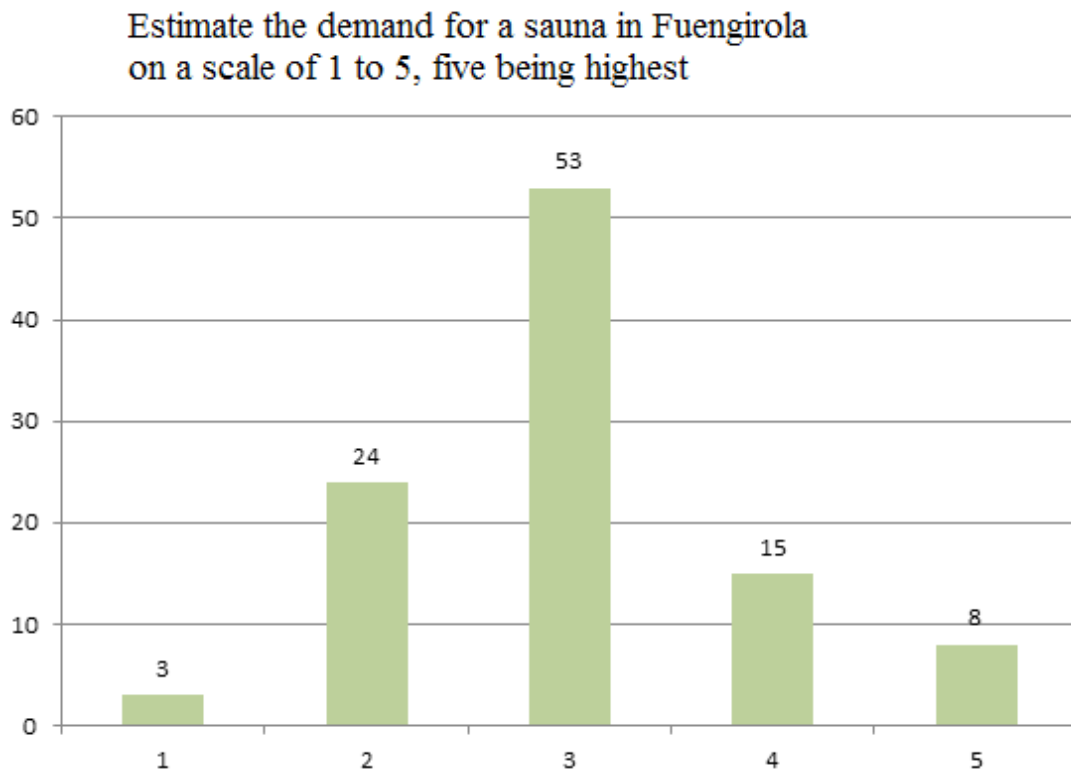
Figure 18 “Smartphone application”



“Estimate the demand for sauna in Fuengirola on the scale of 1 to 5, five being highest”

The respondents seem to think that there is some demand, but out of the 104 total replies only 23 think that the demand is on the high side (4 or 5). This is somewhat contradictory to the fact that many people mentioned how there is no good quality saunas in Fuengirola.

Figure 19 “Demand estimation”



Qualitative questionnaire analysis

The qualitative research study was done with the same questions in face to face interview situations in Fuengirola. Eleven people were interviewed, of which eight

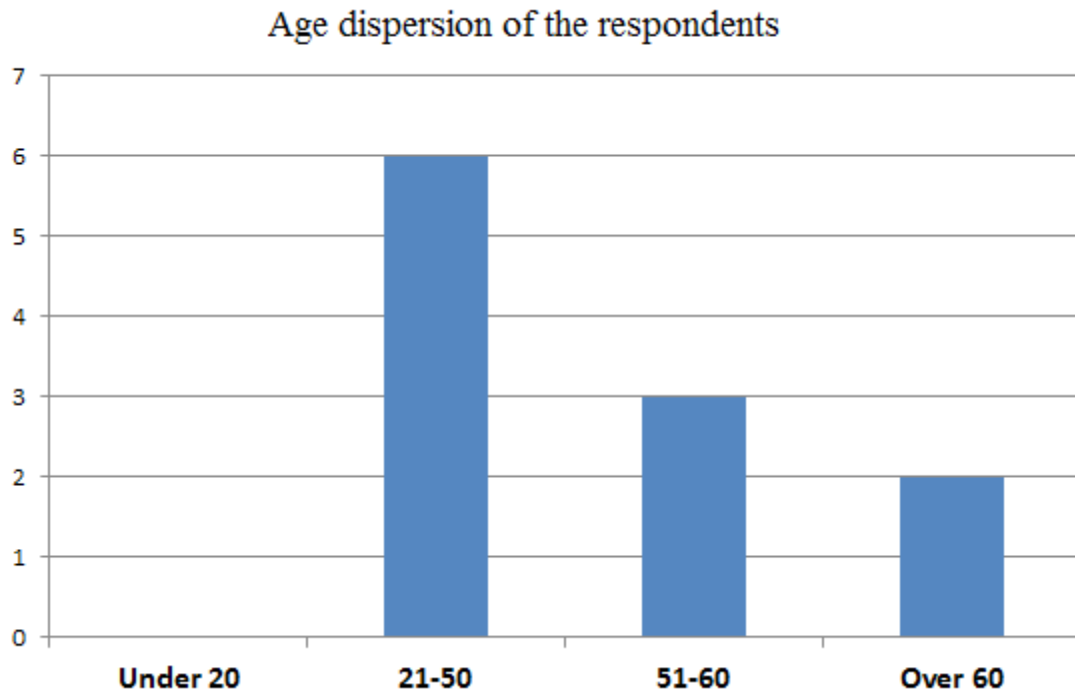
were women and three were men. Therefore the answers might be slightly biased and one can argue that this part of the study used a biased sample. However it must be noted that despite newspaper advertisements, face to face street interview attempts and by spamming several Facebook groups with messages asking for people to be interviewed, it was not possible to obtain more interviewees.

Questions were:

“Age”

The age dispersion in the qualitative study lacks under twenty year olds, and the majority of the qualitative questionnaire interviewees were between 21 to 50 years of age. The results are displayed in Figure 20.

Figure 20 “Qualitative age dispersion”

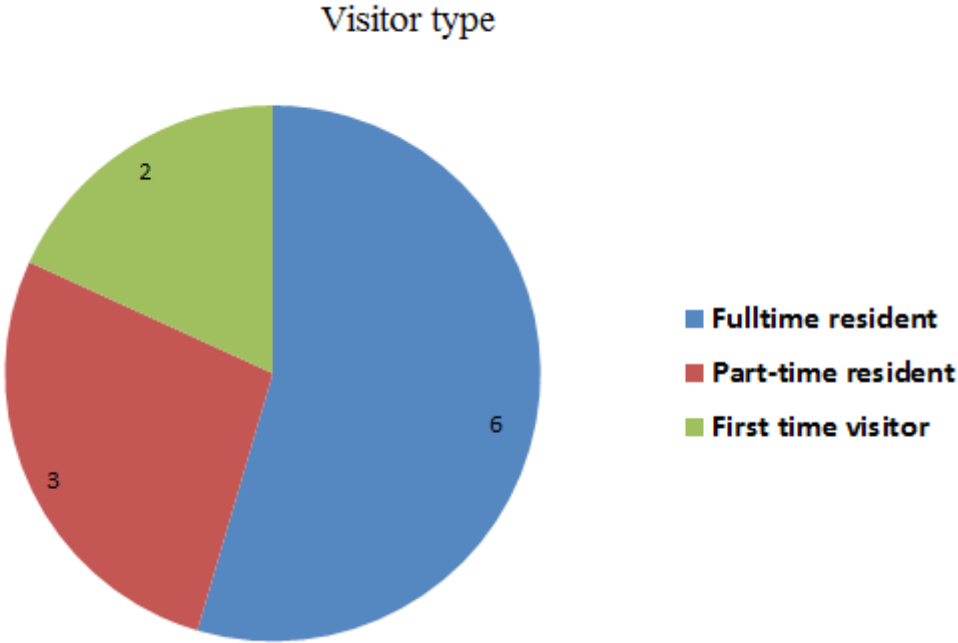


“Visitor type”

Figure 21 illustrates that most respondents to this qualitative part of the study were fulltime residents in Fuengirola, with some part-time residents as well.

Of the eleven respondents, only four had been in a sauna in Fuengirola. Of these four, two had been in a sauna two times, one man only once, and one woman had been to sauna over ten times.

Figure 21 “Qualitative visitor type”



“If you have not been in a sauna or only a few times, why you have not gone more often?”

The answers were very varied. I categorized the reasons down to four main types of answers. As one can observe, the majority of the respondents felt that the saunas are overpriced, and that some people do not want to visit public scheduled saunas.

Figure 22 “Qualitative why have you not been in a sauna”

If you have not been in a sauna or only a few times, why you have not gone more often?

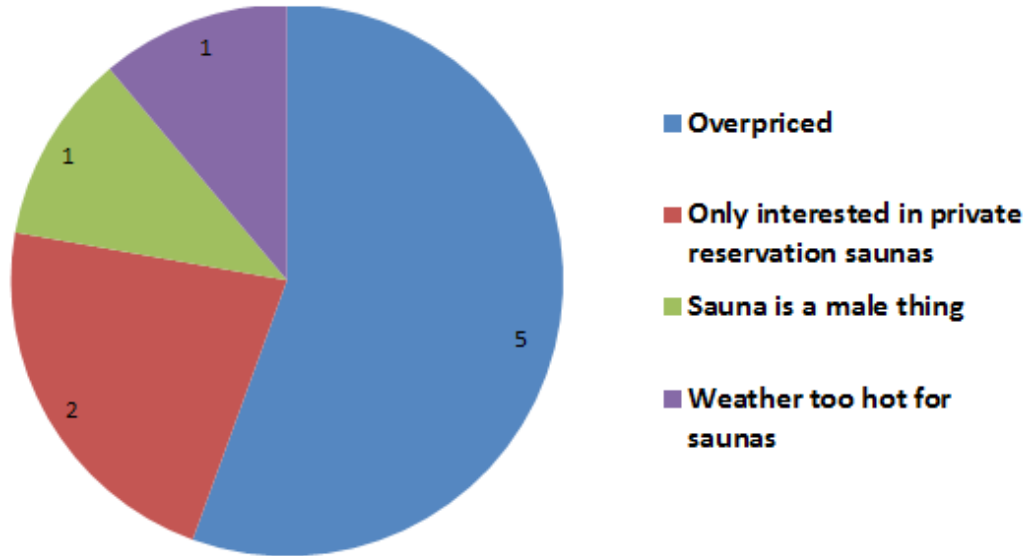


Figure 23 shows that of the respondents that have been in a sauna in Fuengirola, a big majority has only used their own saunas, but some have visited public saunas.

The maximum distance that people are willing to travel averaged at 26 minutes, or 5 kilometres.

For the best location the answers had a lot of variation, but the most popular answer was a four-way tie between “Outskirts of the city”, “Mijas hills”, “Los Boliches” and “Los Pacos”. There were also very creative suggestions such as “Near the Castell castle” and “In a peaceful place”

Figure 23 “Qualitative where you have been in a sauna if you have visited one”

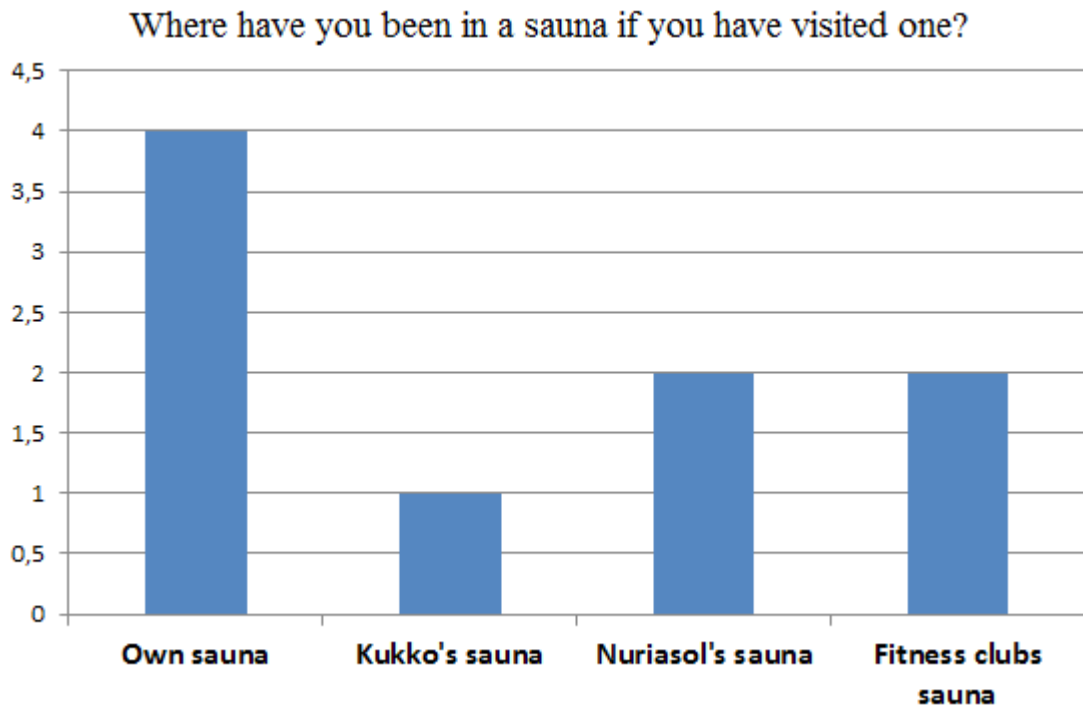
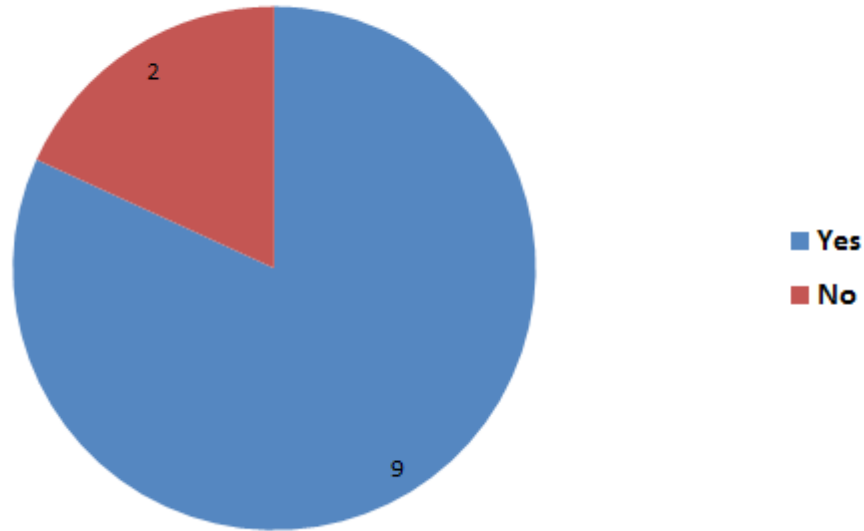


Figure 24 shows a large discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative respondents as majority of the qualitative respondents would be willing to pay more for a sauna that would be close, opposed to the majority in the quantitative respondents.

Figure 24 “Qualitative willingness to pay more for a sauna that is close”

Would you be willing to pay more for a sauna if it would be close and transportation options would be good?



The answers to “What would be the best pricing scheme” were that seven respondents thought that “By reservation”, e.g. a fixed pricing scheme would be the best way to charge for the sauna, while four thought that “By the hours” way was better.

For the question “What would be an tolerable hourly rate for a sauna?” the average rate calculated from all the answers was 8,6€, which is similar to the quantitative study answer (8,5€).

However, for the question “What would be an tolerable rate for a fixed 3-4 hour reservation?” the average of all answers was much higher than the quantitative studies, as the qualitative respondents average was 65€ - more than two times the quantitative studies calculated average of 28€.

When asked about “Would you be willing to pay for more a sauna if it was be close and transportation options would be good (e.g. Los Boliches)” the majority, seven out of the eleven of the respondents were willing to pay more.

Customer loyalty scheme question answers were along the same lines, with eight respondents out of the eleven answering “Yes, I would be interested”.

The question “What kind of events would entice you to come to the sauna? E.g. Nutrition-theme, sports theme, men’s or women’s nights, some other event, what?” had by far the longest and most varied answers in this qualitative study. Many of the female respondents were hoping for “pampering” events where there would be a cosmetologist and a hairstyler that could do hair and makeup after the sauna. There are also many that wanted nutrition and food type events, icehockey nights, active sports (e.g. exercise before sauna) nights and not so surprisingly, women’s nights were also mentioned by several respondents. One man said that he would like to see men’s night events. Two fairly unexpected suggestions also arose – Eurovision nights and motorsport nights. One respondent hoped to see sauna yoga events, as he discusses that such augmenting service would potentially appeal to some customers.

The question about the phone application got almost a fifty-fifty ratio with the answers, with majority of answers being “Yes” but only by one vote.

All of the qualitative questionnaire interviewees thought that the demand for a sauna in Fuengirola is high.

CONCLUSIONS

The research carried out provided answers to all of the core research questions:

What amount of money customers would be willing to pay for a sauna session? A: 8,5€ per hour, or 28€ per a 3-4 hour private reservation. If one takes the qualitative answer of 65€ per 3-4 hour private reservation into account, one conclusion could be the average between these two very different answers: 46€ is the maximum that could be charged for the said reservation time.

2. What is the maximum distance customers would be willing to travel for a sauna? A: The majority of the respondents were willing to travel either between half a kilometer to 15 kilometers or less than 25mins. The qualitative and the quantitative

study gave similar results. I think that the sauna would be easiest to set up on the hills of Mijas, the 10 minute/6 kilometer bus ride there from the Fuengirola city centre would suit most of the potential customers.

3. What kind of tourists are the primary customer segment for a sauna destination? A: From the research answers it seems that the fulltime residents and the part-time residents are the primary segments, as majority of the respondents outside these two groups did not miss not having a sauna.

4. Does the sauna need to be an external structure, or is an indoor sauna sufficient? A: It seems that there is a substantial amount of people that would be willing to pay more for an outdoor sauna, especially if we look at the qualitative research study results. The quantitative study result is more unclear, but I think that many of the “Not sure” answers would be positive (e.g. that they would want an external, outdoor sauna) if the sauna was situated in a peaceful place with a nice view.

5. What facilitating and augmenting services the customers expect from a sauna establishment? A: This is by far the hardest research question to answer because it has such a broad definition. The by far most wanted facilitating service outside the sauna itself was the jacuzzi or a swimming pool where to dip after or during the sauna. The most wanted augmenting services were women’s nights (with or without a cosmetologist) and nutrition events. Many men also wanted sports nights and men’s nights. From the answers it is clear that the current saunas in the area do not offer enough facilitating and augmenting services around the sauna product.

From the research results it can be seen that there is a definite need for a high quality sauna in the Fuengirola area. Therefore there could be a business opportunity for an entrepreneur who could provide such a product. The key for success would be the ability to make interesting augmenting services around the core product. Initially it was thought that the hourly rate –pricing model would be less popular than the by reservation model as the pricing is pondered in the theory with the assumption of people enjoying a more stress-free pricing model where they would not have to worry

about time. However, the results show that the majority of people want an hourly rate, even if in the qualitative research part the results give a different result – however as the qualitative study can be argued to be of a biased sample, it cannot be considered to be the actual state of the matter on a larger scale. People rather pay less in total than spend more money for a longer sauna reservation which they will only partially use.

I was somewhat surprised that the respondents were not so interested in a loyal customer program, and that very few people considered a phone application to be important. Also, the answers to the “Estimate the demand” questions were somewhat disheartening to the idea at setting up a sauna business in Fuengirola, even though there seems to be an ample demand for such a service.

All in all, I think that I achieved what was wanted through this thesis. The research done provides some concrete answers about what the consumers want, and most of it is in line with the theoretical framework. This thesis provides a good base information package for anyone who is planning to set up a sauna business into the town of Fuengirola. Further studies could be made about the ideal location and the service portfolio of such a sauna, as this thesis outlines the fact that there is a definite need for a higher quality sauna in the region. Not that the current offerings would be that poor, this is a very subjective matter, but through the questionnaire and the interviews it became clear that many people are hoping for a “quality sauna” to be set up. Only time will tell that if such hopes can be made into reality.