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IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF BALNEOLOGICAL, SPA AND WELLNESS CENTRES BY IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF VARNA MUNICIPALITY)

Relevance of the study. In an environment of change and uncertainty, it is important for balneological, spa and wellness facilities to define, invest in and maintain their vision of innovation in planning, organisation, control in a way that adapts to the unknown. Innovation is part of the culture and integrated into strategy, operational plans and vision. The analysis of the genesis of innovative approaches to the development of balneological, spa and health facilities shows that it is an example of increasing the sustainability of health tourism in the evolutionary period of development. The main research methods used in the development are analysis and synthesis, intuitive and systematic approach.

The purpose of the study. The main objective of the study is to identify the types of innovations and innovation strategies in the field of spa and wellness services. The main outcome of the study is the creation of an exemplary portfolio of innovative strategies for spa and wellness facilities in the Varna municipality.

Research results. Many foreign and domestic scientific publications are devoted to the problems of innovative development. Thus, various theoretical aspects of this problem are highlighted in the scientific works of such well-known researchers as I. Ansoff, P. Drucker, M. Porter, B. Santo, R. Waterman, A. Chukhno, O. Shnytko, J. Schumpeter. It should be noted that O.I. Kovtun [5] proposed a paradigm of the strategy of a modern enterprise and its innovative component. Y.I. Klyus and O.P. Parkhomenko [4] considered the strategies of innovative development of an enterprise. L.E. Dovgan, Y.V. Karakai, L.P. Artemenko [3] provided a classification of basic and competitive strategies. S.M. Zhuravleva [7] analysed the strategies of innovation activity of the hotel industry, but today they are somewhat general

In the modern economy, innovation is its leading attribute. Competitive advantages in the spa and wellness market based on the creation of a new product must be implemented in innovative ways. Today, the success of spa and wellness facilities largely depends on the use of innovative technologies in the spa and wellness services sector. It is the innovative orientation of the company that is the main condition for increasing competitiveness and improving the quality of service. The choice of business strategy is made by the management of enterprises based on the analysis of key factors that characterise its state and the state of the product portfolio [7]. In modern conditions, the issue of choosing a strategy for the innovative development of balneological, spa and health facilities in the Varna municipality is increasingly arising. An innovative strategy is one of the means of achieving the goals of the organisation and is characterised by novelty, first of all, for balneological, spa and health facilities, and often for the industry, market, and consumers [4, p. 54]. Undoubtedly, for successful development it is necessary to formulate a strategy for the innovative development of balneological, spa and health facilities of the Varna municipality. The innovation strategy should focus on anticipating global changes in the economic situation in and around the enterprise, as well as on making decisions aimed at strengthening market positions and sustainable development of the enterprise through innovation [5, p. 46-47].

The importance of developing a strategy that will allow the balneological, spa and health facilities of the Varna municipality to survive in the competition in the long term is extremely high. In the face of fierce competition and rapidly changing market conditions, it is very important not only to focus on the internal state of affairs of enterprises, but also to develop a long-term strategy [1, p. 236-237].

There are four types of innovations that are taking place in the spa and wellness market and are important for the spa and wellness facilities of the Varna municipality, namely:

1. Product;
2. Marketing;
3. Resource;
4. Organisational.

Let's look at the types of such innovative strategies in the spa and balneological services market.

1. Product innovations are aimed at creating new services and introducing new service technologies:

- application of modern cleaning technologies (dosing of detergents, low-temperature household chemicals);
- installation of energy-saving technologies (automatic heating, ventilation and water supply systems);
- use of environmentally friendly materials (bed linen with antibacterial and bactericidal properties);
- introduction of aroma technologies, etc.

2. Marketing innovations are associated with the emergence of distribution technologies in electronic booking systems that allow online management of the booking process.

3. Resource innovations involve the use of an electronic management system for a health resort and a resource planning system for the enterprise.

4. Organisational innovations are related to the development of a health enterprise in the management system and structure: the latest methods of staff training, purchase of a franchise, creation of an own network of health enterprises, etc.

In accordance with this, a system of classification of innovative strategies in the form of a portfolio of innovative strategies for balneological, spa and health facilities of the Varna municipality is proposed (Table 1).

Subsequently, the pricing strategy and success for the balneological, spa and wellness facilities of the Varna municipality depend on the chosen innovation strategy. The innovation strategy of the organisation should be considered as a system of actions for the balneological, spa and wellness facilities of the Varna municipality, aimed at achieving the long-term goals of their functioning, further development, strengthening competitive positions, meeting consumer needs, ensuring sustainable demand for products, through the use of scientific and technical achievements, determining the strategy of the organisation, and

This approach to defining the innovation strategy of healthcare enterprises will allow:

- to formulate the concept of "innovation strategy" based on the logical chain "innovation-strategy-innovation strategy";
- avoiding such phrases as "innovation sphere", "innovation development", "innovation projects", "innovation solutions", which are derived from the concept of "innovation strategy" and require additional interpretations, when formulating the concept of "innovation strategy";
- consider an innovation strategy as a system of actions aimed at achieving a specific long-term result and requiring the identification of specific innovation indicators.

The implementation of innovative strategies will enable the balneological, spa and recreational facilities of the Varna municipality to reach a new qualitative level of development.

Table 1

Portfolio of innovative strategies for balneological, spa and wellness facilities in the Varna municipality

<i>Types of innovative strategies for the spa and balneological services market</i>	<i>Characteristics of innovative strategies for balneological, spa and wellness facilities</i>
Outsourcing strategy	The healthcare company outsources certain business processes and management functions to other companies
Benchmarking strategy	The hotel company will study the practice of direct competitors and representatives from other areas and in the process of competitiveness analysis will identify the most successful products for the hotel
The blue way	Strategy (the healthcare company is actively mastering environmental and energy-efficient technologies)
The "women only" strategy	A wellness facility welcomes everyone, but, for example, a separate floor or SPA is an area that only women are allowed to visit
Brand strategy	The efforts of the health resort's administration are aimed at creating a viable and reliable strategy that will help it develop, expand and be successful in the market
Business strategy	Day health companies offer business travellers rooms for a few hours
Precariat strategy	The health resort company is introducing extremely dubious innovations in the hotel services market, but it is possible that they will become successful in the future
Retail strategy	The ability of the staff of a health company to sell as many additional services as possible to the consumer of spa and balneological services
Different-strategy	The health company provides services that are fundamentally different from those of its competitors)
Competitive strategy	Allows the management of the health resort to successfully achieve its goals in comparison with competitors
Sampling strategy	Free distribution of the wellness company's product to provide feedback (new types of massage, wellness procedures, etc.)
Re-engineering strategy	Allows you to change the activities or actions of the health enterprise to achieve change
Diversified strategy	Wellness companies expand into new business areas

Developed by the author based on [1; 2: 6].

These innovative strategies in the spa and balneological services market will be:

- take into account all the modern needs of spa and balneological services consumers;
 - to create favourable conditions for attracting investments for the construction of new or reconstruction of old balneological, spa and recreational facilities in the varna community;
 - increase the attractiveness and accessibility of spa and balneological services;
 - to provide competitive advantages to spas and health facilities in the varna community;
- a tool for survival and promotion in the spa and balneological services market.

For the successful and sustainable development of balneological, spa and wellness facilities in the Varna municipality, it is necessary to introduce innovations in activities. The competition strategy of a successful health enterprise includes business approaches and initiatives to attract customers, compete and strengthen its position in the market [1, p. 279].

Research conclusions. Innovation strategies offer competitive advantages when used correctly and in combination with the overall strategy of the Varna municipality balneological, spa and wellness facilities. Today in Bulgaria, wellness businesses providing competitive services are constantly improving their business approaches and developing innovation strategies. A successful innovation strategy for the Varna municipality spa and wellness facilities will lead to success and the expected profit margin.

The development of the spa and balneological services market requires that health enterprises have an innovative component. The most effective innovation policy will be in case of simultaneous use of several innovative strategies in the activity.

Their availability will provide the health enterprise with competitive advantages, as well as the needs of consumers of spa and balneological services. For new projects, it is necessary to apply new, more advanced strategies that will help attract as many consumers as possible, maximise sales, and create a positive image of the hotel company. While technological innovations were sufficient in the past, now the principles of the strategic planning process for an innovation strategy need to be applied. Each innovation strategy must be in line with the overall strategy of the health resort enterprise.

Prospect for further research is to develop ways to implement the identified conditions for the development of the spa and balneological services market and create a model for the formation of an innovative strategy for spa and health facilities in the Varna municipality.

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