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**THE RELATION BETWEEN INTERIOR DESIGN OF  
SPAS AND WELLNESS FACILITIES AND CUSTOMERS'  
PREFERENCES**

Master Thesis

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## INTRODUCTION

Healing qualities of mineral springs have been known for many centuries. Thus, since the ancient times, people tended to visit places which offered opportunities for improvement of their health. Gradually this tradition of *taking waters* has evolved into the modern tendency of visiting various spa and wellness facilities. As a result, during the recent decades the number of facilities offering wellness and spa services has grown dramatically. Throughout the Europe, even in smaller countries like Estonia, one has a really wide choice of places to enhance personal wellbeing. Although there are quite a number of spa and wellness centres, they all tend to provide similar range of services. Therefore, the competition among the companies is quite intense. One of the possibilities to differentiate themselves is to shift major attention from services and concentrate on some other aspects. For instance, some additional attention could be paid at such subtle point as human psychology. Thus, the successful way of approaching this issue can be focusing on interior design of the facility.

The International Spa Association (2015) defines spas as “places devoted to enhancing overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit”. In turn, a wellness centre is “an establishment that offers health services for the body and mind” (Wellness Center, n.d.). As both spas and wellness centres provide services which are simultaneously aimed at body and mind, the author decided to choose them both for the current research. However, it is important to mention that in the context of the present research, spas will represent bigger facilities with a number pools and water attractions, while wellness centres – smaller amenities without pools and baths. It is important to notice that in case of this particular research, all the chosen facilities provide very similar range of services. Thus, both spas and wellness facilities offer facials, body treatments, as well as manicure and pedicure. Moreover, notions *wellness parlour*, *wellness centre* and *wellness facility* will be used interchangeably throughout the research.

The significance of interior design in facilities aimed at relaxation and overall improvement of one’s wellness has been discussed by several scholars (D’Angelo, 2010; Adams, 2013; Ali & Amin, 2014; Kellert, 2005). However, all of them discuss

the elements of design separately, not considering them in efficient composition. Some authors highlight the importance of chromatics and visual effects of light sources in connection to human psychology (Bellia, Bisegna & Spada, 2011; Day & Rich, 2009; Elliot & Maier, 2013; Knez & Kers, 2000). Others concentrate on psychological benefits of indoor plants and overall positive influence of nature (Largo-Wight, 2011; Erickson, 2012; Bringslimark, Hartig & Patil, 2009; Annerstedt & Wahrborg, 2011). Other scholars view the issue from another angle, emphasizing the role of effective choice of materials and furniture (Nyrid, Bringslimark & Busheim, 2014; Dazkir & Read, 2012). Thus, none of the authors demonstrated complex approach towards the issue of interior design of spa and wellness facilities. In addition, that despite the scholarly articles being written comparatively recently, most of the authors tend to cite sources which are quite old. Thus, it could be concluded that there is a lack of complex and up to date research in this field. Therefore, the author of the current thesis chose this topic for further exploration in order to fill the existing gap.

Thus, the author has come up with the following research question: in what way is interior design of spa and wellness facilities related to customers' preferences? Based on the stated question, the aim of the current research is to understand the relationships of spa and wellness facilities interior design and customer preferences. In order to reach the set goal, the author has stated the following objectives:

- Based on knowledge gained through critical review, understand whether interior design influences customer preferences
- Based on knowledge gained through critical reading reveal the main principles and elements of interior design and understand the interrelation of design with customer satisfaction and behaviour intentions.
- To make several proposals on improvement of interior design of chosen Estonian spas and wellness facilities based on the research of main principles of successful interior design as well as customers' preferences.

Here it is important to mention that the author of the paper decided to concentrate on aspects proposed by Reddy, Chakrabarty and Karmakar (2012) in order to define the efficient interior design. These aspects are the following: appropriate colour scheme;

presence of texture; efficient use of forms and empty spaces; customized lighting; well-planned acoustics, which implies both music choice and level of noise. In addition, the author decided to include customized materials and incorporation of nature elements due to the fact that there is a scientific evidence of their beneficial effects on one's wellness. It is important to notice that notions *effective* interior design, *efficient* interior design and *good* interior design will be used interchangeably during the research.

Based on the theoretical material related to the interrelation of physical environment, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions, the author came up with a hypothesis that the interior design plays an important role in determining customer's opinion concerning the spas and wellness facilities. To test this hypothesis the sample of 200 customers of particular wellness facilities and spas was chosen. To add, for the purpose of the current research the questionnaire for obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data will be used. The aim of the questionnaire is to find out the opinions of customers concerning the design of the particular facilities to reveal their strengths and weaknesses and understand customers' preferences in order to suggest future improvement of the existing interior design.

The current Master thesis consists of introduction, three main chapters, conclusion and ends with a short summary in Russian language. The first chapter is divided into four subchapters and contains critical literature review related to the interrelation of physical environment, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions, interior design principles and such its components as colour and texture, nature elements and materials. The second chapter explains research method, sampling and data collection practicalities. To add, it contains the questionnaire results analysis. The third chapter combines theoretical background and the results' analysis and provides author's suggestions concerning the improvement of existing interior design of the facilities being examined. Finally, the conclusion will give a brief overview of the results, limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research.

# **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **1.1 The Interrelation of Physical Environment, Customer Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions**

In order to attract customers and remain competitive, wellness and spa facilities are always exploring new and better ways to differentiate themselves from other companies. One efficient possibility for differentiation is creating positive customer experiences through the design of service environment. Pareigis, Edvardsson, and Enquist (2011) claim that “physical environment plays a critical role in differentiating service firms and influencing the nature of customer experiences” (p. 121). However, Ezen and Harris (2007) emphasize the fact that “it is still a resource that remains under-employed by many practitioners” (p. 63). Indeed, despite being an effective method of influencing customer preferences, this aspect tends to be underestimated by wellness and spa facility management throughout Estonia. Bankoski and Register (2011) justly state that “when guests visit a spa for the first time, the spa has an opportunity to anticipate and meet their personal expectations and to lay the ground work for them to return” (n.p.). Undoubtedly, the first impression of a customer will be determined by several aspects, starting from warm welcome by the administrator and ending with the design of the reception area. Concerning the organizations offering services, physical environment is of a great importance, since “services may be produced and consumed simultaneously in a surrounding which acts as a packaging of the service...” (Mari & Poggesi, 2013, p. 171). Indeed, the environment in which the service is provided should be appealing to major human sensory channels such as sight, sound and scent.

Interestingly, the positive interrelation between physical environment and customer preferences can be traced quite easily. Thus, the findings of the research conducted by Ali and Amin (2014) show that “a better environment helps customers to get satisfied” (p. 258). Indeed, a more positive perception of physical environment may lead to more favourable behavioural intentions. It is important to notice that creating positive customer experience will not only guarantee loyal guests but also provide

an influx of new customers. However, people tend to share not only positive but also negative experiences which inevitably influence the image of the company. Therefore, spa and wellness facilities should constantly strive for perfection not only in services they offer but also in the environment, in which these services are being offered. What is more, negative feedback from dissatisfied customers is often more influential than the positive one. Scholars have proved bad to be stronger than good in many of human life, for example, in reacting to events, close relationships, emotion, learning, neurological processes, information processing, memory, stereotypes, forming impressions, and feedback (Nass & Yen, 2010). Thus, it may take the facility quite a long time and big effort to restore its positive image. Bankoski and Register (2011) justly state that “every guest comes to the spa with expectations, needs and desires and leaves with a story they will share with others by word of mouth and , increasingly, the Internet” (n.p.). If a spa fails to meet its guest’s expectations or needs, the *story* may have an extremely negative character. Therefore, “in order to create spa experiences that will result in satisfied, loyal guests who will return to the spa and refer the spa to others, it is necessary to make the experiences memorable – in a good way – from the first moment of contact to the last” (Bankoski & Register, 2011, n.p.). This statement once again emphasizes the significance of even minor details in the whole service design process.

The same idea is supported by Han and Kim (2009) who claim that “customers’ previous experiences with the product or service result in formation of an attitude towards the provider that is greatly associated with consumer intentions to repurchase and recommend” (p. 824). Indeed, it is important not only to create the first impression but also maintain the high level of services throughout the whole functioning of a company. Due to the fact that service production and consumption in wellness and spa industry are inseparable, it is vital to consider not only the quality of service itself but also the environment in which the service is being provided. Bankoski and Register (2011) support this idea claiming that “it is crucial to consider all the aspects of spa design as, for example, a good treatment in a poorly maintained spa results in guest’s dissatisfaction, while a poor treatment in a well maintained spa has the same results” (n.p.). This statement re-echoes with the

author's idea that these two elements are closely linked and in case of ignoring one, the other will be also corrupted.

High-quality, attractive environment represents an integral part of service quality. Therefore, concerning the hospitality enterprises, Ali and Amin (2014) propose that these “should make an effort to satisfy customers by designing and maintaining good physical environment, which can lead to positive post consumption behaviours” (p. 260). Moreover, wellness and spa facilities should consider physical environment as an effective marketing strategy in order to appeal to customers from various backgrounds. Bankoski and Register (2011) distinguish the processes that directly impact spa guests, among them there are: “design and management of facilities ( including the spa's front door and entrance, reception area, waiting area, locker areas, showers, saunas, steam rooms, whirlpools, swimming pools, lounges, treatment rooms, Vichy showers, fitness area, retail area, etc.)” (n.p.). Going in more detail, the authors emphasize the significance of selection and management of the equipment, such as “the spa's massage tables, hot towel cabinets, hot stone heaters, facial steamers, pedicure chairs, hot wax pots, fitness machinery, etc.” (Bankoski & Register, 2011, n.p.). The managers should thoroughly consider whether the facilities are visually appealing, functional, comfortable and well-maintained. None of the aspects should be underestimated, as, for example, comfortable relaxation area with dirty recliners or beautiful treatment room with uncomfortable massage table, can spoil the customer's experience.

Taking everything mentioned above into consideration, it can be said that interrelation of physical environment and customer satisfaction cannot be ignored. This issue is especially topical in spas and wellness parlours, due to the fact that services offered in such facilities demand appropriate ambience, necessary to create particular mood. If the facility fails to meet customers' expectations and create positive experience, client may not only refuse from visiting this facility in future but also advice other people not to choose it as well. Therefore, managers of wellness and spa facilities should keep this fact in mind and constantly work on improvement and maintenance of beautiful environment and welcoming atmosphere in the facility.



## **1.2 Design Principles: Physical Entities and Environmental Factors**

Adams (2013) states that “design, in general, encompasses many disciplines such as fine art, graphics, textiles, industrial products and interiors” (p. 158). Indeed, the design represents the unity of various elements. It is impossible to create efficient interior using only one, or sometimes even several, elements. For example, the empty room with painted walls cannot serve as a good example of interior design. Basically, it will stay unfinished until at least some elements, for instance furniture, will be added. The similar opinion is supported by Orth, Heinrich and Malkewiz (2012), who state that “personality judgments originate not from any single interior design element, but rather from holistic prototypes of design rooted in higher-order generic design factors comprised of multiple elements” (p. 195). The conceptual framework of their research is based on the principles of Gestalt psychology. According to these principles, one’s mind is able to perceive the general image as a whole, rather than viewing its elements separately. These basics of Gestalt psychology could be successfully applied to the field of interior design. This idea is supported by Orth et al. (2012), who state that “any one of multiple interior design elements taken in isolation fails to convey the nature of the room, but content and meaning emerge from the orchestration of numerous parts to construct a far richer perceptual whole” (p. 195). Thus, the opinions of the abovementioned authors set the direction for viewing the notion of interior design as complex and multifaceted. Interestingly, Pehlivanoglu (2012) emphasizes the importance of integrity of the elements of interior design. He justly states that “each Spa begins with the vision and continues with the story” (Pehlivanoglu, 2012, p. 37). Indeed, keeping this idea in mind will help to not only offer something new, interesting and even unique to a customer but also make it easier to adhere to one common theme or motive in creating a complete and solid space.

Kumar, Purani and Sahadev (2013) view the notion of design from the different angle. The authors claim that “the understanding of aesthetics plays a role in marketing, as the attractiveness of the products offered is likely to impact the consumer purchases” (Kumar et al., p. 348). This idea can be entirely applied to the whole spa industry, especially to the area of spa design. However, it is a common knowledge that there is no

general standard of beauty. This notion is quite complex, as it can signify various things for different people. The understanding of beauty can vary depending on sex, age, nationality, culture and sometimes even current mood of a person (Morris, 2014). For instance, cultural differences can cause different interpretations of certain colour. Thus, for Western cultures red is the colour of passion and excitement, for Eastern and Asian cultures – the colour of happiness, joy and celebration, for some Latin American nations – the colour of religion when used with white, while in Middle East red evokes feelings of danger and caution (Cousins, 2012). At the same time, for example, in Japan yellow means courage and nobility, in China it represents honour and royalty, while in Egypt it is associated with mourning (Williams, 2015). All these peculiarities should be taken into consideration while designing the facility which needs to attract people and make them feel safe and comfortable while staying inside.

Reddy, Chakrabarti and Karmakar (2012) consider the emotions evoked by space design from the ergonomic perspective. The authors propose the idea that good interior design needs to consider, first of all, people, who will use this space. “The ... interior must be aesthetically appealing and practical at the same time” (Importance of Interior Design, 2013). Thus, several authors support the user-centred approach to the design. “A good interior space is about considering all the physical, environmental, and cognitive elements and harmonizing them to make it a space that feels right, functionally and emotionally” (Reddy et al., p. 1072). If this idea is underestimated, there is a risk that customer will feel inconvenient and probably even stressed in such interior. Alongside with the previous authors, Pehlivanoglu (2012) states that “the most important phase of the design is the concept integrity of the spa area and the hotel in general” (p. 37). Although the author speaks about the particular spa type, this idea should be implemented in designing any type of spa or wellness facility. Harmony, integrity and clearness of the message, that the designer wants to communicate, should be present in any facility that claims to have a good design. Nowadays there are quite many opportunities for creating excellent interior design, starting from the overall planning of the facility, ending with such details as carpets, curtains and pillows. However it is still time consuming process that needs very thorough consideration. Probably the simplest tools for creating and maintaining common theme in design are colour and texture. In case designers want to go further, correct and considered lighting

solution could perfectly accentuate and continue the common theme of the facility (Lighting in a Beauty Parlor, n.d.).

Bringing the previous idea further, Pehlivanoglu (2012) defines design process as a “combination of art, science and accidental discovery” (p. 37). Indeed, the design is a very multifaceted concept which comprises aesthetics and technological advances used to create complete balanced space. The process of designing of a space is extremely energy- and time consuming. However, if designed well, the facility will satisfy not only the designer but also all the users of this facility. Supporting the idea concerning the versatility of the design concept, Reddy et al. (2012) suggest quite a complete and accurate, from the author’s point of view, definition of interior design by listing the elements of interior space. These include physical entities such as colour, texture, form, empty spaces, and environmental factors, such as light, sound, temperature, humidity. Thus, it can be assumed that in order to create efficient interior design, each of its above mentioned elements should be thoroughly considered.

For example, Dazkir and Read (2012) examined separate aspect of interior design, namely, shapes in detail. They tested peoples’ reactions towards curvilinear and rectilinear furniture and revealed that interiors with curvilinear settings tend to evoke more pleasant and positive emotions than those with rectilinear forms. During their research it became evident that the participants of the experiment desired to spend more time in the settings with only curvilinear lines, and they desired to affiliate with others more in those settings compared to the settings with only rectilinear lines. Interestingly, the idea of importance of such aspect as shape, mentioned by Dazkir and Read in 2012, is continued by top trends in pool and spa design for 2014, where designers propose avoiding acute angles by constructing pools with oval shapes (Top Trends in Pool and Spa Design, 2013). For example, oval and round shapes are typical for pools and Jacuzzis, while curvilinear shapes are used for recliners. Dazkir and Read (2012) also mention that “some respondents explained that curvilinear furniture looked more comfortable, interesting and calming compared with the rectilinear furniture” (p. 730). Indeed, curvilinear shapes tend to associate with a sense of comfort and cosiness. To be more precise, soft curves tend to associate with happiness, pleasure and generosity,

while circular shapes provide a sense of tenderness, care, protection and affection (The Psychology and Perceptions of Forms and Shapes, n.d.).

Reddy et al. (2012) dedicate their particular attention to such aspects as forms and empty spaces as well. The authors believe that a balance between the whole space and material forms used to make it complete should be thoroughly considered. Moreover, Kumar et al. (2013) state that “the beauty of a service environment not only depends on the objects seen by the consumers in the built environment but also on how they are laid out in the three dimensional space” (p. 357). Thus, the visual aesthetics of the servicescape depend on the combined effects of all the elements of the environment. The size of a space determines furnishing, forms, colours, texture and even light in advance. Thus, bigger rooms allow putting some more furniture while smaller rooms require much less furnishing in order not to look too heavy or stuffed. However, the design of a smaller room with a bigger number of furniture items can still look very impressive, in case all the items are smaller in size and the whole composition is carefully designed. On the contrary, spacious rooms are sometimes successfully designed in minimalist style, which emphasizes the room’s simplicity and lightness.

Bellia, Bisegna & Spada (2011) view one of the aspects proposed by Reddy et al., namely light, claiming that light is able to affect physical, physiological and psychological behaviours. The authors rest their research on the Knez and Kers’ (2000) idea that “good lighting should provide for the needed level of visual performance, but it also determines spatial appearance ... provides for safety and...contributes for wellbeing” (p. 825). Indeed, inadequate light exposure can cause disorder in human rhythm, which consequently may result in poor performance and other health problems, inevitably leading to the deterioration of one’s wellbeing. In addition, Reddy et al. (2012) claim that “every room has its own specific and unique lighting needs” (p. 1075). In general, this idea can be applied to any other elements of interior space. Space peculiarities should be carefully considered while filling it with all essential elements in order to make the design really effective. Moreover, the authors suggest that light exposure can influence human rhythms, and emphasize that natural daylight plays the most important role. Therefore, it is vital to provide opportunities for daylight to come in by increasing the number of windows and doors while constructing the buildings.

However, facilities aimed at providing relaxing effect are allowed to be darker than those made for conducting energizing and invigorating activities.

Acoustics also need to be considered while designing an interior space. Several scholars emphasize the importance of such aspect as sound, claiming that this element of interior design is always present (Pehlivanoglu, 2012; Reddy et al., 2012). In case of wellness and spa facilities, inappropriate music or noise are unacceptable. Customers come to such places, in order to relax and escape from daily routine. Therefore, excessive noise should be minimized, and music thoroughly considered, in order not to destroy the experience and create peaceful atmosphere. This idea is further broadened by Reddy et al. (2012) who claim that “musical sound with harmony can result in positive emotions and peace while interrupted noises can have adverse influence in a ...space” (p. 1076). In order to control the sound level, special attention should be paid at materials used for construction of floor, ceiling and walls. Moreover, such materials as carpets, curtains, pillows and furniture could be used for minimizing noise level. It is of a high importance to carefully plan the location of various areas designed for different purposes. For example, it is necessary to avoid disposing swimming pools for children next to the pools for relaxation, or aerobics room next to the massage or meditation rooms.

Regarding temperature and humidity, Reddy et al. (2012) argue that “maintenance of a comfortable indoor climate with appropriate temperature and humidity is essential for wellbeing and performance at maximum efficiency” (p. 1076). In addition, it is important to distinguish two types of spaces, namely, dry rooms and wet rooms. Thus, dry rooms are those that do not contain water services or hydrotherapy equipment with the exception of a sink basin, while wet rooms are those that imply provision of water services (D’Angelo, 2010). The temperature and humidity must correspond to the function of the space. For instance, in bigger spa centres with large pool areas it is crucial to maintain a higher temperature than, for example, in smaller centres where all the facilities, such as pools and saunas are situated close to each other.

### 1.3 Colour and Texture

Bellia et al. (2011) claim that the choice of colour depends not only on inner associations but also on other various factors, adding that “it is a matter not only of the visual performance but also of psychology, aesthetics and...even climatic, social and cultural factors”. (p. 1985). In addition, Moller, Elliot and Maier (2009) claim that “color is usually considered in terms of aesthetics alone; however, it is possible that the red’s, green’s, blue’s and yellow’s that we perceive on a daily basis are not only pleasing to the eye, but also carry meaningful associations that have direct implications for psychological functioning” (p. 898). This fact makes the labour of designers even more complicated, as sometimes it is impossible to predict one’s associations with the particular colour. There are a number of common positive associations; however, in some cases people have very intimate and specific associations with a concrete colour. The following table demonstrates the most wide-spread associations with specific colours.

**Table 1.** Common Colour Associations (adapted from D’Angelo, 2010)

Colour	Common Associations
Red	High energy, passion, excitement, warning, danger, sensuality
Orange	Stimulating, invigorating, cheerful
Blue	Tends to evoke peace and calm, healing, trust
Green	Soothing, rejuvenating, natural, refreshing
Yellow	Evokes mental stimulation, compassion, sympathy, happiness
Brown	Stable; organic
Purple	Royalty, power, richness, spirituality
Black	Grief, mourning, sophisticated
White	Purity, safety, cleanliness.

Elliot and Maier (2013) also suggested considering human perception of colour not in relation to aesthetics but in connection to its influence on psychological functioning in humans. They proved that colour can impact people’s affect and cognition, determine attraction and affiliation, and influence consumer behaviour. During their research, the authors referred to two theories, explaining the link between colour and psychological functioning. The first theory developed by Goldstein (1942) suggests that “color perception produces physiological reactions in the body that are overtly manifest in people’s emotions, cognitive focus and motor behavior” (as cited in Elliot & Maier,

2013, p. 97). The second theory proposed by Ott (1979) claims that “color directly produces physical reactions in the body that are manifest in observable behavior” (as cited in Elliot & Maier, 2013, p. 97). Both theories explain that separate colours may produce particular effects on human body, which awakes certain emotions. For example, warm colours often evoke feelings of happiness, optimism and energy, while cool colours tend to have calming and soothing effect, but can also express sadness (Stuart, 2015).

It is a common knowledge that individual approach should be the basis for the design concept. Undoubtedly, the influence of colours on human psychology should be considered observantly. The colours in spa and wellness facilities should be chosen in such way that they would have relaxing, rejuvenating and inspiring effect (Yan, 2007). The author suggests several colour schemes which could contribute to this aim. The Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate possible colour schemes for wellness and spa facilities.



**Figure 1.** *Relaxing* colour scheme (adapted from Yan, 2007)

The *relaxing* colour scheme promotes the sense of appeasement and comfort. As it can be seen from the Figure 1 above, the basic colour is green, which is known to be as the most calming from the whole range of colours. The base colour is combined with reserved lighter shades of green which are widely used for the present colour scale. These hues are combined with saturate colours which could be used for flooring or carpeting. Saturate brown colour could be used in order accentuate particular details of the interior.



**Figure 2.** *Vitalizing* colour scheme (adapted from Yan, 2007)

The *vitalizing* colour scheme symbolizes energy and vitality. Such combination of colours implies moderate use of colour accents, while dilute colours could be used quite widely. Interestingly, despite being offered in 2007, the concept of both colour schemes has been repeated in the trends for 2015 year. Vandermeulen (2014) suggests that designers will be focusing on rich colours, and multiple hues in the same colour family throughout a design scheme. Moreover, Vandermeulen (2014) supports the topicality of *vitalizing* colour scheme saying that “ocean tones in royal, turquoise, and sky blue, as well as plum... will dominate the scene”(n.p.). To add, blue evokes feelings of calmness and spirituality as well as security and trust, however using it too much can create a cold, disengaged feeling (Stuart, 2015). Another opportunity is to select different shades and textures of the single colour, and in this case even the bigger items will begin to blend into the room and widen out the space (Ufland, 2015).

Alongside with previous authors, Reddy et al. (2012) assume that, for example, the same colour will be interpreted differently depending on its place in a space (floor, ceiling, or walls), type and size of a space where it is used. It can create either the feeling of comfort or discomfort depending on how successfully it was applied on a certain type of space. Elliot and Maier (2013) also suggest that “colour meanings and...colour effects are context specific” (p. 109). Moreover, they found out that the same colour may have various meanings in different contexts, which could lead to different implications. Finally, it should be also kept in mind that the context can be either physical or psychological.

Day and Rich (2009) view this issue from the different angle, examining the relationship between colour and Plato’s investigation of pure forms and explore how a modern-day spa designed and built by integrating these strategies could be tested to gain further knowledge about their influence on healing. In other words, the authors attempt to suggest efficient combination of light, colour and form. The hypothesis proposed by the authors is the following: “patients who visit a Spa designed to connect form with light and colour will experience more effective and timely outcomes than the same guests who visit an ordinary Spa” (Day & Rich, 2009, p. 84). This idea coincides with the concept proposed by Reddy et al. (2012), who also claim the benefits of combining several elements for the achievement of better results in interior design. Thus, if the



latter proposed to enliven colours with the addition of texture, then the former suggest combining colour, light and form. The idea of interrelation of colour, texture and other design elements is continued by Petrova (2005) who advocates the importance of considering colour and texture of the room while selecting the type of illumination.

Colour cannot be separated from its association with its texture, while the strength of this association is reinterpreted by understanding the way it absorbs or reflects light giving it a specific character and creating a unique sense of space (Bonnefille, 2010). Moreover, Reddy et al. (2012) claim that texture "...brings the sense of life in a room and it is an element that you can see and touch" (p. 1074). Indeed, texture is a significant aspect of interior design which contributes to the creation of the whole image of a space. "A room devoid of texture or pattern will be boring and flat, as texture and patterns bring a room to life and add dimension" (Vandermeulen, 2014, n.p.). The absence of texture or its misuse might have negative consequences, while the efficient use of texture allows designers to create a desired mood that can be either stimulating or relaxing. "One common use of texture is to add interest to a space which has boring monochrome colors" (Reddy et al., 2012, p. 1074). Thus, this aspect should not be underestimated as Vandermeulen (2014) justly states that "texture is used to enforce the design concept" (n.p). Indeed, if handled well, it can provide vividness to the room and emphasize its uniqueness, or, on the contrary, totally destroy its image. Interestingly, texture can also suggest temperature as "smooth and shiny textures which reflect more light, give a cool impression, while soft, raised textures, which absorb more light convey a sense of warmth" (Grainger, 2013, n.p.). The following table explains the effects produced by different types of textures.

**Table 2.** Effects produced by texture types (adapted from Grainger, 2013)

Rough/Course Textures	Smooth/Shiny Textures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect less light and feel 'warmer'</li> <li>• Give an object more 'weight'</li> <li>• Feel more 'rustic'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect more light and feel cooler</li> <li>• Make an object feel lighter</li> <li>• Feel more modern</li> </ul>

Interestingly, even the simple space coloured in monochromatic schemes could be improved by the addition of texture. The texture can totally change the way a room ‘feels’, making it more interesting. For example, big areas could be decorated by the means of rough textures in order to make them feel warmer, while smaller spaces could be decorated with smooth textures making the room feel lighter. To add, rough textures are more likely to make a space feel intimate and grounded while smooth textures bring more plain and isolated tone to the room. Finally, it is necessary to keep in mind that contrast is vital for interior design as it keeps things balanced and provides visual interest. If everything is too similar, it is hard to focus. Therefore, texture could be used in order to accentuate separate elements of interior design.

## **1.4 Nature Elements and Materials**

Largo-Wight (2011) advocates beneficial effects of nature contact stating that “cultivating healthful places, is an important public health focus” (p. 41). From the author’s point of view, healthful places should comprise safety, well-developed design and opportunity for nature contact. It can be noticed that nowadays major attention is being paid to the pernicious effects of the environment, both outdoor and indoor, on human physiology, while psychological influence of the environment remains underestimated. It could be suggested that such factors as crowded public places and excessive noise inevitably lead to stressful states. However, these negative effects can be smoothened or even totally eliminated if people manage to unite with nature as much as possible. The idea is supported by Bligslimark et al. (2009) who prove such beneficial effect of indoor plants by addressing Ulrich’s (1983) theory, concerning environmental influences on psychophysiological stress-reduction. Based on reviews of previous studies in this field Raanaas et al. (2010) also conclude that “viewing relatively natural environments better promotes psycho-physiological recovery from acute stress than viewing built environments lacking in vegetation, while having indoor plants present enhances the reduction of acute stress” (p. 387). This idea once again highlights superiority of natural environments over the built ones. At least sometimes people need

to shift urban settings to the natural ones, in order to maintain their wellbeing and stay healthy both physically and psychologically.

Annerstedt and Wahrborg (2011) also advocate benefits of nature contacts proposing three kinds of public health effects, related to nature: “short-term recovery from stress or mental fatigue”, “faster physical recovery from illness”, and “long-term overall improvement on health and wellbeing” (p. 381). Indeed, after a short walk in a forest or nearby park, people tend to feel more calm, relaxed and uplifted. Moreover, natural environment facilitates active leisure time which results in improved health and overall wellbeing. Interestingly, Erickson (2012) addresses the so-called biophilia hypothesis, offered by Wilson (1984), explaining that “biophilia hypothesis suggests that there is an instinctive bond between human beings and other living systems” (p. 91). This theory can provide an explanation of people’s desire to go to picnics, spend vacation in camping, travel to mountains or lakes. Bringing the idea further, Kellert (2008) brings out six biophilic design elements: “environmental features, natural shapes and forms, natural patterns and processes, light and space, place-based relationships, evolved human-nature relationships” (p. 25). The elements offered by Kellert (2008) perfectly coincide with interior trends for 2015 year where natural materials, such as stone, wood, metal and glass, natural elements and interior colours, organic shapes and textures represent an ecofriendly, contemporary feeling in design and decor, bringing unique furniture pieces and fusion of styles into creative and personalized interior design (7 Modern Interior Trends, 2014).

Bringslimark, Hartig and Patil (2009) suggest that “in large numbers and with a large volume relative to the space indoor plants may represent the recreation of outdoor nature indoors” (p. 423). Raanaas, Patil and Hartig (2010) studied the effects of an indoor foliage plant intervention on patient wellbeing during a residential rehabilitation program. The authors conducted their own experiment in order to find out, whether the addition of indoor plants in the common areas in a rehabilitation centre would improve patient’s physical and psychological health. Although there were no significant changes in physical health noticed, the self-reported mental health and overall wellbeing of the patients improved. “Although the plants were introduced in relatively modest amounts to the common areas and were a minor part of the interior in general, the plant

intervention had a positive effect on satisfaction with the interior of the rehabilitation centre as well as satisfaction with plants in the common areas” (Raanaas et al., 2010, p. 391). Thus, the authors managed to partly prove their hypothesis concerning the positive influence of plants on human psychology. This finding could become a good reason for incorporating natural plants in spas and wellness facilities.

Although the most logical place for reunion with nature is definitely outdoor environment, due to the busy lifestyle people often do not have enough time to spend outdoors. Therefore, Largo-Wight offers an alternative way of keeping in contact with nature. “A plant in an office, a fish tank in a dentists waiting room, a window and natural light in a class room, nature photography in the home...are all examples of health promoting nature contact” (Largo-Wight, 2011, p. 43). Indeed, while sitting in the waiting room before visiting a dentist, fish tank could be a good trick to distract patient’s attention from the forthcoming painful procedure. To add, music with sounds of nature tends to be more relaxing and suitable during the spa procedures unlike the absence of any sounds or some ordinary music compositions from the radio stations. This idea is supported by Burkholder (n.d.) who states that sound is among the most transformative and healing energies on the planet which calm us, restore balance and harmony in life and promote health. Indeed, sound affects people on different levels, starting from physical and ending with spiritual. “The right kind can turn depression into joy, anger to calmness, hate to love, and fear to courage” (Burkholder, n.p., n.d.). Indeed, if selected well, music can not only strengthen the effect of a treatment, but also serve as an independent separate treatment.

Largo-Weight demonstrates more practical approach towards the issue of incorporating nature elements in built environments bringing out the following possibilities:

1. Encourage animal contact indoors.

*Restorative* and *relaxing* contact with both familiar and unfamiliar pets is extremely beneficial. For example, even twenty minutes of a contact with dog, cat, bird or fish can evoke positive emotions.

2. Bring potted plants indoors.

Largo-Wight (2011) states that “live indoor plants promote healthy air quality and stress reduction in a “dose dependant” relationship” (p. 51). Indeed, potted plants represent an easy, affordable and efficient way to bring a piece of nature indoor. Concerning spa and wellness facilities, it is important to mention that various areas of spa and wellness facilities demand different types of plants. For example, reception areas could be decorated with blooming plants, making it more attractive and visually appealing, wet areas - with plants with big surface of leaf, able to adjust to high humidity level, and rooms for treatments – with plants that are consistent to poor lighting (Greenery in Spa, 2015).

### 3. Let bright natural sunlight shine in.

The author states that “natural light promotes normal physiological functioning and regulation, maximization of visual performance, and mood enhancement” (Largo-Wight, 2011, p. 51). It is a common knowledge that during the summer, when daylight hours are longer, people feel more happy and active compared to dark winter period, when daylight hours are very short. In order to increase the access of natural light, the author suggests incorporating windows and a view outdoors. “...access to a view of natural elements at home and work even for brief moments, were associated with satisfaction, resources, necessary to combat stress, restoration from stress, and health” (Largo-Wight, 2011, p. 52). Indeed, people tend to feel themselves more comfortable in spas with large windows rather than in those without them. This can be explained by the fact that windows facilitate not only the access of daylight but also an opportunity to view the nature. However, D’angelo (2010) argues that “no matter how small the window in amenity is that has been shown to have a soothing effect on clients”(p. 121).

### 4. Let outside air and sounds in.

“The feeling of the outdoor air and movement (if the air is of a comfortable temperature) and the sound of the outdoors (if sounds are relatively natural such as breeze or birds), may enhance nature contact indoors and thus promote health” (Largo-Wight, 2011, p. 52). For example, if the climate and location are beneficial, outdoor pools could be a good idea for promoting nature contact as in this place guests could not only enjoy sunlight and nature views but also ocean breeze or birds singing.

Largo-Wight separately distinguishes methods of indirect nature contact which can be also successfully used indoors. These are:

1. Display nature photography and paintings.

“Healthy indoor places should display personal or professional nature photographs or paintings” (Largo-Wight, 2011, p. 53). For example, photographs or paintings could depict flowers or other plants, animals or some natural landscapes. Moreover, it could be a good idea to make paintings correspond to the current season.

2. Listen to recorded nature sounds.

For example, in the pool area it is better to play the music with the sounds of nature rather than ordinary radio songs, in order to maintain a complete concept of the wellness facility.

3. Watch video or show of natural environment.

Videos depicting wild nature could be very relaxing and restorative. Thus, nature shows or videos may become a component of a healthful indoor environment as they help guests to become a part of nature and escape from the urban routine.

4. Add more representations of nature.

Largo-Wight assumes that artificial representations of nature, for example, such as animal sculptures, artificial plants, and waterfall imitations could also provide some benefits for one’s psychological state.

The theme of nature contact can be perfectly continued with natural materials. Kellert (2005) proposed the idea that “... natural element in the interior design such as wood and stone may also trigger beneficial, ‘biophilic’, responses” (p. 105). For example, as both stone and wood are present in nature, it would be a good solution for creating interior design of spaces characterized as healthful. Moreover, wood is one of the easiest to incorporate and warmest of natural materials, and is not only durable and beautiful, but it can also be finished in any possible way (Gibson, 2015).

Nyrud, Bringslimark and Bysheim (2014) also deal with environmental psychology, and the theory of biophilic design, supporting the idea of beneficial influence of nature contact. Along with the previous scholars, Nyrud et al. (2014) discuss the effect of implementing natural materials, namely, wood for the purpose of interior design. The necessity of integrating nature elements into the interior design is explained by the fact that “integrating features of nature into the built environment can...give people the possibility of experiencing and interacting with nature to a larger degree...” (Nyrud et al., p. 125). The authors suggest implementing this approach while constructing or improving buildings, especially those used for promoting or maintaining wellness. Interestingly, Pehlivanoglu (2012) also emphasizes the significance of the choice of appropriate materials, claiming that the materials should be clean and custom designed. He states that “when the guests are receiving massage or scrub they usually view the ceiling or the floor” (Pehlivanoglu, 2012, p. 40). Indeed, in the spa and wellness facilities even minor details of interior should be carefully considered in order to provide pleasant experience.

In their research Nyrud, Bligslimark and Bysheim (2014) concentrated on the effects of implementing wood in a hospital environment. They introduced wooden surfaces in an experimental hospital room and tried to analyze, whether the wood would evoke positive emotions and further examine what amount of wood will be the most suitable. The authors supposed that “the use of natural building materials, such as wood, in the indoor environment, can make it possible to introduce natural elements in hospitals or institutions where there are limitations to the use of indoor plants and to the view through window” (Nyrud et al. 2014, p. 125). The results indicate that the use of natural material, such as wood, has an impact on user preference as it reduces stress and improves overall wellbeing.

Day and Rich (2009) also support the idea of implementing nature materials in the interior and their positive effect on one’s wellbeing. They provide a list of key elements of the design which includes wood, fire, earth, metal and water. What is more, “simple elements like earth, air, water, and fire are also playing major role as naturally available waterways, open skies, clay, rock, and other landscape features become a focal point in many spa designs” (D’Angelo, 2010, p. 119). Indeed, these elements could be

implemented for the purpose of biophilic design and further applied for the construction of the design of Estonian spas and wellness facilities.

In the first chapter the author examined the interrelation of physical environment, customers' satisfaction and their behavioural intentions. It became evident, that customer satisfaction does not only depend on services offered by a company but also on environment in which these services are being offered. In addition, the author provided a brief overview of general interior design principles. It was revealed that the notion of design is very complex as it always implies several different disciplines. Finally, the author discussed such design components as colour and texture, nature elements and materials. It was noticed that, in order to create both comfortable and beautiful interior design, each of its elements should be considered very thoroughly and, what is important, not separately from each other.



## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2. 1 Method, Sample, Data Collection Practicalities**

The current chapter will provide an overview of the method used for the current research. In addition the author will describe the sample chosen for the questionnaire. Finally, data collection practicalities will be mentioned.

For the purpose of the current research the author has chosen two spas, which are currently the members of Estonian Spa Association. Both facilities are well-known and have quite a high rate of visiting. Moreover, they offer similar services starting from massages and facials and ending with different pools and saunas. Due to the fact that the customer base of these spas is very multifaceted and involves not only couples, individual visitors, but also families with children and big companies, these two facilities could be suggested to be used as representatives of many other Estonian spas. In addition, the author examined two wellness facilities, situated in Tallinn, which have been operating in the field of health and beauty for more than five years. Both facilities position themselves as wellness parlours and provide similar range of services starting from body and facial treatments and ending with the services of hairdresser and manicure. Both facilities are aimed at a wide customer range providing services for all age groups – children, teenagers, adults and seniors. This fact has motivated the author to choose these particular facilities as representatives of other Estonian wellness parlours.

For the purpose of the current research questionnaire for obtaining both, quantitative and qualitative data was used. Questionnaire is a list of a research or survey questions which people are asked to answer in a predetermined order (Taylor, 2013). The basis for questionnaire is compiled by the author and is illustrated in the Table 3 below. The author took the ideas mentioned by the scholars below and interpreted them during the creation of her own questionnaire. Overall, the questionnaire has been divided into different sections concerning the design principles, colour and texture, nature elements and materials.

**Table 3.** Basis for the questionnaire

Part of the questionnaire	Resource
Design Principles	Adams, E. (2013), Orth, U.R., Heinrich, F. & Malkewitz, K. (2012), Kumar, D.S., Purani K. & Sahadev, S. (2013), Pehlivanoglu, B. (2012), Bellia, L., Bisegna, F. & Spada, G. (2011), Dazkir, S. & Read, M. (2012), Reddy, S.M., Chakrabarti, D. & Karmakar, S. (2012), D'Angelo, J. (2010).
Color and Texture	Bellia, L., Bisegna, F. & Spada, G. (2011), Moller, A.C., Elliot, A.J. & Maier, M.A. (2009), D'Angelo, J. (2010), Elliot, A.J. & Maier, M.A. (2013), Jan, A. (2007), Stuart, A. (2015), Vandermeulen, N. (2014), Ufland, A. (2015), Day, D. & Rich, C. (2009), Reddy, S.M., Chakrabarti, D. & Karmakar, S. (2012), Bonnefille, P. (2010), Grainger, M. (2013).
Nature elements and materials	Largo-Wight, E. (2011), Annerstedt, M., & Wahrborg, P. (2011), Bringslimark, T., Hartig, T. & Patil, G.G. (2009), Erickson, M.S. (2012), Kellert, S.R. (2008), Raanaas, R.K., Patil, G.G. & Hartig, T. (2010), D'Angelo, J. (2010), Gibson, R. (2015), Nyrud, A.Q., Bringslimark, T. & Bysheim, K. (2014), Pehlivanoglu, B. (2012), Day, D. & Rich, C. (2009).

Both, open-ended and close-ended questions have their advantages and disadvantages. For example, “close-ended questions limit the respondent to the set of alternatives being offered, while open-ended questions allow the respondent to express an opinion without being influenced by the researcher” (Foddy, 1993, p. 127). As a result, “the quality of survey data could be influenced. What is more, the advantages of the open-ended questions include the possibility of discovering the responses that individuals give spontaneously, and thus avoiding the bias that may result from suggesting responses to individuals, a bias which may occur in the case of close-ended questions” (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar, 2003, p. 161). However, open-ended questions also have disadvantages such as the need for extensive coding and larger item non-response (Reja et al., p. 161). Therefore, scholars often prefer to combine these two types of questions. Taking the above-mentioned information into consideration, the author of the current thesis conducted questionnaire consisting of both, open-ended and close-ended questions. To be more precise, 13 multiple choice questions were compiled in order to get quantitative information, while four open-ended questions were compiled to get qualitative information. This way of data collection was selected as it is relatively inexpensive, allows accessing many respondents and providing their anonymity. In

addition, the results of the questionnaire are relatively easy to analyze. However, it should be noticed that it took longer to reach the desired response rate. Moreover, the author experienced some difficulties due to the fact that the questionnaire had to be translated into 3 languages, namely, Russian, Estonian and English before being distributed. The English version of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. The questionnaire was compiled by the author based on the literature review. The questionnaire was designed via website *anketolog.ru* and distributed electronically among the visitors of Spa1, Spa 2, Facility 1 and Facility 2 in the period between the 15<sup>th</sup> of February and the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. Face-to-face surveys are clearly structured, flexible and based on personal interaction, which allows them to be controlled within the survey environment (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). In addition, the respondents' reactions can be easily observed. On the other hand, there are some disadvantages, such as interviewer bias, high cost per respondent, geographical limitations and time pressure on respondents (Alreck & Settle, 2004). At the same time online surveys have a number of strengths, such as lower cost and higher speed; they are visual, interactive and flexible; they do not require interviewers to be present and allow interviewees respond at any time convenient for them (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). Due to the fact that the author of the paper was limited in time, but still had to access a big number of respondents, she preferred to conduct online survey. By the means of the questionnaire the author examined the following aspects of the facilities: the presence of common theme, appearance of the employees, presence of nature elements, acoustics and music choice, colours, materials and lighting. The aim of the questionnaire was to find out customers' opinions on the existing interior design of the chosen facilities. To be more precise, the respondents were asked questions related to colour and light solutions, presence of natural or artificial plants, the existence of common theme of the design, the use of materials as well as acoustics. Open-ended questions allowed the author to understand the preferences of the customers and, after that, introduce several suggestions on improvement of the interior design based on the analysis of the questionnaire.

Sample is a group of people that is chosen out of a larger number and is asked questions or tested in order to get information about the larger group (Kothari, 2013). The sample size of the current research is 200. The equal number of the respondents, namely, 50 for

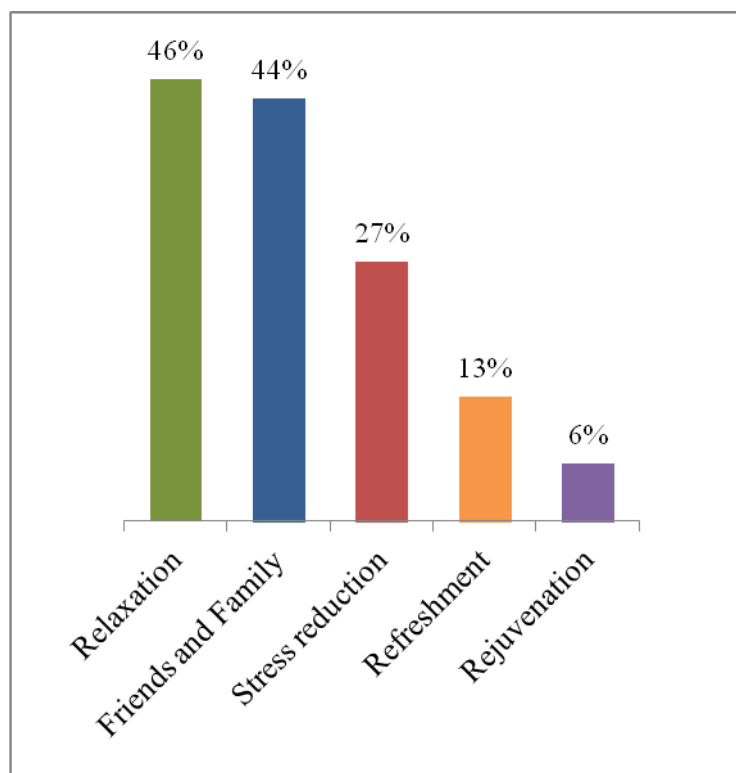
each facility, was involved in the research in order to make further data analysis more reliable. The participants of the questionnaire were found by the author in the Facebook groups of each facility being examined. Due to the fact that all the questionnaires were distributed to each participant of the research personally, the author had an opportunity to trace such demographic information as sex and nationality. Thus, the majority of the respondents were women (73%), while 27% were male respondents. Concerning nationality, the biggest group is represented by Estonians (58%), and then go Russians (29%), followed by the Finns (10%) and Swedes (3%).

## **2.2 Data Analysis**

During the period from 15<sup>th</sup> of February till 15<sup>th</sup> of March totally 208 responses were gathered. The questionnaires were sorted, and eight of them were excluded as the respondents answered the first question (“Have you visited X facility”) negatively. As a result, 200 questionnaires were proceeded for the further analysis. The number of the respondents is equal for each facility and comprises of 50 people. The author compiled groups consisting of the same number of the respondents intentionally, in order to provide more reliable data analysis. For the convenience of the analysis, the facilities were grouped and named in the following way: Spa 1, Spa 2, both corresponding to bigger spa facilities, and Facility 1, and Facility 2, corresponding to smaller wellness parlours.

In the second question the visitors were asked to describe their overall impression of the visited facility. From the analysis of the answers, it became evident that Spa 1 and Facility 1 were evaluated positively more often than the Spa 2 and Facility 2. The common phrases concerning the description of Spa 1 and Facility 1 were: “comfortable”, “cosy”, “modern”, “clean” and “relaxing”. Most frequent adjectives associated with the two other facilities were: “untidy”, “dull”, “dark”, “noisy” and “ill-conceived”. Thus, already from the very beginning of the questionnaire some weaknesses of the design, influencing the whole atmosphere of the facilities have been traced by the author. At least in spa and wellness industry, places that are too noisy and not clean enough are unlikely to earn a good reputation among visitors.

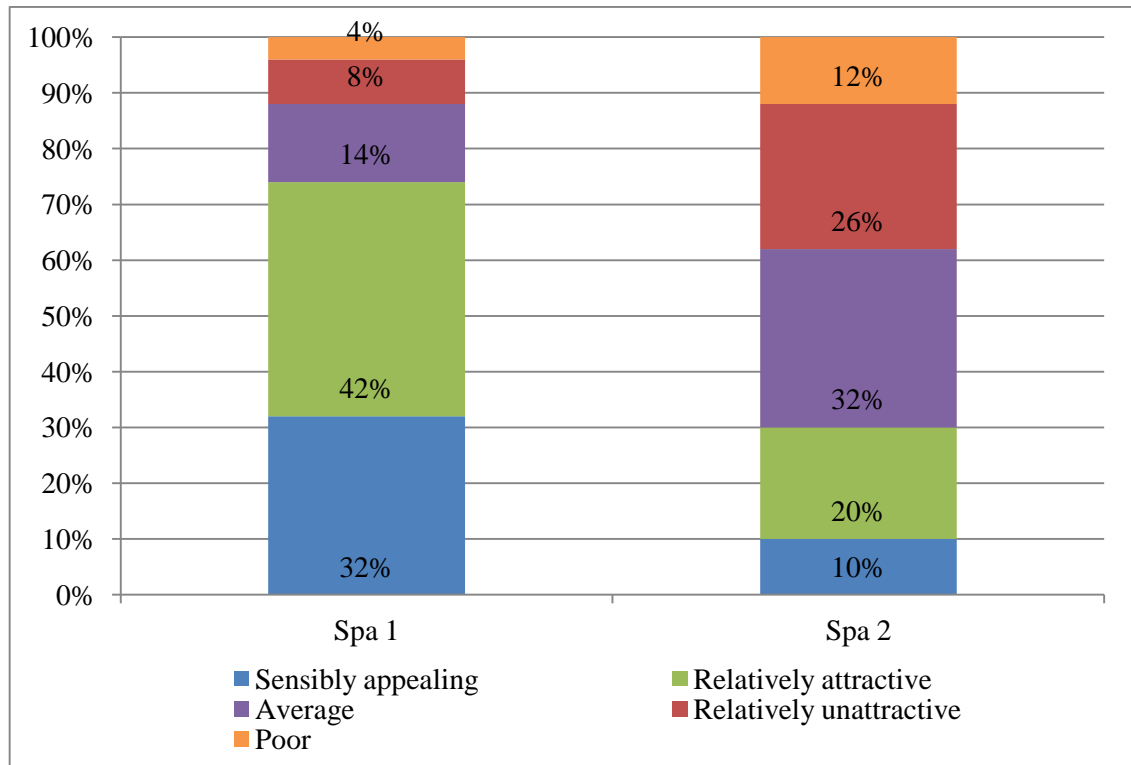
Having analyzed data concerning the major aim of visiting the facility, it was revealed that the most popular reasons for visiting facilities were relaxation and spending time with friends or family, 46% and 44% respectively. Interestingly, “spending time with friends and family” purpose of visit was mentioned by male respondents more often than by female, 53% and 47% respectively. Concerning nationalities, no significant differences were noticed. In addition, 27% visited facilities in order to reduce stress, 13% for refreshment and 6% for rejuvenation. The answer “other” was not used. These answers could provide an explanation, why people want to stay in clean, cosy and relaxing environment. In spas, the question of cleanliness should be posed especially sharply, due to the fact that these are frequently visited by children and pensioners, who represent the so-called “risk group”, as their immune system is not strong enough. The Figure 3 below demonstrates the frequency of the occurrence of each answer in percentage.



**Figure 3.** Purpose of visit (n= 200)

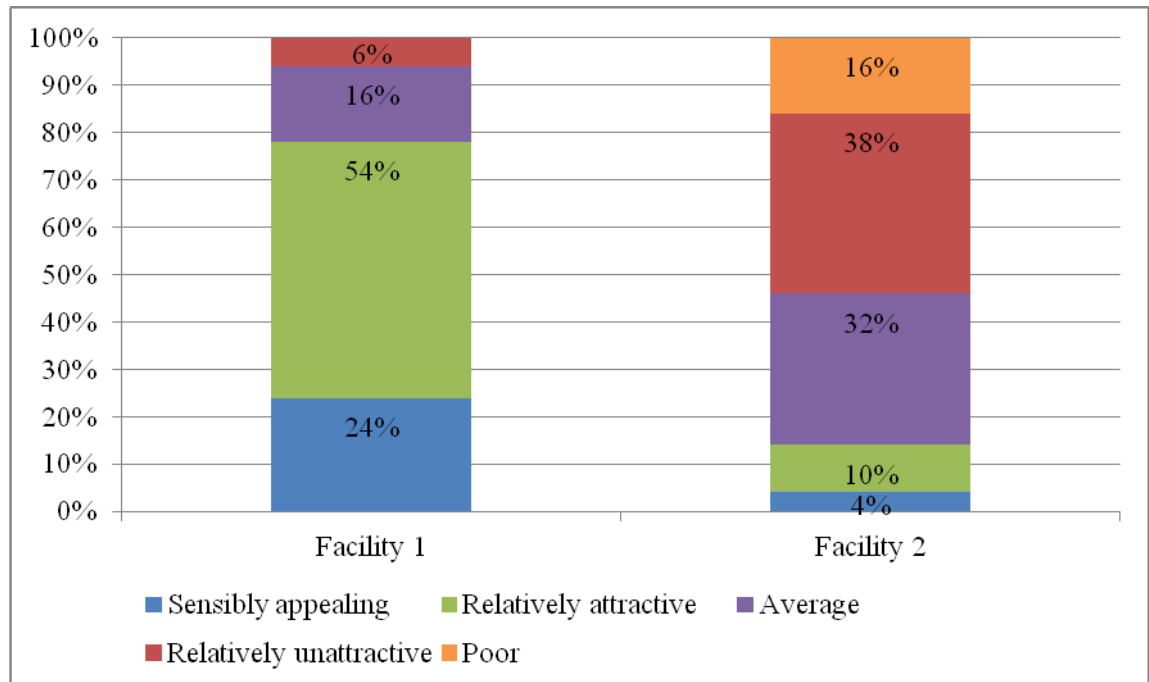
For the accuracy of the analysis, data gathered from the following question was examined in two groups: comparing two spas and comparing two wellness facilities separately. Concerning the answers received from the visitors of Spa 1 and Spa 2, it was

revealed that the design of the Spa 1 seemed to be more attractive than this of the Spa 2, 74 % and 30% respectively. Interestingly, both spas got some negative evaluation of the design. However, the results of Spa 1 still remained more positive, 12% and 38% respectively. The high number of negative responses in Spa 2 indicates the need for the improvement of the interior design. The results of the current question are illustrated in the Figure 4 below.



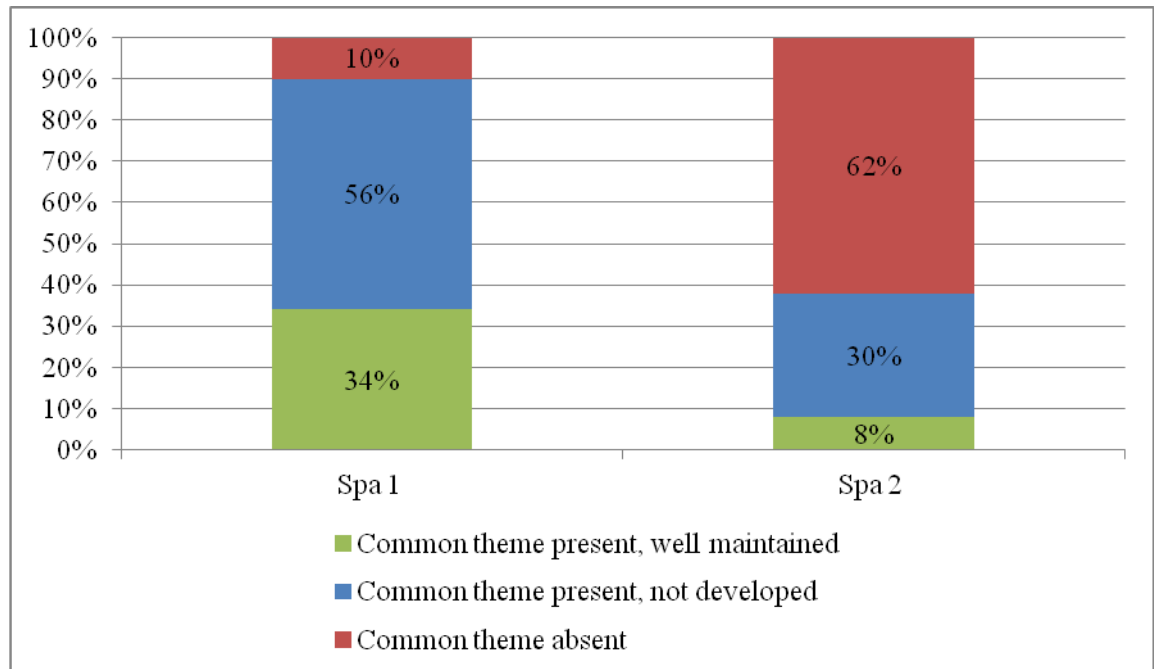
**Figure 4.** The impression of the design of the spas (n=100)

The same comparison was made for the Facility 1 and Facility 2. Having analyzed the data gathered it was revealed that the design of the Facility 1 can be characterized as more appealing due to quite a big number of positive responses, namely 78%. On the other hand, only 14% of respondents were satisfied with the design of the Facility 2. Such a low number of positive responses may signify a strong need for reconsidering the existing design of the wellness facility. Interestingly, in both cases, concerning the impression of the design of spas and wellness facilities, Finnish customers tend to be more loyal than, for example, Estonians and Russians. The data gathered is illustrated in the Figure 5 below.



**Figure 5.** The impression of the design of wellness facilities (n=100)

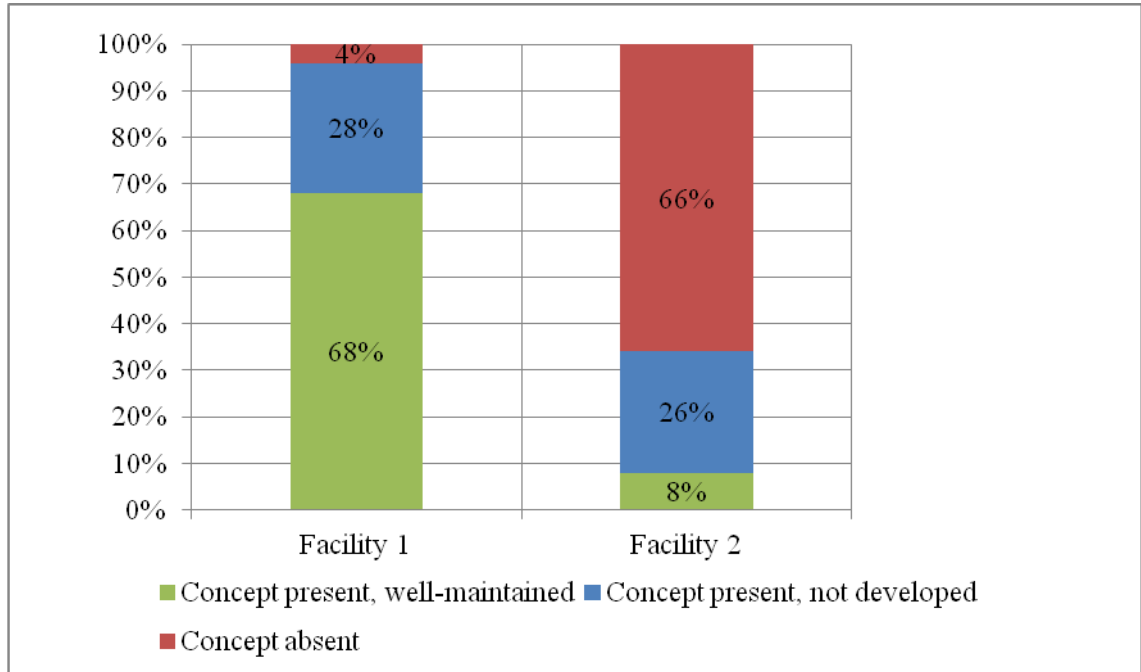
Another important concept, namely, common theme in the design of the facility was analyzed further. The positive tendency concerning the design of Spa 1 is maintained in the responses to the question 5. To be more precise, 34% of the visitors of Spa 1 have noticed a well-developed common theme of the whole facility, while only 8% admitted the presence of the well-developed common theme in the Spa 2. Interestingly, women were more critical in this question than men. Thus, only 7% of female respondents used answer “common theme present, well-maintained” compared to 39% of male respondents. Figure 6 demonstrates the number of positive and negative results concerning the presence of common theme in two spas.



**Figure 6.** The presence of common theme (n=100)

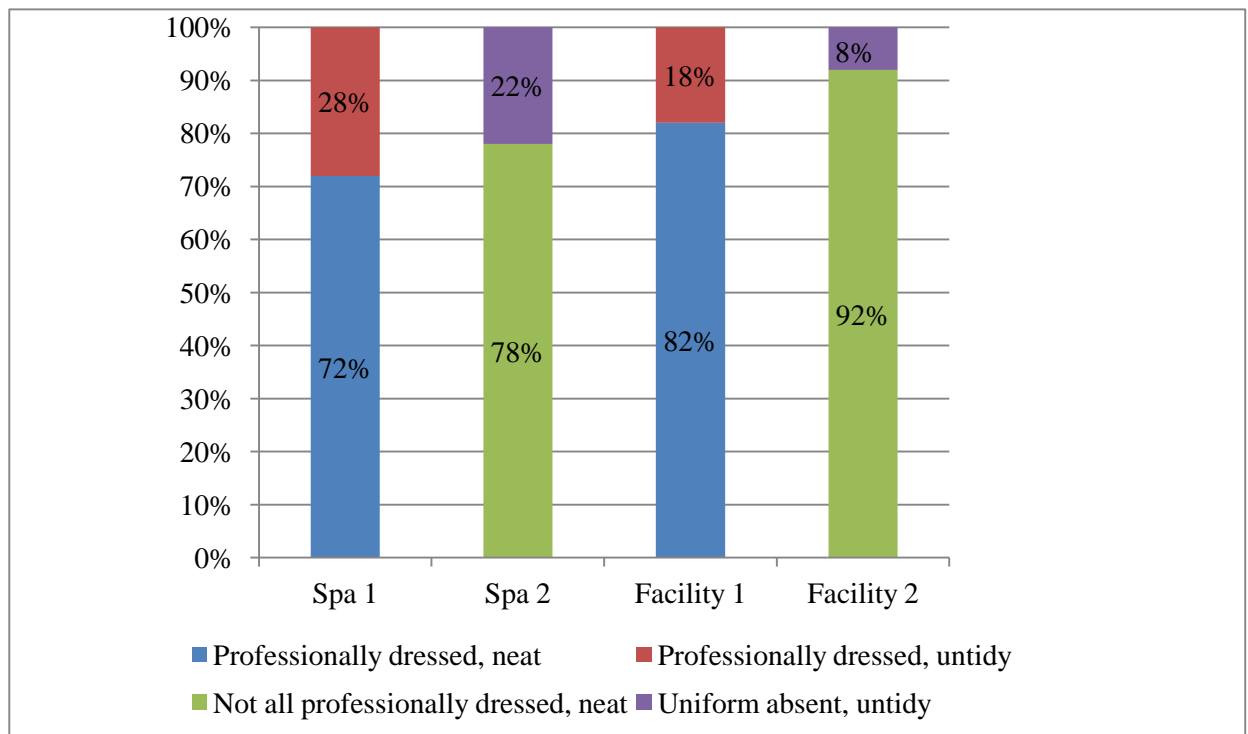
Having analyzed the answers gathered from Facility 1 and Facility 2, the author of the current thesis came to a conclusion that Facility 1 has succeeded more in the development and maintenance of the common theme in its interior design than Facility 2, 68% and 8% positive responses respectively. In this case, women again were more critical than men. Thus, answer “concept present, well-maintained” was chosen only by 11% of women as opposed to 44% of men. What is more, Facility 2 appears to be the most successful of all the facilities being examined. This could be explained by the fact, that smaller area makes it easier to better think the common theme through and consider even minor details. However, it should be justly stated that 26% of the respondents have noticed the presence of common theme in Facility 2, although it was not developed enough. Figure 7 below illustrates gathered results.





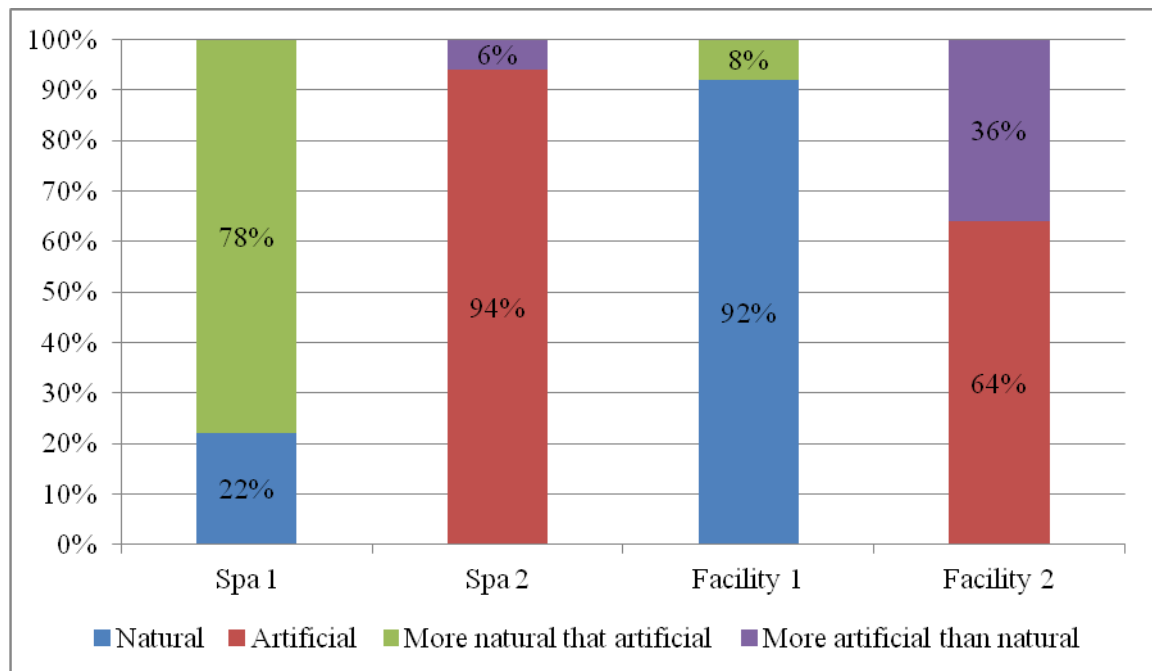
**Figure 7.** The presence of common theme in wellness facilities (n=100)

The appearance of the employees is crucial for the facilities operating in spa and wellness industry. Therefore, the author of the current thesis examined how visually appealing the employees of the chosen facilities look. Having analyzed the data, the author of the current paper has noticed some similarities among the attitudes towards the appearance of the employees among two different facilities. Thus, the results of Spa 2 and Facility 2 show that not all employees tend to wear uniform and look neat and tidy. On the contrary, Spa 1 and Facility 1 are doing quite well concerning the appearance of its employees, 72% and 82% of respondents evaluated this aspect positively. The full results for the question on this topic are illustrated in the Figure 8 below.



**Figure 8.** The appearance of the staff (n=200)

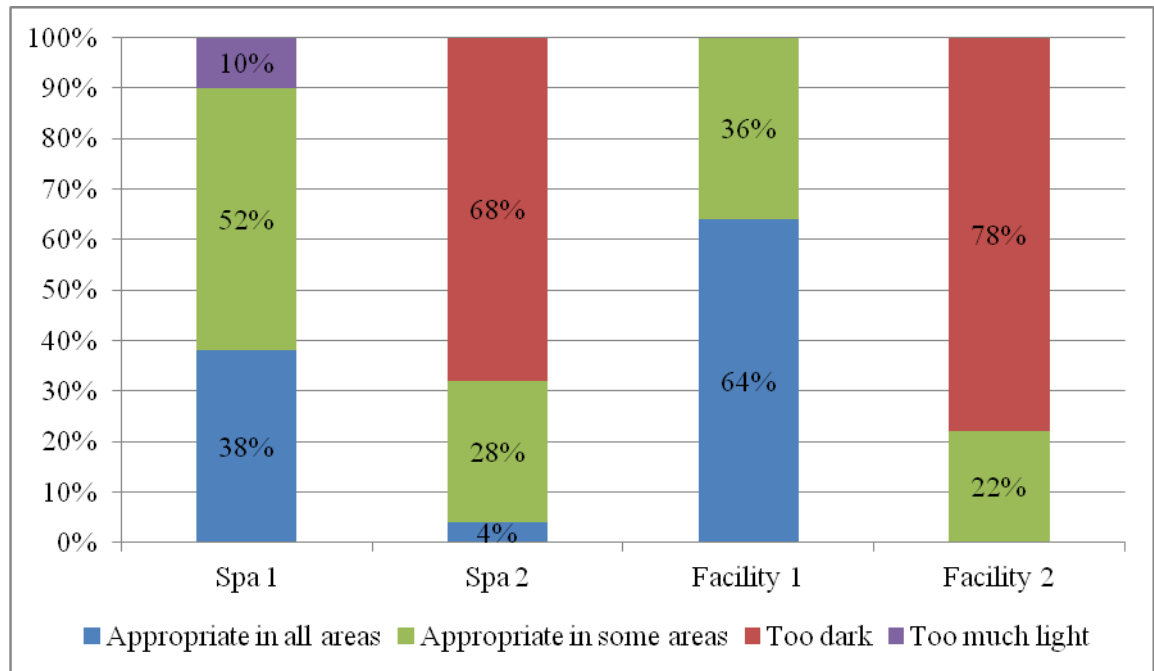
The following question was aimed at examination of the plants being used in the facilities. As it can be seen from the Figure 9 below, both Spa 1 and Facility 1 tend to use natural plants. This fact demonstrates correct attitude of the designers of the facilities towards implementing nature elements in interior design, as potted plants represent an easy, affordable and efficient way to bring a piece of nature indoors. However, some respondents, namely 78% and 8 % still noticed the presence of some artificial plants as well. This fact could be explained by the difficulty of the maintenance of natural plants in some particular areas of the spa, for example, little number of plants is able to survive in the rooms with poor light. Therefore, in some relaxation rooms it is more reasonable to put artificial plants.



**Figure 9.** Types of plants in the facilities (n=200)

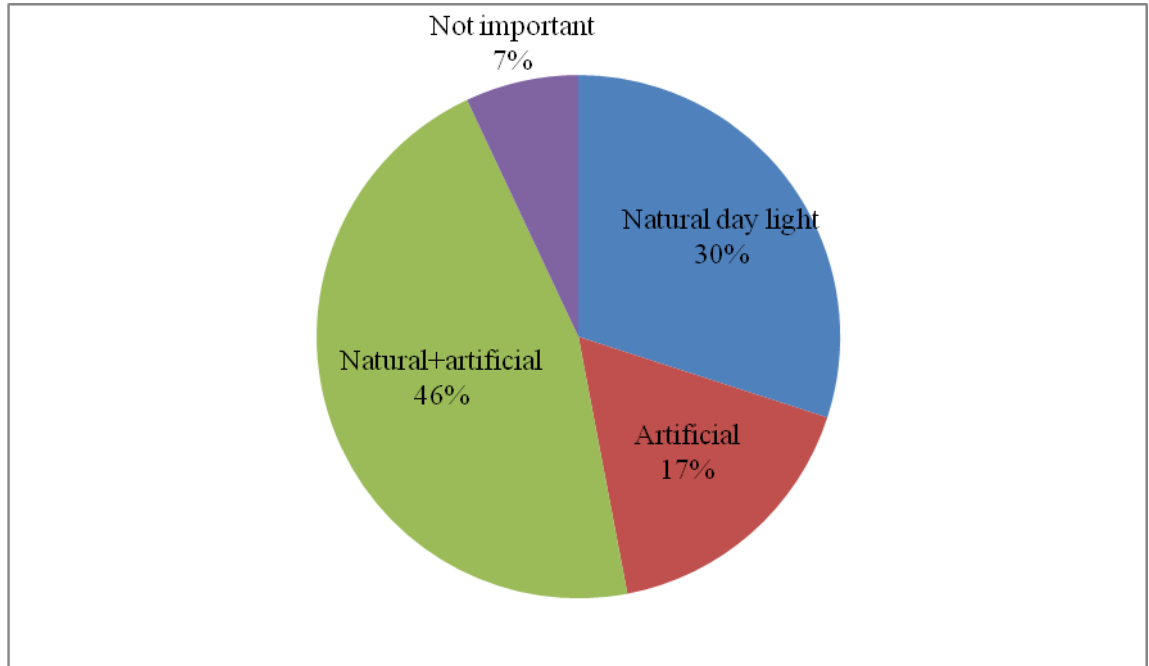
Further, customers were asked to comment on type and number of plants present in the concrete facility. In general, people were happy with numerous flourishing plants, for example, in Spa 1 and Facility 1. However, there were some responses expressing the dissatisfaction with the number or state of the plants. The most frequent answers were the following: “artificial plants were dusty”, “not enough natural plants”, “unmanaged natural plants”. In this case, women again appeared to be more critical than men, while no significant differences among nationalities were noticed. Thus, negative responses were received from 37% of women, as opposed to 6% of men.

Concerning the lighting in the facilities, it was revealed that the customers of the Spa 1 and Facility 1 in general were satisfied with the quality of lighting, to be more precise 90% and 100% respectively. On the contrary, concerning the Spa 2 and Facility 2, only 32% and 22% were satisfied with the lighting. This tendency once again indicates the need for new approach to the design of the facilities, as the light represents quite an easy and reasonable way to make the interior look more beneficial. The data mentioned above is illustrated in the Figure 10 below.



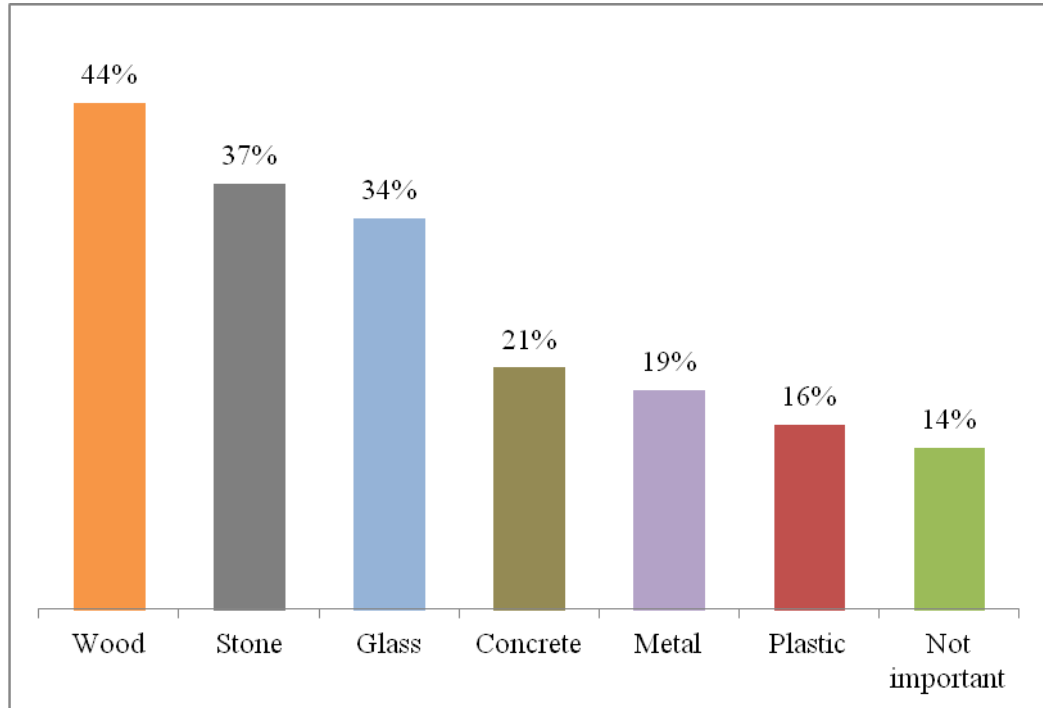
**Figure 10.** The level of light in the spas and wellness facilities (n=200)

Asking the following question the author of the current thesis was interested in getting information concerning customer preferences towards the type of lighting used in the spa and wellness facilities. Therefore the data gathered was analyzed by summarizing the answers of the visitors of all the facilities being examined. As it can be seen from the Figure 11 below, the most preferred type of lighting was combination of natural and artificial light, followed by natural day light. This tendency can be explained by the specificity of the facilities. For example, in saunas and relaxation rooms dim light is usually preferred, which can be achieved mainly by the means of artificial light.



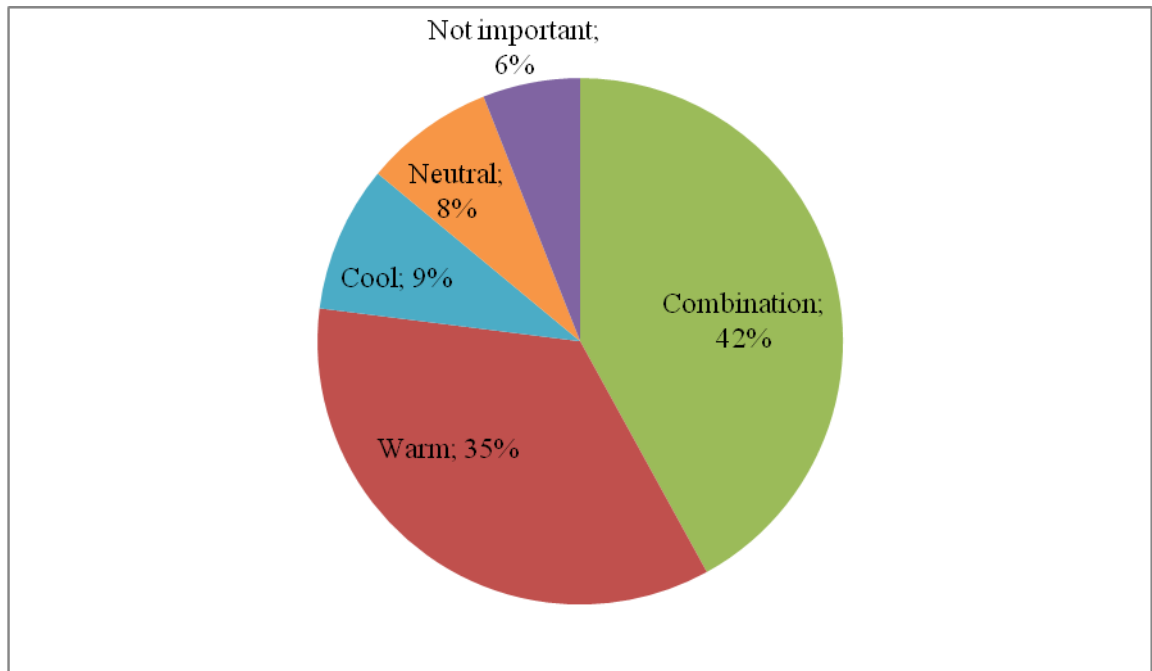
**Figure 11.** Customer preferences towards source of light (n=200)

The next important issue examined by the means of the questionnaire was the most preferred materials used for the interior design of spa and wellness facilities. It is important to mention, that more than one option could be chosen in the current question. As the question considers the general preferences of visitors, the data gathered was also analyzed in general, not dividing it in subgroups. The results indicate that people tend to choose the materials which can be classified as natural, namely, wood, and stone more often, 48% and 37% respectively. Interestingly, these materials are followed by glass, 34%. Such choice could be probably explained by the desire to see more “light” and spacious rooms in the facilities. Moreover, much glass often implies the presence of many big windows, which let natural daylight in and make the space more light. It was noticed, that option “not important” was mostly chosen by men (78%), which could suggest that men are less attentive to details than women. The results can be seen in Figure 12 below.



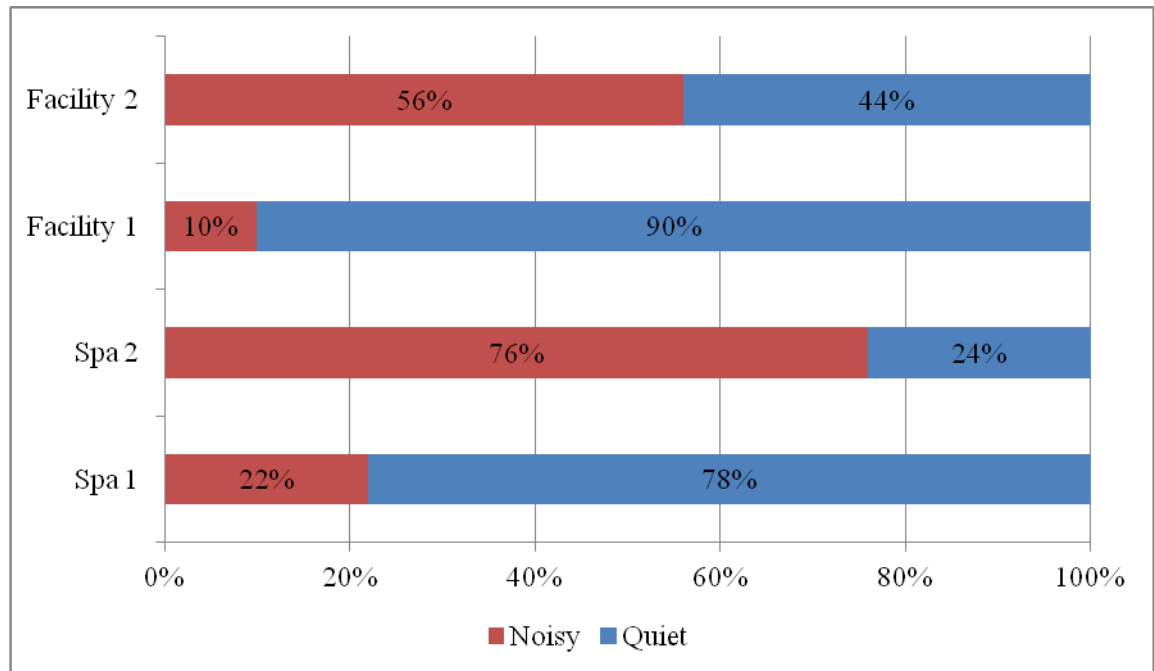
**Figure 12.** Preferences towards materials (n=200)

Concerning the colours, it was revealed that the most preferred are combinations of neutral colours with either warm or cool colour types, 42%. For example, people often proposed combinations of brown or beige with some warm colours or white or grey with some cool colours. The second by popularity, are warm colours, receiving 35% of the responses. These are followed by cool colours, 9%. The author has noticed that cool colours as well as combinations of neutral colours with some cool colours were mostly chosen by men, while women preferred warm colours or combination of neutral colours with warm colours. Interestingly, a very small percentage, namely 6%, considered colour being not important. Again, 83% of those, answered “not important” were men. This fact also makes the author suppose that women are more attentive to details than men. Still, the majority of the respondents chose some colour type or proposed some colour combination, therefore, it could be supposed that this issue should not be underestimated while developing the interior design of the facility. The Figure 13 below illustrates the data gathered.



**Figure 13.** Preferences towards colours (n=200)

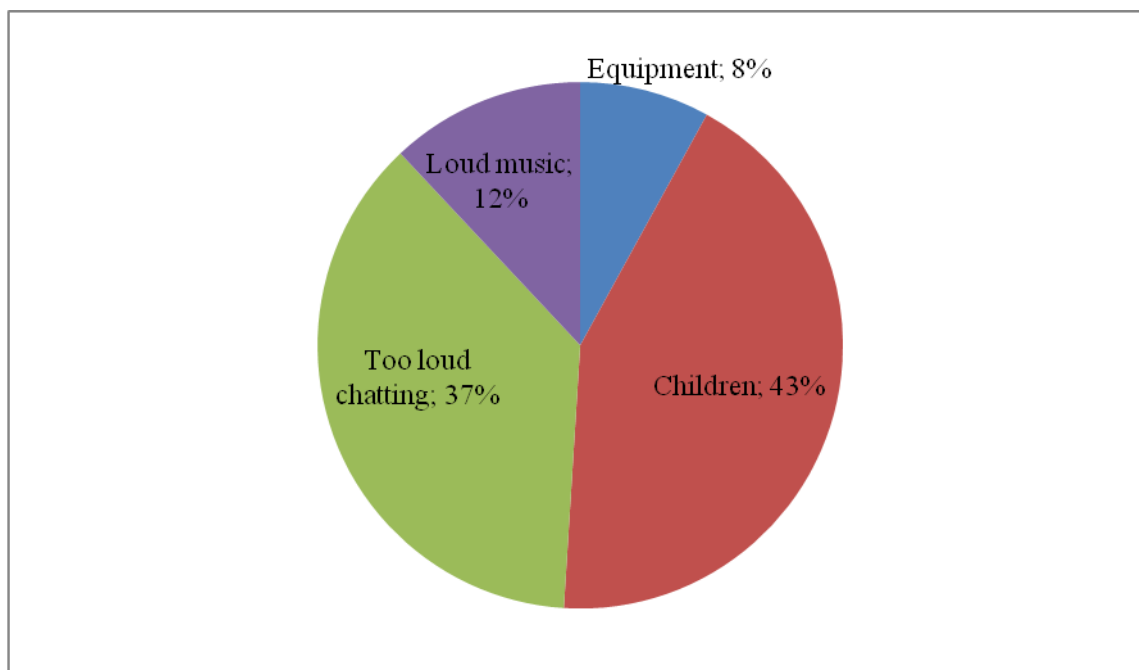
The following question was aimed at finding out whether the problem of excessive noise is present in any of the facilities. Unfortunately, it was revealed that each facility faces the problem of excessive noise to a greater or lesser extent. Interestingly, Estonian customers (34%) were more sensitive towards this issue than, for example, Russians (26%), Finns (18%) or Swedes (22%). However, it should be justly noticed that in places where people tend to gather and spend their time in bigger companies, it is almost impossible to totally eliminate the problem of noise. Still, the percentage of dissatisfied customers can be decreased, in case the problem is handled with proper responsibility. The results are illustrated in Figure 14 below.



**Figure 14.** The level of noise. (n=200)

Specifying question was also provided in order to better analyze which kind of noise can be present in wellness and spa facilities. It became evident that the most common noise sources are children, loud music and big companies chatting in a loud voice. If the first two issues could be solved relatively easily, then the latter one needs some more thorough consideration, as this is more an issue of culture and etiquette. To be more precise, spas mainly face the problem of big companies chatting in a loud voice and children making noise, while for smaller wellness facilities loud music and, in several cases, working equipment caused excessive noise. The Figure 15 below demonstrates distribution of the answers.

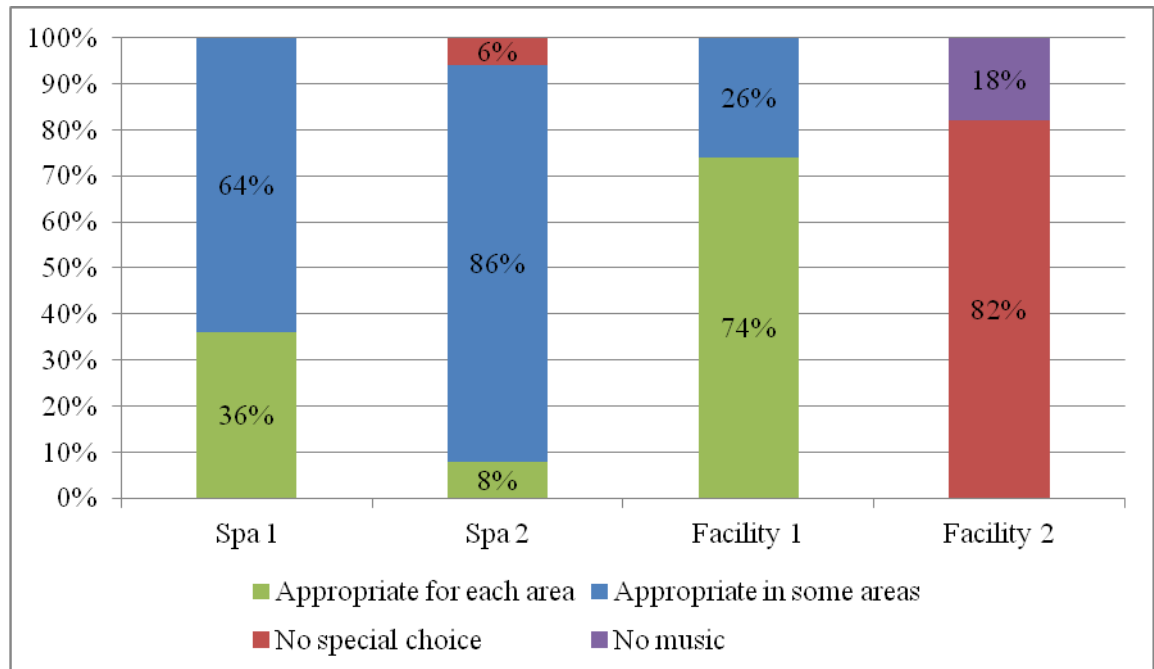




**Figure 15.** The source of noise (n=82)

In order to get information concerning the customers' musical preferences, the author of the current thesis asked about the type of music a visitor would like to hear in a spa and wellness facility. Among numerous answers the most frequent ones were: "music with no words", "lounge music", "chill-out music" and "sounds of nature". These types of answers were quite predictable due to the fact that in such facilities people want to escape from the daily routine and tense lifestyle. The chosen music allows relaxation and reaching harmony with oneself. No significant differences were noticed among nationalities or sexes.

The following question considered the choice of music in the facilities. Despite being affordable and easy to implement element of design, music should be thoroughly chosen starting from the level of volume and ending with the type. Successfully chosen music will contribute to creating positive experience while inappropriate music choice can destroy the whole atmosphere. The results show, that each of the facilities still has the place for improvement. However, it should be noticed that, by the present moment, the music choice of the Facility 2 needs the most thorough consideration. The Figure 16 below illustrates the level of satisfaction with the choice of music in each separate facility.



**Figure 16.** Music choice (n=200)

Finally, the respondents were asked to write about the aspects that could be improved in the design of the four facilities. Despite the facilities being quite different, the customers' answers concerning the opportunities for future development were quite similar. Among the most popular ones there were the advices to consider the common topic more thoroughly, advices to pay more attention to employees' appearance, to increase the amount of natural plants and maintain them in good condition, to reduce the noise level and reconsider the choice of music. Interestingly, several spa visitors highlighted the significance of adjusting the design of a spa to the needs of handicapped people. Indeed, this issue is of a high importance. However, such changes should be incorporated only in collaboration with medical specialists. This issue is beyond the scope of the current research, as it needs to be considered separately with special attention.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data gathered by the means of the questionnaire conducted by the author provided information related to visitors' preferences concerning the interior design of spa and wellness facilities. Questionnaire allowed the author to get an in-depth understanding of the issues the customers assume to be the most topical. In addition, customer responses concerning the potential problems suggested by the author allowed to reveal which of the problems of interior design tend to appear the most frequently.

The results received during the analysis of the questionnaire allowed the author to prove the hypothesis stated at the beginning of the research. It became evident that the interior design indeed plays an important role in determining customer's opinion concerning the spa and wellness facility. Thus, the author of the paper managed to support the idea of many scholars who state that physical environment plays a crucial role in differentiating service firms and influencing the nature of customer experiences (Pareigis, Edvardsson, Enquist, 2011; Mari & Oggesi, 2011; Ali & Amin, 2014). Undoubtedly, in the context of spa and wellness industry the multifaceted approach is vital while providing services. An excellent service level can only be achieved if high-quality service is presented in an appropriate atmosphere. Therefore, well-considered design will contribute to the creation of an appropriate atmosphere, while inefficient design can spoil the experience.

Further, the author managed to get an answer to the research question "in what way is interior design of spa and wellness facilities related to customers' preferences", stated at the beginning of the paper. During the research it became evident that spas and wellness facilities with efficient interior design tend to evoke more positive emotions than those with the less successful design. This idea is consonant with the idea of Ali and Amin (2014) who propose that managers of wellness and spa facilities should strive for customer's satisfaction by designing and maintaining good physical environment, which will result in positive post-consumption behaviours. However, it should be noticed that the design only cannot determine the company's success and such aspects as service quality and range of treatments should also be carefully considered. The research

indicates that Spa 1 and Facility 1 succeed more in development of interior design. First of all, these facilities managed to create common theme and developed it throughout the whole interior. To add, they recognize the importance of the appearance of their employees and therefore their workers are well-dressed and neat. Moreover, they consider the importance of nature elements and tend to have the biggest number of natural plants in the facilities. In addition, managers of the abovementioned facilities realize the importance of music choice and try to provide the music corresponding to the peculiarity of the facilities.

On the contrary, based on the data gathered during the research the author came to a conclusion that Spa 2 and Facility 2 did not manage to develop efficient interior design. To be more precise, Pehlivanoglu (2012) advocates the importance of the presence of the common topic in the interior design of the facility. Unfortunately, in case of Spa 2 and Facility 2, large number of visitors claimed that these facilities had failed to demonstrate well-developed common theme. Moreover, Spa 2 and Facility 2 seem to underestimate the beneficial effect of nature contact as they either have not enough natural plants or keep them in an inappropriate condition. However, a number of scholars emphasize that the creation of relatively natural environments better promotes psycho-physiological recovery from stress and leads to relaxation and overall mood enhancement (Largo-Wight, 2011; Raanaas et al., 2010; Bligslimark et al., 2009). According to the responses, a large number of people desire to see natural plants in abundance. Therefore, Facility 2 and Spa 2 should reconsider their approach towards this issue. What is more, the questionnaire revealed a number of complaints about the lighting in Spa 2 and Facility 2. To be more precise, customers claimed that it was too dark in the facilities. Largo-Wight (2011), Reddy et al. (2012), as well as Bellia, Bisegna & Spada (2011) highlight the importance of natural light in spa and wellness facilities as it promotes normal physiological functioning and regulation, and mood enhancement. In addition, Facility 2 and Spa 2 have several problems with the acoustics and music choice. Thus, the complaints received from customers were related to excessive noise and inappropriate music choice. However, Pehlivanoglu (2012) and Reddy et al. (2012) stress the importance of sound as an integrate element of every space saying that appropriate choice of music can result in positive emotions while interrupted noises can have adverse influence on an atmosphere of a place. As in case of

the facilities being examined by the author, the main purpose of visit was relaxation and stress reduction, bustling atmosphere has become a serious issue for the customers.

Based on the responses gathered from the questions concerning customer's preferences towards various elements of interior design, the author of the paper will introduce several suggestions aimed at the improvement of Facility 2 and Spa 2. It is important to mention, that despite numerous positive feedback about Spa 1 and Facility 1, still these places need improvement and could successfully integrate the following suggestions as well. To begin with, during the research it was revealed that all the facilities experience problems with plants to a greater or lesser degree. Therefore, the author could suggest increasing number of plants by adding natural ones. For example, reception area could be decorated with Dragon-tree, *Phalaenopsis*, *Spathiphyllum* and *Anthurium*. As the reception area is the starting point of the spa experience, this place should be visually appealing and decorated with blooming plants such as those mentioned above.

Concerning areas with large amounts of water, *Zamioculcas Zamiifolia*, *Cordilina*, *Howea Forsteriana*, *Adiantum*, *Bromeliads* and *Asplenium* could be a good solution due to the fact that plants with big surface of a leaf could adjust perfectly to areas with high humidity regulating it to the optimal level (Greenery in Spa, 2015). Moreover, often rooms for procedures do not have enough natural light. Therefore, some plants as *Aspidistra*, *Aglaonema*, *Sansevieria*, *Scindapsus* and *Tolmiea Menziesii* could be incorporated into the rooms with poor lighting. However, it is important to notice that even if the sufficient number of plants is arranged in facility, positive impression will not be reached unless the plants are well-maintained. It is necessary to control the state of the plants, as only clean and healthy plants can contribute to the enhancement of visitor's well-being.

Light is a crucial component of interior design which has two major purposes: enhancement of the ambience and the support of operation. Indeed, interior of the facility and illumination are linked inextricably, as only lighting design is able to revive the color, shape and volume of a space. Moreover, various lighting solutions allow solving functional, aesthetic and emotional tasks of a particular area simultaneously. Unfortunately, none of the facilities being examined managed to facilitate appropriate lighting in all areas. To add, in Spa 2 and Facility 2 major part of visitors complained on

lack of lighting. The question concerning customer preferences towards the source of light in wellness and spa facilities, has shown that visitors either prefer rooms with combination of natural light with artificial or just natural day light to those with solely artificial lighting.

Resting on the customers' opinions, the author of the current thesis proposes some possible changes that could positively influence the situation with the lighting in the abovementioned facilities. As the author deals with the already existing facilities which are not anymore in the stage of a construction, the list of advices concerning the influx of natural daylight inside the facility cannot be too broad. Thus, it is necessary not to block the windows so that they could maximally allow the light to pass through; not to overload the space with the furniture; to use more glass in decorating the facility; not to colour the floor, walls and ceiling in dark colours. For example, "... natural light can turn otherwise claustrophobic environment into one that feels connected to nature no matter how small the window and amenity that has been shown to have a soothing effect on clients" (D'Angelo, 2010, p.121). In addition, successfully hanged mirrors can also make a room look brighter.

While the level of natural light is more or less predetermined by the construction of a building, the varieties of light solutions with artificial light are almost endless. For example, reception areas are often combined with waiting areas, which implies the use of two types of lighting: general and accent lighting. As reception desk represents the face of the whole facility, it should look beautiful and give customers a hint on the common theme of the facility. In addition, reception area should be a bright spot in the room, as right here it is important to organize cheerful and energetic spirit. Low-lying lights with fluorescent lamps could be used in order to accentuate the reception desk (Lighting in a Beauty Parlor, n.d.). Moreover, "the use of coloured lights has become another popular choice in spas for its healing benefits" (D'Angelo, 2010, p. 121). Thus, waiting area could be illuminated with decorative coloured lamps, selected in accordance with the colour of a room, in order to make it look more interesting and unusual. However, it is necessary to be careful with bright colours, so that not to annoy customers. It is important to remember that such aspects as colour and texture of walls, type and colour of the floor, colour and material of the furniture also influence the

illumination of an area (Petrova, 2005). All these aspects should be considered, as dark surfaces tend to absorb, while light ones – reflect light. What is more, efficiently chosen lamps can visually enlarge the room, or produce the effect of seclusion and privacy.

While designing the light in the room for procedures, it is important to link mutually exclusive aspects: on the one hand – intimate atmosphere necessary for the maintenance of procedure, on the other hand – transparency. These are two factors managers should keep in mind. Colour score of the interior of the room for massage should be neutral, for example, different hues of green could be used. This colour is known for its relaxing and calming effect on the customer. The light should be dim and soft. Dimmer switches, soft accent lights, and candles are good choices in spa treatment rooms where lighting is an important part of setting the mood for a relaxing massage (D'Angelo, 2010). In order to reach this effect, small lamps could also be used. Their construction is designed with the aim of producing not only direct light but also indirect light. Simultaneous use of direct and indirect light will allow to create the psychological comfort while the procedure.

In the room for cosmetology procedures, as in no other room, all medical requirements for carrying out the procedures should be maintained. In addition, it is important not to ignore the necessity of creating comfortable atmosphere for relaxation and rest. This will lead to a double effect: the maximum and minimum level of light (Lighting in beauty parlours, n.d.). Undoubtedly, the dynamics of light plays an important role in achieving this goal. It gives an opportunity to both, correspond to all the standards and create a pleasant and harmonic atmosphere. Besides, it is quite easy to create such flexible system. First of all, the effect of diffused light could be achieved by the implementation of candelabrum, for example, downlight with mat light bulbs and cool colour temperature (Lighting in beauty parlours, n.d.). Secondly, direct working light is organized by the means of small wall lamps, which will produce the light onto the walls and face of the client. Moreover, by redirecting the light flux of these working lights onto the walls, the indirect light effect will be reached – the best type of light for the relaxation after the procedure (Petrova, 2005). Finally, such energy efficient options as LED, compact fluorescent lighting, low-voltage and solar-powered landscape lighting should be used in order to both, maintain the atmosphere and save energy (Petrova,

2005). This step will not only demonstrate careful attitude of the facility towards nature, but also show its attention to even minor details and readiness to seek for the best and up-to-date solutions for its interior design.

When selecting materials for spa or wellness facility, one should keep in mind the specificity of different areas. All materials used in wet rooms, including wall coverings, paint, and furnishing, must be able to withstand the moisture. To add, "... nonporous materials, such as tiles and certain types of stone, that can withstand water and continuous cleanings, are imperative" (D'Angelo, 2010, p. 119). Moreover, a number of materials used in spa today originate both, from natural and man-made substances that are environmentally friendly (7 Modern Interior Trends, 2014). To add "ecologically sound, nontoxic, nonhazardous materials that can stand up to mould have infiltrated spa design in a big way with durable products such as tile, concrete, natural stone and biodegradable resins showing up on spa ceilings, floors and walls around the globe" (D'Angelo, 2010, p. 119). Therefore, the author of the current thesis suggests that natural stone could be easily used in steam rooms, due to the fact that it withstands the moisture and can be cleaned easily. Moreover, glass can become a good solution for decorating pool area. For example, several walls in pool area could be replaced with matt glass block walls, in order to make the room look brighter and feel lighter. Moreover, if installed correctly, glass can visually broaden the space.

Nyrid et al. (2014), as well as Day and Rich (2009) and Gibson (2015) have noticed beneficial effects of wood elements in spa and wellness interior design. However, due to the increased focus on sustainability which has influenced spa interiors, those should be decorated with naturally textured woods, such as bamboo and cork, instead of using precious trees. Based on the idea of Day and Rich (2009) concerning the implementation of such simple nature elements as earth, air and fire, the author of the thesis suggests integrating them in spa design in shape of outside pools, fireplaces, wood stoves, candles and natural scents to give the spa visitors the sensation of communicating with nature.

The importance of such element of interior design as colour was mentioned by such scholars as Bellia et al. (2011), Moller, Elliot and Maier (2009), and Reddy et al. (2012). Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly consider the colour of each area, in



order to create memorable experience. Based on the classification proposed by Jan (2007) and taking into consideration customer responses concerning their purpose of visit, the author of the paper suggests choosing colours which contribute to relaxation and restoration. Therefore, the author suggests using relaxing and vitalizing colour schemes, proposed by Jan (2007), which were previously discussed in the literature review (See Figure 1 and Figure 2). For example, rooms for treatment could be coloured in green hues in order to create relaxing and calming atmosphere, while pool area could be decorated with blue and sand-coloured mosaic in order to implement the motifs of beach and sea. One more possible approach towards colour choice is basing colour scheme on the ability of warm colours to evoke feelings of happiness, optimism and energy, and cool colours to produce calming and soothing effect (Stuart, 2015). To add, pools could be decorated with colourful LED lighting to maintain the positive effect of colour therapy.

In addition, one should keep in mind that dark colours absorb light, making a room look and feel smaller (Ufland, 2015). Therefore, the walls should be painted in light colours in order to make a space feel open and airy. For this purpose, such colour schemes as pastels, neutrals and whites could be useful. Also it is necessary to paint the wall trim and mouldings in a lighter colour than the walls; this way, the wall appears to be further back, making the room seem bigger (Ufland, 2015). Moreover, white colour of the ceiling will open up the space, while bright ceiling colour with the texture will catch the eye and, according to Ufland (2015), create the illusion of height.

It is of critical importance to zone spa functions away from fitness functions so as to maintain good acoustic control. Not only is sound reduction important from an aesthetic standpoint, it is also important from the standpoint of communication (Pehlivanoglu, 2012; Reddy et al., 2012). In addition designers should carefully plan the location of various areas designed for different purposes. For example, it is necessary to avoid disposing swimming pools for children next to the pools for relaxation, or aerobics room next to the massage or meditation rooms.

Designers should carefully choose materials for the floor, ceiling and walls construction in order to control the sound level. Within the pool area, design should include baffles or other devices to reduce the echo effect. To add, other less noticeable materials such

as soundproofing wallboards and rubber door seals, while not at the forefront of design, show the attention to detail that creates the ultimate spa experience (D'Angelo, 2010). Concerning other details, carpets, curtains and pillows also promote sound isolation and therefore should not be underestimated while decorating the lounge area.

Music is one of the aspects that should not be ignored while developing the whole concept of the spa (Burkholder, n.p., n.d.). It is important to keep in mind that the main aim of visiting the spa is relaxation and therefore the music should contribute to this aim. Nowadays there is a large number of music CD's which were created especially for spas and wellness facilities. These usually imply the sounds of nature in order to create the holistic atmosphere and to unite the spa visitors with nature. In addition it is important to remember that all the people are different and their music preferences vary. Therefore, in smaller facility or in separate rooms for treatments in bigger spas, it could be a good idea to allow the customer choose the music he or she likes. In addition, as the participants of the current research preferred to hear relaxing music with no lyrics, classical instrumental piano or guitar music could become a good choice. It is important to avoid repeating the tracks during the day as it could irritate clients. Finally, nature sounds in shape of waterfalls, sounds of the ocean, birds and forests will contribute to creating a peaceful atmosphere and help customers to escape daily routine.

In the current chapter the author discussed the results of her research, related to visitors' preferences concerning the interior design of spa and wellness facilities. The most topical aspects and the most frequently appearing problems of interior design, from the customer's point of view, were revealed. Based on customer responses, the author of the paper introduced several suggestions aimed at the improvement of Facility 2 and Spa 2. The ideas proposed by the author were aimed at reconsidering of such design elements as plants, lighting, materials, colour and texture, music and acoustics.

## CONCLUSION

Visiting spas and wellness centres is one of the popular ways of spending one's leisure time. Indeed, due to the busy lifestyle people tend to choose such leisure activities that help them to escape from daily routine, relax and reach harmony between body and mind. During the recent decades the number of facilities offering wellness and spa services has increased due to the fact that people become more concerned about their wellness. As a result, the competition among such facilities is becoming more tense. In order to win customer's preference, companies should definitely stand out. One of the possibilities to differentiate themselves is to shift major attention from services and concentrate, for instance, at development of outstanding interior design of the facility. Although the existing scope of literature provides some data on the effect of separate design elements on human psychology, still there is a need for complex and multifaceted approach towards this issue. Therefore, the author of the current thesis decided to examine the relation between customers' preferences and interior design of spas and wellness facilities from another perspective.

For the purpose of her study the author has stated the following research question: in what way is interior design of spa and wellness facilities related to customers' preferences? The author has also set the aim to get an understanding of the relationships of spa and wellness facilities' interior design and customer preferences. This aim was accomplished in several steps. First of all, the author tried to reveal the existence of the influence of interior design of customers' preferences by the means of critical review. Secondly, the author found out the main principles and elements of interior design and examined the interrelation of interior design with customer satisfaction and behaviour intentions by the means of the questionnaire. Having reached the connection of mentioned above relationship, the author made several proposals on improvement of interior design of chosen Estonian spas and wellness facilities. Thus, during the research it became evident that spas and wellness facilities with efficient interior design tend to evoke more positive emotions than those with the less successful design. Therefore managers of wellness and spa facilities should strive for customer's satisfaction by designing and maintaining good physical environment, which will result in positive post-consumption behaviours.

At the beginning of the current research the author has stated the following hypothesis: the interior design plays an important role in determining customer's opinion concerning the spas and wellness facilities. The results received during the research allowed the author to prove the previously stated hypothesis. Undoubtedly, in the context of spa and wellness industry the efficient design is of special importance. To add, the effect of high-quality service can be enhanced by an appropriate atmosphere, while inefficient design will spoil customer's experience.

The research indicates that Spa 1 and Facility 1 succeed more in development of interior design. First of all, these facilities managed to create common theme and developed it throughout the whole interior. To add, they recognize the importance of the appearance of their employees and therefore their workers are well-dressed and neat. Moreover, they consider the importance of nature elements and tend to have the biggest number of natural plants in the facilities. In addition, managers of the abovementioned facilities realize the importance of music choice and try to provide the music corresponding to the peculiarity of the facilities. On the contrary, Spa 2 and Facility 2 did not manage to develop efficient interior design. Unfortunately, in case of Spa 2 and Facility 2, large number of visitors claimed that these facilities had failed to demonstrate well-developed common theme. Moreover, Spa 2 and Facility 2 seem to underestimate the beneficial effect of nature contact as they either have not enough natural plants or keep them in an inappropriate condition. What is more, the questionnaire revealed a number of complaints about the lighting in Spa 2 and Facility 2. To be more precise, customers claimed that it was too dark in the facilities. In addition, Facility 2 and Spa 2 have several problems with the acoustics and music choice. Thus, the complaints received from customers were related to excessive noise and inappropriate music choice. As in case of the facilities being examined by the author, the main purpose of visit was relaxation and stress reduction, bustling atmosphere has become a serious issue for the customers.

Although the current research has reached its aims the author has still faced some limitations. First of all, the period of collecting data by the means of questionnaire lasted for one month, which inevitably has led to another limitation, namely, quite a small number of respondents. Finally, due to the lack of time, only four facilities were

examined. A greater depth of information could have been obtained if the research had more longitudinal character. The increased time period would also lead to the growth of the sample size. This study could also benefit from interviewing the participants. This method could have provided greater insight into participants' opinions. What is more, more complete and comprehensive data could be gathered by the means of analyzing various spas and wellness facilities, for instance throughout Europe, or even worldwide. Finally, working staff could also be involved in the research in order to get their perspective on this issue.

The current work could become a starting point for the managers of the examined facilities in order to reconsider their attitude towards the interrelation of interior design and customers' preferences. Moreover, several design ideas could be extracted in order to create a more efficient and up-to-date design. In addition, this paper could also be useful for those wishing to open a spa or a wellness facility as it explains the high dependency of customers' preferences on the overall design of the facility in addition to the quality of the services offered. Therefore, if the facility will provide excellent service in a space with an efficient interior design, it will attract more customers and, as a result, enlarge an influx of company's income.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

Dear respondent!

The current questionnaire is conducted for the purpose of the research aimed at the determination of relationship between the interior design of wellness and spa facilities and customer preferences. The confidentiality of responses is guaranteed. Please devote 15 minutes to answering the questions below.

In the questions marked with \* more than one answer can be chosen.

#### **Q1 Have you visited X facility?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(If Yes is selected, then skip to the next section of the questionnaire. If no is selected, then skip to the end of the survey)

#### **Q2 Please explain your overall impression of the facility. How did you like it? (Please comment in few words).**

.....

.....

.....

.....

#### **Q3\* What was the main purpose of your visit?**

- ☐ Relaxation
- ☐ Stress reduction
- ☐ Refreshment
- ☐ Rejuvenation
- ☐ Spend time with friends/family
- ☐ Other (please comment)

.....

#### **Q4 How did You feel about the design of the facility?**

- ☐ It was sensibly appealing
- ☐ It was relatively attractive
- ☐ The design is on average level
- ☐ It was relatively unattractive

- It was rather poor

**Q5 Does the facility have a common theme supported by its interior design?**

- Yes, the common theme is present and well maintained throughout the whole facility.
- Yes, the common theme seems to be present, however it is not developed enough.
- The common theme seems to be absent.

**Q6 Please comment on the appearance of the employees.**

- All the employees were professionally dressed and appeared neat
- All the employees wore uniform, however it did not look tidy enough
- Not all employees had uniform, however each worker looked neat
- Uniform was absent; overall worker's appearance was not appealing

**Q7 What types of plants were present in the facility**

- Natural
- Artificial
- Both (more natural than artificial)
- Both (more artificial than natural)
- None

**Q8 Please express in few words Your opinion concerning the type and number of plants present in facility X.**

.....

**Q9 How did you feel about the lighting in facility X**

- There was an appropriate lightning in each separate area
- Lighting was appropriate in some areas
- It was too dark in the facility
- There was too much light in the facility

**Q10 Which type of lighting in the spa and wellness facility do you prefer?**

- Natural day light
- Artificial
- The combination of natural and artificial light
- The source of light is not important

**Q11\* Which type of materials would you prefer to be used in the spa and wellness facilities?**

- ☐ Wood
  - ☐ Stone
  - ☐ Glass
  - ☐ Metal
  - ☐ Plastic
  - ☐ Concrete
  - ☐ The material is not important
  - ☐ Other (Please comment)
- .....

**Q12 What types of colors do you consider to be appropriate for the spa and wellness facility?**

- ☐ Neutral colors (black, white, grey, brown, beige)
  - ☐ Warm colors (different shades and combinations of red, orange and yellow)
  - ☐ Cool colors (different shades and combinations of blue, green, purple)
  - ☐ Combination of several color types (Please specify)
- .....

- ☐ The color is not important

**Q13 Did you experience the problem of excessive noise?**

- ☐ Yes, it was too noisy
- ☐ No, it was quiet enough

**Q14 What kind of noise was present in the facility? (Please skip this question, if the answer “No” was chosen in the previous question)**

- ☐ Noise from the working equipment
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Too loud music
- ☐ Too loud chatting
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

**Q15 What kind of music do you prefer to be present in spa and wellness facilities? (Please comment in few words)**

.....

**Q16 Was the choice of music in facility X appropriate?**

- ☐ The music was appropriately chosen for each area
- ☐ Music choice was appropriate only in some areas
- ☐ There was no special music choice, the radio was playing in the whole facility
- ☐ There was no music
- ☐ Other.....

**Q17 Please comment in few words what would you like to be improved in the design of the facility X?**

.....

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Тема данного диплома: взаимосвязь между дизайном интерьера спа и веллнесс заведений и предпочтениями клиентов. Данная тема актуальна, поскольку конкуренция на рынке спа и веллнесс заведений достаточно высокая и предприятиям необходимо найти способ привлечения как можно большего количества клиентов. Одним из таких способов является создание незабываемых впечатлений не только от сервиса, но и от дизайна интерьера, поскольку эти два аспекта тесно связаны между собой в рамках веллнесс и спа индустрии. Особенность этой работы заключается в том, что автор использует комплексный подход при изучении взаимосвязи между несколькими элементами дизайна и предпочтениями клиентов, в то время как до этого изучалось влияние отдельных элементов дизайна на восприятие клиентами.

Опираясь на теоретическую базу данного исследования, связанную со взаимоотношениями окружающей среды, удовлетворенностью клиента и его поведенческими намерениями, автор сформулировал следующую гипотезу: дизайн интерьера играет важную роль в определении мнения клиента по поводу спа и веллнесс заведений. Чтобы проверить данную гипотезу автор опросил 200 посетителей определенных веллнесс заведений и спа. Целью данного опроса было выявить мнения посетителей касаясь дизайна определенных спа и веллнесс заведений чтобы выяснить сильные и слабые стороны и понять предпочтения клиентов, чтобы в дальнейшем предложить решение по улучшению существующего дизайна.

В ходе работы автором был поставлен следующий вопрос для исследования: каким образом связан дизайн веллнесс и спа заведений с предпочтениями клиентов. Основываясь на вышеупомянутом вопросе, автор сформулировал следующую цель: понять взаимосвязь между дизайном интерьеров спа и веллнесс заведений и предпочтениями клиентов. Для достижения поставленной цели автор поставил следующие задачи:

- Опираясь на теоретическую базу данного исследования, понять действительно ли дизайн интерьера влияет на предпочтения клиентов.
- Выявить основные принципы и элементы дизайна интерьера и понять взаимосвязь между дизайном и удовлетворенностью клиента и его поведенческими манерами.
- Изучив основные принципы успешного дизайна и предпочтения клиентов, предложить некоторые идеи по улучшению дизайна интерьера двух определенных спа и двух веллнесс заведений Эстонии.

Данная работа состоит из введения, теоретической и практической части, заключения и короткого резюме на русском языке. Первая глава разделена на четыре подраздела, посвященных следующим темам: взаимосвязь физической среды с удовлетворенностью клиента и его поведенческими намерениями, принципы дизайна интерьера и такие его компоненты как цвет и текстура, природные элементы и материалы. Вторая глава описывает методы исследования, способ отбора людей для опроса и анализ данных. Более того, в этой главе обсуждаются результаты, полученные в ходе опроса. Третья глава суммирует теоретическую базу и результаты анализа опроса. Более того, автор предоставляет идеи по улучшению уже существующего дизайна интерьера двух заранее отобранных для исследования заведений. В заключение, автор подводит итоги проделанной работы, упоминает лимитирующие обстоятельства данного исследования и предлагает возможные варианты развития данного исследования в будущем.

В результате исследования автор подтвердил свою гипотезу и пришел к выводу, что, бесспорно, в спа и веллнесс индустрии успешный дизайн играет немаловажную роль, так как эффект от качественных услуг может быть закреплен соответствующей атмосферой, в то время как непродуманный дизайн может испортить общее впечатление клиента. Более того, автор пришел к заключению, что спа и веллнесс заведения с хорошо продуманным дизайном вызывают более позитивные эмоции, чем заведения с менее успешным дизайном.



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