

GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH TOURISM IN PORTUGAL

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Abstract

The present article aims to analyse spa tourism in Portugal from the standpoint of its geographical and historical evolution from its origin (Roman age) to the present day. The analysis identified five stages of development. The most recent one, comprising the present day, is characterized by the expansion of both the quality and the quantity of the service offered, to the extent of creating a conceptual shift from *spa tourism* to *health tourism*.

1. Introduction

Lusitanian hydrotherapy has very ancient origins, like in many other countries of Western and Mediterranean Europe. The proof for this is found in many archaeological findings dating back to the Roman domination (completed around the I c. B.C), which were mainly found in areas close to springs renown for their therapeutic qualities. Evidently, on the basis of empirical understandings deriving from direct observations, the use of said healing remedy lasted more or less until the XVII century. From then on, medical experimentation based on rigorous scientific principles started dominating in an irreversible manner. Indeed mineral waters ceased having a magical or holy halo and they acquired the status of actual remedies to heal the body according to their chemical composition. It is renown how during the Roman Age, bathing in thermal waters was a daily habit, which besides a hygienic and therapeutic purpose, also entailed other aims such as that of conviviality, of encounters and of pleasure.

Therefore there were:

...bagnos de água minero-medicinais; e muitos outros banhos nos balneários urbanos, públicos e privados, alimentados em água comun por grandes aquedutos e com estruturas complexas, envolvendo sistemas de aquecimento, salas a diferente temperaturas, vestiários, áreas de repouso, outras de conversação⁹ (Cavaco, 2008b, 41).

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⁹ Translation : “baths in thermal and healing waters; many baths in public and private, urban bathing resorts, using the water from the city thanks to large and complex aqueducts, developing a heating system with rooms of different temperatures, changing rooms, resting areas and other spaces for conversation”.

Hence, bathing in the spa became a common habit in the whole Empire, which explains the capillary presence of spa facilities in all significant urban areas. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the habit of using thermal baths continued especially around hot springs, even if the modalities were now completely different from the previous phase. The habit was carried on in Lusitania, to the point that the Portuguese term of Medieval origin *caldas*¹⁰ is still used to define a hot water spring used for therapeutic purposes (and it is often used as a toponym, i.e. *Caldas da Rainha*) whereas the term *fontes* indicates a cold water spring Cavaco (2008b) highlights how only at a later stage, by the end of the XIX century, the term *termas* was introduced in scientific literature in addition to the term *caldas*, clearly referring to the role it had during the Roman era.

Located on the furthest Western strip of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal is a country very rich of waters. Indeed around 400 springs were found to have mineral qualities¹¹, but only 48 resulted as being used for bottled water or for bathing purposes. According to the data provided by the Associação das Termas de Portugal (2012), there are 38 active thermal resorts, 11 of which are managed directly from local bodies (Câmara Municipal e Junta de Freguesia), 3 are managed by public bodies (1 directly by the Ministério da Saude and 2 by INATEL¹²), while the remaining ones were granted in concession to private companies.

Due to geo-morphological reasons, the majority of thermal springs are found in the area north of the course of river Tago (the country's Centre-North), whereas there are only three active resorts in the areas south of the river: Nisa and Cabeço de Vide in the Alentejo Region, and the Monchique spas in the far south of the Algarve Region. Moreover, there are two active resorts in the insular areas: the Furnas Spa in the island of São Miguel, the Carapacho Spa in the island of Corvo, both islands are part of the archipelagos of the Azores (Map 1).

In principle, when looking at a map, the majority of active thermal resorts can be found to the East of the Atlantic axis Lisbon-Porto. These areas are internal and thus inaccessible, scarcely populated and distant from main lines of transport, but offering very impressive landscapes.

Currently, in order to compare the actual value of the national spa industry with that of other countries, both the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy (FEMTEC)¹³ and the UNWTO suggest using two indexes for *thermal* density, to be calculated separately. The first index is given by the ratio

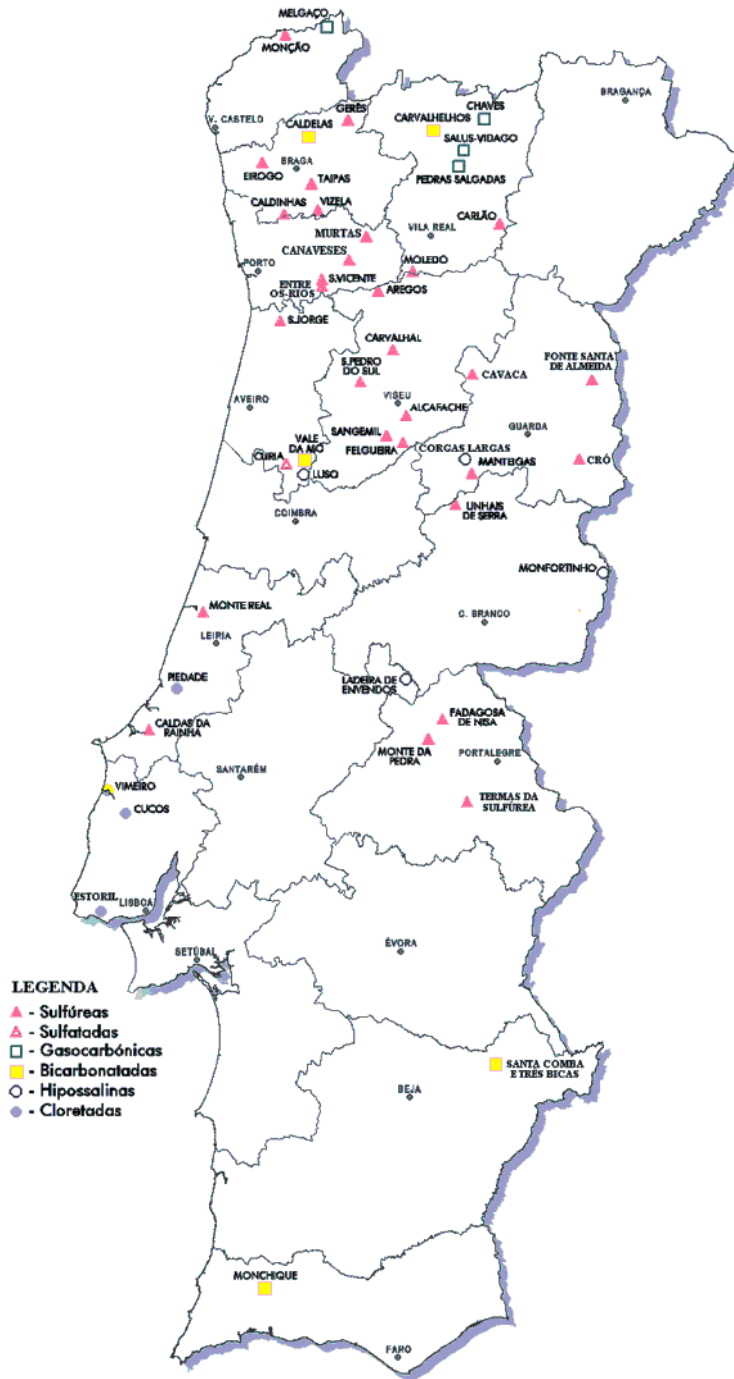
¹⁰ From Latin *caldus*, vulgar form of *calidus* derived from the verb *calēre*, «being hot».

¹¹ In 2005 the Direção Geral de Geologia e Energia published in the *Boletim das Minas* (vol. 40, n. 1) a ranking of mineral waters according to their chemical composition. There are six different types of waters: hyposaline waters, sulfur waters, carbonated waters, bicarbonated waters, chlorinated waters and finally sulphate waters.

¹² Founded in 1935 as Fundação Nacional para Alegria no Trabalho (FNAT), today INATEL (Instituto Nacional para o Aproveitamento dos Tempos Livres dos Trabalhadores) is a foundation directly controlled by the Ministério da Solidariedade e Segurança Social with purpose of promoting recreational activities and social tourism (including elderly tourism). Currently it owns a number of Hotels and campsites and includes around 250 thousand associates. (www.inatel.pt).

¹³ The umbrella organization for spa industries in 44 different countries. www.femteconline.com

between the number of all active thermal facilities in a country and the resident population (per million of people).



Map 1 – Localization of spa resorts in Portugal.

(Source: Ministério do Ambiente, Ordenamento do Território e Energia . LNEG - Laboratório Nacional Energia e Geologia)

The second index is instead calculated as a ratio between the number of thermal facilities and the overall surface of the country in Km² (Sousa 2008). Both values resulting from the two indexes place Portugal at the top of the rankings, which goes to show how the spa industry and health tourism represent a strategic component of

the overall national tourism offer.¹⁴ Indeed, together with other reasons explained further on in this paper and similarly to other European countries, hydrotherapy and thalassotherapy, represented the first form of organized tourism in the modern sense of the word (Simões, 2005).

Nonetheless, schematically it is possible to distinguish five development stages of Lusitanian hydrotherapy, from independence onwards¹⁵:

- 1) Rediscovery of the healing properties of thermal waters;
- 2) Valorisation of hydrotherapy on the basis of scientific progress;
- 3) Development and apogee of Lusitanian hydrotherapy;
- 4) Decline of hydrotherapy;
- 5) Rise of *Turismo da Saúde e Bem Estar*

2. Lusitanian hydrotherapy stages of development

The fall of the Western Roman Empire that was caused by the invasions of people from Germanic descent, on one level caused the decline of the political unity of Western Europe as well as of life style that until that point had dominated the world; on another level these people that:

penetrated the Empire as winners, nonetheless submitted to the Church, an authority that did not distinguish between Germanic and Roman. Indeed their Christian faith was certainly one of the main reasons for their immediate closeness to the people of conquered countries. (Pirenne, 1996, p. 36).

Christianity was one of the earliest forms of contact and of unity between those people of different origins and traditions that had settled in the land of the former empire. Certainly this was the main reason for the rapid success of Christian precepts, to the extent of deeply influencing the behaviours and the organization of the societies of the time. Indeed all new teachings condemned those behaviours that did not conform to the new morals, including some typical habits and customs of the Roman era, which were considered particularly promiscuous and thus strenuously opposed. Hydrotherapy was labelled as an “infamous” practice (Vigarelo, 1988 p.35)¹⁶ because it was associated with “luxo e prazer ... (e por isso foi) recusada pela moral cristã”¹⁷ (Cavaco, 2008a p. 98). However, despite the bans enforced by the clergy and the dangers of travelling to the springs, which as previously said were located in areas far away from inhabited centres, the practice

¹⁴ A studied produced by the Instituto de Turismo de Portugal (2006) identified 10 strategic axis for the Lusitanian tourist offer: sun and sea, nautical tourism, nature tourism, business tourism, sport tourism (golf), food and wine, health and wellbeing tourism, cultural and landscape tourism, residential tourism within resorts (climatic tourism for the elderly), city breaks.

¹⁵ The latter was formed between 1147 and 1249 after conquering the Algarve, the last region to be annexed to the new state. It was a liberation war fought on two fronts: South against the moors (*a Reconquista*) and North East against the Kingdom of Leon, to which it originally depended as a vassalstate. (Oliveria Marques, 1996).

¹⁶ The author argues that said aversion of the Church for hydrotherapy has a clear and precise origin in a letter by San Geronimo (Epist. 45,5) where spas are described as a threat to chastity.

¹⁷ Translation: “Luxury and pleasure... (and for this) rejected by Christian morality”

of bathing in thermal waters was not abandoned. Notwithstanding within the specific context of the Iberian Peninsula, it is important to consider the influence determined by the Arabic culture and by its customs, which to a certain degree were absorbed by local populations as a result of the long period of domination¹⁸. Said customs included the practice of bathing in hot water, which is still so important that the *hammam*:

... is an essential facility of the Islamic city, being an annex of the mosque. The importance of the hammam certainly derives from the religious precept and by the fact that managing the bath was also a significant source of income” (Galliano, 2009, p.22).

In some circumstances, as for example in the Caldas de Alafões, the Arabs built an actual hammam on the ruins of a previous thermal facility dating back to the Roman era. After the *Reconquista* the Portuguese ruler Dom Afonso Henriques adapted the structure to his bathing purposes, building a new swimming-pool and some rooms for both the rich and the poor of the reign (Cavaco, 2008a).

The Caldas de Alafões stand as a clear example of the historical stratification of thermal resorts; their use is consistent, what changes are the meanings and the concepts connected to the practice. This proves that since the outset of the new independent kingdom, in medieval times, hydrotherapy was supported by sovereigns for its renowned healing qualities (as well as entailing a function of *self*-promotion for the monarch). The practice was also maintained by later sovereigns as proved by the numerous constructions and refurbishment works on old resorts documented almost all around the country, entrusting their management to the different religious orders in the territory¹⁹.

The following stage stands out for the emerging of the first scientific studies on the therapeutic qualities of waters (these also mainly funded by monarchs) from 1696, when the first work on the healing powers of the waters of Alafões was published by doctor António Pires da Silva. Another study of great interest is dated 1726 when the *Aquilégio Medicinal* was published by Francisco da Fonseca Henriques, who was also court-doctor for King João V. This treaty presents at least two interesting information concerning that historical time: the inventory of the thermal springs used for therapeutic purposes (29 of them, virtually all in the North-East of the country), the local habit of bathing in waters to celebrate the Patron Saint and the perception of healing as a gift granted by the intercession of

¹⁸ The Arabic nomination in Lusitanian territory began in 711 and ended in 1250, with the liberation of the Algarve (Olivera Marques, 1986).

¹⁹ Every monarch or relative of the court had a personal favorite spa resort, which s/he would promote with his/her presence and financially support all maintenance and expansion works. It is worth mentioning the refurbishment work carried out by princess Mafalda (daughter of king D. Sancho I) at Caldas de Aregos (XII sec.), or the works conducted by D. João II in 1495 in the Caldas de Monchique. His wife D. Leonora de Lancastre, herself supported in 1488 the building of a hospital closet o the springs of Caldas da Rainha, (also the origin of the toponym), to the point that after a few century these became “termas por excelência da corte e da aristocrazia” (Azevedo, 1995, p.29).

God, which is something that is still believed in some rural areas of the country.

The third stage is that of the apogee of Lusitanian hydrotherapy:

A viragem do século XIX para o século XX marca o início das época de ouro das termas portuguesas²⁰ (Azevedo, 1995 p. 58).

Cavaco (2008b) notes that in this phase, despite the progress of medicine and the availability of more or less efficient medicines, hydrotherapy was still held in the highest consideration. The same author also asserts that the reasons for this success are linked mainly to two factors: the spreading of romantic and naturalistic values among the wealthier classes who sought pleasurable stays in delightful and rural localities, away from urban centres and the spending power of said classes that allowed for the development of a trend of “tourism” and entertainment that could also be combined with therapeutic needs²¹.

This was the time when some thermal resorts became particularly famous, especially for their proximity to the railway system. Namely these resorts were Vidago, Pedras Salgadas, Luso, Cúria, Monte Real all of which gradually became luxury hotel infrastructures (Grand Hotel) Casino, Cafés, as well as lush thermal resorts where to take walks, listen to music and spend pleasant group stays:

... casinos, parques românticos, decorações de arte nova, arquitecturas de sonho²² (Azevedo, 1995, p.19).

Indeed, in the preface written by Júlio César Machado for the 1875 publication of *Banhos de Caldas e Águas Minerais* by the writer and journalist Ramalho Ortigão (1836-1915) it is possible to read: “As termas conciliavam tudo: mudança de ares, exercício ameno, banhos, copinhos, entratimento, *vita nuova*...”²³. Many authors of that time described detailed accounts of those pleasurable stays. For the purpose of this article it can be interesting to recall Maria Rattazzi’s work (1833-1902) *Portugal de ralance* (1879)²⁴. The author, who was born in Ireland from Letizia Bonaparte (Napoleon’s niece) and Sir Thomas Wyse (British MP), remarried Urbano Rattazzi, two times Prime Minister for Vittorio Emanuele II. She was a very well-read woman who belonged to a restricted European aristocracy, who travelled extensively including to Portugal, which she claimed to know quite well. In her *Lettera vigesima quarta* she narrates her spa stay at *Caldas da Rainha*,

²⁰ Translation : “ the passage from XIX c. to the XX c. marks the golden age of Portuguese spas”.

²¹ The golden age of Lusitanian chrenotherapy also benefited from a rather favourable legislative status, especially from the second half of the century onwards. Said laws would regulate both the exploitation of mineral waters and of thermal springs. This provoked the building of new spa resorts and of accessory infrastructures.

²² Translation : “ casino, romantic parks, art-nouveau decorations, dreamy architecture”.

²³ Translation: “Spas appeased everything: change of scene, pleasant exercise, baths, drinks (Porto or other liquors, t.n.) entertainment and *new life*”.

²⁴ The first edition of the book was in Paris by A. Degorce-Cadot with the title “Le Portugal à vol d’oiseau”, provoking disdain and controversies throughout the whole of Portugal. Indeed the author described the country and its inhabitants under a rather mean light, sometimes falling into easy prejudices. Camilo Castelo Branco (1825-1890), one of the major writers of the time, in 1880 published a paper to respond to “A senhora Rattazzi”, further fuelling the diatribe.

describing both the place and the aristocrat frequenters, providing an original insight into late XIX c. Lusitanian hydrotherapy.

This stage of expansion lasted more or less until the 1940s, a little longer in comparison to the rest of Europe. The reasons for this longer duration are mainly of a political nature; the country was indeed completely excluded from the second world conflict and thus it provided asylum to all those who, with conspicuous monetary means, wanted to run away from the violence of the war. Precisely at this time, the most renowned spa resorts as well as luxury hotels in the largest cities provided the widest offer of high-range hotel stays. However as opposed to the city hotels, spa resorts in the countryside could also offer greater calm and discretion, which was the necessary condition for all those on the hide. Hence, due to these *atypical tourists*, the golden age of Lusitanian hydrotherapy lasted a while longer (Cavaco, 2008b).

The 1960s stand as the decade of international development of tourism in Portugal, thanks to the famous 3S (Sand, Sun, Sex,) making the fame of completely new seaside resorts along the beaches of the Algarve and allowing the rediscovery of already famous seaside resorts: namely the ones along the Costa do Estoril and the Island of Madeira (De Iulio, 2010). Spa resorts on the contrary, began a moment of sad decline just as in the rest of Europe²⁵.

There are at least two main recognizable causes for this decline:

- 1) The spreading of new aesthetic and taste parameters suggested by mass-media, which managed to make summer vacation coincide with seaside stays;
- 2) The progresses made by medicine and pharmacology making hydrotherapy not anymore a vital treatment for specific diseases.

Despite the support from the national health service (more incisive since the creation of the democratic state and the participation to the EU), until the last decades of the past century, Lusitanian spas were considered places of stay only for the elderly and retired on a reduced budget, especially female customers from the surrounding areas who would mostly commute to the resort (Anuário das Termas de Portugal, 2007).

Ramos (2005) recalls how from that time onwards, the spa stay was perceived as something only linked to diseases, old age and loneliness. Therefore any potential marketing strategy for re-launch had to effectively remove iconic sadness. However in the meantime, since the early 1990s a new form of hydrotherapy tourism started emerging at global level. The trend was now more faceted and complex then before, as besides the healing aspect of waters, the industry started offering new services catering towards *wellness* and *remise en forme* (Rocca 2013), hence overcoming the traditional dichotomy between therapy and mental and

²⁵ Exactly at that time, the image of declining spa resorts, with a strong nostalgic aura, was used as the set for the film “*L’année Dernière à Marenbad*” by Alan Resnais, which won the Leone d’Oro at the Venice Biennale of 1961. The blind spa town, with its ruined and melancholic buildings provided an effective background to a sad and at time surreal story.

physical relaxation. This new phase labelled *Turismo da Saúde e Bem Estar* is defined as:

um conjunto de produtos, que sendo a saúde como motivação principal e os recursos naturais como suporte, tem por fim proporcionar a melhoria de um estado psicológico ou físico fora da residência habitual²⁶ (Cunha, 2006 p. 217).

There are a number of different reasons for the success of the new hydrotherapy experience, and these mainly relate to new ways of living and to the new values that are shaping contemporary society. Very briefly these reasons can be summarized as follows:

- the increasing uncertainty of life, leading people to seek forms of hedonism and personal pleasure as well as of new life experiences and an active and stimulating life from both a physical and an intellectual standpoint;
- the attempt to improve personal mental and physical wellbeing, to delay ageing through adequate physical activities, committing to cultural interests and enhancing social relations;
- the importance of appearance, physical shape and good aesthetical look for both personal relations in the private sphere and for professional purposes, where often a pleasant physical appearance determines professional success;
- the quest for a more direct contact with nature as a result of a frenetic and sedentary lifestyle, lived mainly in polluted urban environments: this condition determines the growing demand for natural foods, alternative medical treatments closer to nature such as crystalotherapy, aromatherapy, chromotherapy and consequently the rediscovery of the healing power of waters (that generally does not have any contraindications).

Attention should be paid to the fact that mental relaxation practices are also carried out in facilities that have nothing to do with hydrotherapy. Indeed, regardless of the properties and of the origin of the water used (sometimes the latter can even just be taken from the urban water supply, as was the case for ancient Roman spas) hydrotherapy techniques are matched with the new wellness industry technology, which in the majority of cases is inspired by ancient Oriental techniques. This premise implies that spa tourism is moving towards a new season which will have richer contents than the previous one.

Usually hydrotherapy is now carried out in facilities offering great comfort, generally built and decorated with natural materials, playing relaxing music and offering sophisticated games of light (Bastos, 2006). In different terms, it is possible to identify three macro-areas in the range of new services offered within spa resorts:

- medical area (i.e. post-surgery recovery, cosmetic medicine);
- therapeutic area (using waters to treat specific pathologies);
- wellness area and wellbeing (relaxation massages, *remise en forme*).

²⁶ Translation: “a package of products targeted for health and supported by natural products aiming to improve the physical and mental state, outside normal living conditions”.

In this sense there has been a shift from a simpler concept of *spa tourism* to a more vast and faceted concept of *health tourism*²⁷. Hence the only thing these two types of tourism have in common is the theme of relaxation and of wellbeing in relation to the use of water:

onde a água, pela sua relação natural com a essência do ser humano, continua ser um dos principais elementos, sem bem que utilizada de diferentes formas, com diferentes fins e a par de novas técnicas²⁸ (Gustavo, 2009 p. 197).

On the basis of this, Sousa (2008) sees it possible to differentiate the Lusitanian hydrotherapy offer in three groups (Tab. A):

- Group A: spa resorts providing a high level of comfort; catering for cosmetic and therapeutic/prevention treatments; offering a medium to high hotel stay; tourist packages to integrate the stay with other recreational and cultural activities, such as sport, food and wine, cultural or natural visits. These resorts are opened at least for 2/3 of the year.
- Group B: spa resorts catering for healing/preventive treatments but with a very high tourist component; offering a medium to low hotel stay and the tourist offer is not included in expanded tourist packages. These resorts are opened more than 6 months per year.
- Group C: spa resorts providing only healing/preventive treatments, with a poor medium to low hotel offer. There are no integrated tourist packages. These resorts are opened for less than 6 months per year.

All group A spa resorts (except Luso) offer integrated packages for stay and treatments, ranging from simple healing/preventive therapies to more complex wellness treatments. More specifically even if the resorts Gerês, Alcafache, and São Jorge do not have their own hotel offer, they nonetheless have agreements with other hotels in the area. Moreover all these resorts (even if not homogeneously) suggest, within their integrated offer, a number of other activities, such as theme walks in the surrounding area. These excursions can be to natural sites or to local cultural sites.

Within the group it is also possible to distinguish very appealing products, which in literature are often defined as «anchor products», around which the resort creates a unique spa offer. This is the case for some fashionable sport activities such as golf (Vidago, Curia, Vimerio), horse-riding (Vimeiro) or hunting (Monfortinho). Otherwise the offer may simply refer to natural aspects, such as a beach close-by or even just to the great comfort of the hotel. However, in general, these additional activities are not greatly developed yet and thus they are not very appealing for demanding customers expecting greater expertise and a service of the highest quality. All the spa resorts in this group are managed by private companies, except

²⁷ According to the data provided by the Associação das Termas de Portugal, in 2011 spa tourism (only the therapeutic one) stood for the 50% of the overall demand for the industry, however reporting a decline of -10% in comparison to the previous year. Health tourism inclusive of wellness treatments stood for 42% of the total, with a +36% increase from the previous year. From these simple data, even if somewhat partial, it is possible understanding how the future tendency for the health tourism segment will be of growth.

²⁸ Translation: “where water continues to be one of the main elements, for its relationship with the essence of the human being, even thug it is used in different forms, with different purposes and with new techniques”.

for the spas Carvalho and S.Jorge that are instead managed by a public body (Câmara Municipal).

SPA RESORT	DISTRICT	GROUP	OPENING MONTHS	TYPE OF TREATMENT	PRODUCTS	
					ANCHOR	ADDITIONAL
Melgaço	Viana do Castelo	C	6	CP		
Monção	Viana do Castelo	C	8	CP		P S
Caldelas	Braga	A	12	M	L	P S I
Eirogo	Braga	C	3	CP		
Gerês	Braga	A	6	M	L	P S I
Taipas	Braga	B	10	CP		P S
Vizela	Braga	A	12	M		P S I
Carlão	Vila Real	C	4	CP		
S.de Carvalhelhos	Vila Real	C	3	CP		
Chaves	Vila Real	B	11	M		
Moledo	Vila Real	C	5	CP		P
Vidago	Vila Real	A	6	M	L	P S I
C. da Saúde	Porto	A	12	M		P S I
Entre-os-Rios	Porto	B	6	M		P
C. de S. Jorge	Aveiro	A	11	M		P S I
Curia	Aveiro	A	12	M	G L	P S I
Luso	Aveiro	A	6	M	L	
Vale da Mó	Aveiro	C	5	CP		
Arêgos	Viseu	B	6	CP		P S I
Alcafache	Viseu	A	12	M		I
Carvalho	Viseu	A	9	M		P S I
Felgueira	Viseu	B	10	CP		
S. Pedro do Sul	Viseu	B	12	CP		S I
Sangemil	Viseu	C	9	CP		I
Manteigas	Guarda	B	9	M		S I
Almeida	Guarda	C	3	CP		
Cró	Guarda	C	3	CP		
Monfortinho	Castelo Branco	A	12	M	GL	P S I
Unhais da Serra	Castelo Branco	C	7	CP		P
Caldas da Rainha	Leiria	B	12	CP		P S
Monte Real	Leiria	A	12	M	L	P I
Vimeiro	Lisboa	A	6	CP	GEB	S I
Ladeira de Env.	Santarém	C	6	CP		I
Cabeço de Vide	Portalegre	C	9	CP		S I
Fadagosa de Nisa	Portalegre	C	7	CP		P S I
Monchique	Faro	A	12	M		P S I
Furnas	Açores	C	3	CP	B	S I
Carapacho	Açores	C	3		B	S I

Tab. A - Sectioning of spa resorts according to the offer of services and of additional products. (Legend: Treatments: CP curative - preventive, W wellbeing, M mixed; Anchor Products: G golf, E equestrian sport, B beach, H hunting, L luxury hotel; Additional Products: P natural park, S sport activities, I tourist itineraries)

Group B is made of 9 resorts including the 3 biggest resorts in the country in terms of number of services rendered: S. Pedro do Sul, Chaves and Felgueira. Within their offer they all include a hotel stay which is from a 3 star category or under (except for S. Pedro do Sul that is a 4 star hotel).

The group is made essentially by well developed spa resorts mainly targeted to offer a healing-preventive service, hence only a limited portion of the clients actually become tourists. Indeed additional activities are limited to small-scale entertainment shows within the resort, walking paths within the spa park or quick visits to surrounding sites of interests (mainly to castles, monasteries and religious sites). Management is private for Felgueira and Arêgos whereas it is public for the rest of the group. Specifically, INATEL manages Manteigas and Entre Rios, while the Caldas da Rainha are run directly by the State. The Câmara Municipal is responsible only for Caldas da Saúde, S. Pedro do Sul and Taipas.

Group C includes the majority of the country's spa resorts, and most of these do not include a hotel offer (either within the resort or through an agreement with hotels nearby) therefore customers are mostly from the local area with pronounced commuting features. The management of the resorts is predominantly public (10), and the remaining part is private.

3. Conclusions

Influential scholars agree on foreseeing a remarkable expansion of the health and wellbeing tourism industry in the few next years:

In the 21st century, wellness has become a global phenomenon. Many National Tourist Offices (NTOs) now produce dedicated health and wellness brochures. In response to increasing demand, traditional SPA towns around the world are upgrading or contracting modern SPA facilities. The growth of supply is expected to foster a continuing market expansion, to attract new types of customers and to diversify the products offered (Messerli e Oyama, 2004 p.6).

In Portugal, despite the huge potential for growth, especially in international markets, at the moment the industry is still mainly a national phenomenon. Indeed, virtually all customers are of Lusitanian origin (98% of the total, Instituto de Turismo de Portugal, 2006). Only a few resorts closer to the Spanish border show a presence of some clients coming from the neighbouring country. The reasons for this weakness are connected mainly to the reduced size of the majority of spa resorts (most of them are medium to small in size) and to the difficulty to create an integrated network with other tourist agents in the territory, in order to create competitive and original tourist offers for the global market. According to PENT (Plano Estratégico Nacional de Turismo approved by the Cabinet in 2007) said integration should be pursued by the Regional Tourism Plans (De Iulio, 2010). However the lack of available economic means in recent years due to the economic recession and the unclear definition of sectors of competence, so far allowed only a few regions with prior tourist development (for instance the Algarve) to successfully produce an integrated offer, whereas the rest have not gone beyond simply devising and promoting limited tourist itineraries.

In conclusion, Tab A. shows how the coordination and the integration of National tourist resources is mainly left in the hands of individual resort management, which is almost always private and in the majority of cases the spa is part of group A.

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