ABSTRACT
Reflecting upon Health and Wellness, within the sphere of tourism is closely associated to an intellectual activity connected to multiple historical, political and social fields. These are generally characterised for being permanently linked to activities based on leisure, well-being and evasion. It will be demanding, not only to clarify, but also to relate concepts like leisure, tourism and thermalism to new paradigms of the current society and to reflect upon emerging terminologies and to the extent of these areas as well.

Bearing in mind that leisure as the tourism and wellness are all classified as free time activities, linked to the need for relaxation, pleasure and well-being, what is the conceptual scope to the Thermal Tourism today? While being one of the most ancient tourism practices, which connected areas of thermalism do currently get in the tourism field? And what kind of upgrades related to these offer have been demanded in order to consolidate its role within tourism projects?

We can’t have the risk or the danger of, under the “hat” of the Health, Wellness and the Leisure, concepts so emergents today, we can degrade universes so greats, as the thermal’s resorts, with the sumptuous Hotels, ancients and luxurious Casinos or recreations clubs and all the cultural and artistic’s patrimony with the danger of the mass tourism. All these potential disclosed greater importance not only to tourism activity, but also to it’s own sustainable sensible regions development, healthful and singulars, due to it’s ecological, social and environment attractiveness.
Solutions searching is possible through a general principle, that result from the sector sustainable development concept adaptation, that it essentially focus in the resources sustainable use, abusive consumption and wastes reduction, diversity maintenance, social economic support, local communities commitment, professionals and public advices, active people sector sustainable tourism integration capacity, responsible tourism marketing and research.

It is not intended that thermal sustainable tourism shall be a description of an ideal situation that is still not reached, but instead a requirement that mainly focus it’s attention in the long term, that contemplates those principles knowledge and application, so that it can increase attractiveness thermal capacity supported for the thermal tourism quality increase and also, valuing the natural and cultural conditions that should be effectively revalue. Not using such richness, is the same as wasting existing conditions and resources, but equally necessaries to the regional and local development.

Concientious that tourism is mainly a regional/territorial issue, it’s bigger challenge should precisely be the enrichment, preservation and value-added introduction in those places, considering that only the environment care integration and adequate role and dimension infrastructures, can lead to it’s sustainability. The European thermal resorts should also integrate in those territories, with value added to tourist activities, where the inclusion of different economic actors should contribute to the areas harmonious development, in it’s majority located in developing areas.

The thermal tourism destinations are logically the consumption point of the complex activities that comprise the tourism experience and are ultimately what is sold for place promotion agencies on the tourism market. It is in the direction to a bigger destination competitiveness, that it should be introduced differentiated and guarantee quality parameters compatible with natural and cultural sustainability, through thermal treatments standardization related to norms certification instituted for Thermal European Association and to regional and local geologic/ hidrogeologic studies investment, to be able to get orientation lines to medicinal waters protection.

How can we proceed to search incite all the touristy offer, yet so indifferent and so rash, and at the same time to try to catch a market, desirous of moments of leisure and practices propitiators and stimulators of Health and activities conducive to the Wellness? Is in the answer of these question that it is proposed an innovative articulation model between classic thermalism and playful thermalism, that respect not only these concepts complementarities and regional/local complementarities, but also the modernization and services quality marketing through certification and, the thermal waters singular potentialities, that are the differentiator element. Thus, promoting the revival thermal
territories quality, that consider the development of a widened plan to all it’s environment and the heritage, landscape, environmental and cultural resources harness, is today a pressing necessity.

“1. INTRODUCTION”.

The concepts of leisure, tourism and thermalism widely and joint, as well as the tendencies, characteristics and historic reasons that along centuries contribute to change the concept and thermal practice(s), made imperious to proceed to it’s concept clearness, taking into account new paradigms quality society, emergent terminologies and inclusion and connection related to those concepts. In this direction, the great lines analysis that have conducted politics adoption and that have nowadays allowed german thermal resorts to a first rank tourist phenomenon, more demanded for different clients from the traditional thermalist and responsible for the intrusion of new and sophisticated consume habits, allowed them to reach a new thermal development model, also supported for multiples scientists and researchers from various knowledge areas, whose anticipation and rigorous information character, allowed us to detach some of their investigations: (Bleile, 2001; Brittner, & Stehle, 2000; DBV, 1998; DHV, 2000; Forcher, 1997; Hartmann, 1996; Illing, 1999; Kaspar, 1996; Kirschner,1998; Lanz-Kaufmann, 1999; Lohmann, 1999; Muller, 1997; Nahrstedt, 2000; Scholz, 1999; Stehle, 1995; Steinbach, 2001; Steinecke, 1992; Stoyke, 2000; Wilms-Kegel, 1999).

In this direction, non-separable of the well-being, health is one of the inevitable themes in the new millennium, being evident the great tendency of the increasing individuals worries with their body and good physical form, that it reflects the necessity we have of being more healthy and even youngest, permanently searching a better quality of life. Recognizing the actual problematic portuguese thermal case, related to organizational and functional maladjustments, thermal obstruction dimensions and environment community linking absence, it was considerate crucial rethinking new portuguese thermalism measures adoption, and also analyse different portuguese thermal supply sensitivities, through an empirical study (qualitative and quantitative) to thermal supply, based in the german example, and from possible measures and politics development adaptations to lusa actual situation. The analysis results allowed us to conclude that, despite the actual resistance of some obstacles, the responsible for thermal revitalization recognize the inevitable joint and complementarities between illness treatment, preventive and playful thermalism and also, the regional and local environment complementarities.

We think that there are still many things to do in thermal supply field, related to a more adequacy to new demand motivations and the use advantage of some unique portuguese thermal resorts characteristics, like their climate, landscape- natural patrimony- it’s culture, history and human made patrimony- fundamental framework of any tourism destination. In this context, it makes evident that the implementation of a new innovator and quality model related to a bigger marketing aggressiveness and originality, which not only respect the complementarities between classic thermalism and playful thermalism, but also the complementarily between regional and local environment, through an holistic sustainable boarding. This model should still seats in modernization and services quality through certification, in singular thermal waters characteristics and potentialities, that are today a undeniable reality.
There have been multiples developed theories about leisure conceptual clearness along the XX century. In 1996 Costa presented two perspectives that more detach in leisure appropriation and definition. They are holistic perspective and organic perspective. The thesis defended for holistic perspective, leisure is defined like a tranquillity and relaxed time without subjugation to a specific time, while for organic perspective, leisure implies impediment to labour activities, where there is a clear distinction between work and leisure, and also between work and private life, defending that, opposite to holistic perspective, even when it praise some activities linked to leisure during labour activities, they are not residual, comparing with time and absorption required for work (see Boniface & Cooper, 1994; Costa, 1996; Neumeyer & Neumeyer, 1958).

In actual times, we have been assisted to the creation of a leisure that tends to act more in societies, that model individual tastes or preferences, that (re)educate to use and manage time, that mobilize to it’s favour disposable resources in the present and future, that try to confirm and consolidate expectations and imposes and reinforces, with pleasant and philanthropy, world images and from the other. It seems, that effectively we live in a society from and to leisure, where different training types should act with more interaction and innovation. Several studies have been search the future standard leisure(s) demand model. The method generally considered is based in characteristics people knowledge, that nowadays more enjoy specific activities related to leisure, evaluate the future population structure in terms of those characteristics, so that it can possibly define future participation taxes. One of those studies, cited for Young & Willmott (1973, p. 375) already suggested that:

…from 2001, the people leisure, will be more diversified and active, with physical activity increasing, a natural tendency to relaxed programmes and sports practice, as well as to an even more intense cultural participation (Parker, 1978).

In this context, what better tendencies and opportunities european thermal resorts will wait for? In accordance with Costa (1996, p.6), the recreation time occupies a time space dedicated to leisure and is in that recreation time space, that individuals occupied them selves doing tourism. Like leisure, tourism concept still also doesn’t evidence a consensual and universal definition. To this intention, there are several academics that support different conceptual tourism analysis. So, between the multiples Tourism definitions, the one that was proposed in 1994 for World Tourism Organization, said that tourism is the one that include all activities that people do during their trips and holidays in distinct places from their normal environment, for a consecutive time period inferior a year, with resting, business ends or other motives.

Although, even this simple and pragmatic notion, is armed with a strong subjective character that makes very difficult to adopt a universal Tourism definition. For example, a “business tourist”, frequently link his remunerated work time to relaxed and visit time, related to the specificities of places to where he moved on and where he is. For the same reason, a “health tourist” can link several illness treatment or prevention treatments, several activities that will be included in free time designated to complete all the physical and psychological reconstitution process, not leaving that reason to considerate himself a thermalist because, participator and user of thermal establishments, but should equally be considerate a tourist, because consume culture, gastronomy, sport activities, between other.
Pointing a tourism and tourist definition is not an easy task, image configured for multiples tourism definitions evidenced along the years. While some of those definitions try to reach universality or the application to several situations, others were emerging with the intention of giving objectives or purposes answers and specific rules (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). This allowed us to ask, if it is arrived a new context or even a new social dimension, that linked to relaxed and leisure activities, it must associate each time more, activities linked to health prevention or even to some pathologies treatments in voluntarism regime, without being condemned to sick, old and aged label, or over passed…? What importance or impacts will come from the widening concept?

The revision literature about the important Thermalism concept, which is supported for a capital resource- the thermal water- based in the following authors: Forwater, 1990; Cazes, 1995; Ébrard, 1981; Fortuné, 1975; Jamot, 1988, Jarrassé, 1994, Langenieux-Villard, 1990; Lopes, 2002; Louro, 1995; Monbrison-Fouchère, 1995; Nahrsted, 1997; Nahrsted, 2000; Narciso, 1940; Pene, 1994; Pina, 1990; Pollock, A. & Williams, 2000; Simões & Cruz, 1997; William, 1998), allowed to identify the nuclear characteristics in this boarding. The Thermalism include the set of every medicinal, social, sanitary, administrative and shelter forms, duly structured, with mineral waters therapeutic using ends, thermal gas and marine mud. The word “thermalism” implies immediately to indication and using of thermal water with illness treatment recognized virtues, through it’s chemical thermal and mechanics effects for medical class.

Thus, the Talassotherapy is the combination using with medical surveillance, of preventive and illness treatment forms, from the half aquatic several benefits, in symbiosis: the climate, the water sea, marine mud, seaweed, sand and others substances extracted from the sea. One of talassotherapy characteristics is it’s obligation for sea practices. The Balneotherapy corresponds to water using – that doesn’t have to be necessarily thermal, mineral or water sea – to therapeutic ends. The medical balneotherapy is exclusively applied in careful specific structures, like hospitals, clinics, medical office and Cinesotherapy, like thermal establishments, where the thermal water constitute a value added to several balneotherapy effects. However, the non medical balneotherapy is practiced in several establishments, being very adaptive to relax and well-being indications. The balneotherapy, can present itself in different practices or modalities (water circuit with playful character; watergymn; fitness; sauna, hamman, hot baths) in thermal environment or talassotherapy institutes.

The thermal centres and the talassotherapy institutes have developed to endow themselves in a increasing way, from small balneotherapy structures, like complement first activity from those centres or institutes. That diversification has allowed it to catch and answer new and diversified clients, each time more attracted for an innovator offer. In anglo-saxon model later indicated and characterized, it is verified that those clients are frequently proximity clients, that wish and have necessity, not only to take care their body, but also health in general. The Thermoludism, a very used operators and specialists terminology in France and Switzerland, corresponds to the thermal water using to playful and recreation ends. It practice in some places or spaces temoplayful with great spread, although, in the major situations, separated from thermal establishments with predominantly illness treatment and preventive ends. The Talaludism, like Thermoludism is related to recreation and leisure activities, practiced in half marine, with water sea using.

The anglo-saxon Spa(s) model is constituted for small structural units, where specific care are proposed, more closer to thermalism cares using, to talassotherapy and balneotherapy, like massages, the vapours and relaxing treatments. There are frequently used adjuvant ways, like oils, mud, smelling and seaweed, that are designated to enrich the water action. The Spas equally include other equipments like: hammam, saunas, relaxed rooms and jacuzis. It is equally attributed particular detach
to aesthetic care, which in the last years have been evidencing an increasing demand. The Spa(s) exist for several forms, namely, the spas integrated in hotels complexes; the thermal station spas; the winter sports spas and also, the urban spas.

The European thermal culture was deeply influenced for an old, long and strong past capsized to water cult, where material imagination was being founded excellence pure substance. In this direction, it was always through innovator experience from several civilizations – egyptian, celtic, gaul, moor and turk (between others) – and based in greco-roman heritage, that the same water (specially mineral water), progressively became the main reference and health and well-being citizens increment. However, despite thermal resorts have initially been frequented for powerful aristocracy, they progressively became frequented, due to structural changes occurred in occidental and central Europe (Ferreira, 2003).

During XX century, tourism progressively attracted medium classes from the more develop countries, reaching later to popular classes. In this way, a tourism initially elitist was transformed into a practice or massive activity and in a frank growth important economic activity. This substantive past, lived deeply to the water rhythm and in the going to waters, was being crucial disclosed to leisure prosperity, where a supplied clientele could enjoy the exercise and bath likeness. In this way, in many cases, the hydrotherapy illness treatment transformed itself into exceptional luxury holidays, of pleasure and revitalization in some european countries marked for some contrasts.

For opposition, if we consider a supply almost exclusively constituted for classic treatments, with a duration of fourteen to twenty one days, it is easily to understand the problem that the major european thermal resorts have faced in it’s yield infrastructures and equipments, essentially due to some reduction in the number of thermalists. The french and portuguese cases testify that situation, that we illustrate in figure 1. It is also important to point out, the excellence place the german thermal market has comparatively with those, whose comparative data are also exposed.
In this direction, recognizing that new development thermal european models seats into supply diversification and innovation, through the creation of specific products and adequate to each market segment, so, it seems we can identify an evaluative board, characterized for a thermalism directed to health and not illness, the opposite of what has been happened in some European tourism resorts. The Jesse, F. and Williams (1934, p.162) affirmation is a good testimony of that:

“Health like illness absence is a mediocre ness norm; health like quality of life is a norm to enthusiasm and perfection”.

Having verified a permanent and opportune evolution of this concept, specially adapted to new market requirements and accelerated life rhythms, Thermalism have been in last twenty years insistently boarded, in a transversal perspective, which means not to reduce it to pure medicinal source, but associate it to more healthy life dimensions, even such option sometimes it does without it’s illness treatment boarded, although it include another kind of boarders: preventive, playful and well-being. The truth is that will never do without the water and its effects, considering the same mineral water the honey-poot of all activity. In this direction, facing the evidence of the new paradigmatic modernity contours, the thermal resorts revitalization, while excellence tourism destinations, shall it be support in the new thermal/tourist concept? (see Ramos, A., 2005).
“3. METHODOLOGY”.

Considering the evidenced contrasts from the major thermal portuguese and french resorts, as well as Germanic, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, that praise distinct politics and administration and management forms, applied to different contexts, it was looked to analyse different action perspectives, that took to most modern Thermal fundamentals evolutions, allowing to fit and analyse evolutions occurred in different countries and thermal realities and also, it’s actual politics development thermal model.

Thus, the French analyse case pointed to a new development context, being imperative, in accordance with Mr. Alain-Gérard Cohen (1998) that French thermalism expands to a new thermalism, revalorised and playful, which try to associate thermal water potentialities to health performances, inspired in already regular internationally development experiences and models, specially the german case.

In this direction, the fact that Germanic civilizations countries, German, Austria and Switzerland have been constituted a solid and vanguard block of thermal conception and, the fact that Germany is today recognize as the first european country in thermal resorts issues with high frequency levels, as well as, diversification services offered (Ramos, A., 2005), constituted the nuclear factors to select the german case, as one of the excellence cases and analyse, to the transversal european thermal sector knowledge, from implemented politics and limitations felt in last years. The skilful and ingenious classic illness treatment combination and joint, with multiples activities related to complete body/spirit/soul preservation, for one side, the big thermal resorts dimension, for another, and it’s vast geographic widening, as well as, the usual closeness practice, have made this market, and specially, this activity, one of the german ex-libris, which is important to adapt to portuguese reality, inside the evaluated spirit parameters and organizational philosophy.

Rethinking the adoption of new portuguese thermalism measures, as well as analysing different portuguese thermal sensibilities, from an empirical study, supported in the german case and from possible measures and politics adaptations to lusa situation, constituted the bigger essence to the research objectives realization and concretization, namely:

a) that thermal revitalization that nowadays urges considerate, relate not only with a new health concept agreement, but also, with the new markets emergence;

b) that the thermal resorts should constitute it selves like tourist resorts with strong attractiveness, receiving a more demanding, diversified and increasingly engaged people;

c) that portuguese thermal revitalization should repositioning, as well as diversified structures and illness treatment, preventive, but also playful, recreation and well-being activities.

After the theoretician model presentation and pondered different analysis of referred model implicit questions, it was an objective reinforce all theoretician contextualization with an empirical research based on Portuguese case. Thus, identified all the strongest thermalism lines, some of it’s constraints and also, new and innovators dynamics printed in of some thermal resorts, so as it became truly attractive to all diversified populations sectors, it was necessary to understand and explain the underlying dimensions of a thermalism model, that could adapt to new portuguese reality characterized for an increasing worry with health capital and with all ways to consolidate it.
In this direction, the Delphy Technic was applied through questionnaires/ interviews to a twelve specialists panel, constituted for three professionals sets related to Tourism/ Thermalism activities, namely, University Teachers (4), Public Administration entities with relevant professional act in portuguese Tourism and Thermalism areas (4) and, Concessionaires of some Portuguese thermal resorts (4). Moreover, with the end of reaching an equilibrium in tendencies presented answers, it was selected a similar number in the three sets. Although not proceeded to new rounds, because the main objective didn’t consisted so much in reaching theoretical consensus (like the own literature point out), but in collecting information that could allow and command the investigation (see for example, Gupta & Clarke, 1996, p. 184), all the stipulated Delphi rules were respected (Ramos, A., 2005, p. 355).

In intention to corroborate and reinforce the qualitative analyse and decurrently the necessity of recognize and select pertinent information related to thermal renovation/revitalization of a new thermal resort conception, where tourism assume a widely and complementary dimension in fundamental activities, it was also carried out a quantitative study in Continental Portugal to all thermal resorts, through statistical and probabilities support, so that it was possible generalise some conclusions.

The population target of applied inquiries was constituted for thermal Managers / Administrators or Concessionaires; Clinic Directors / Doctors; Technical Directors and Directors or health-resorts Responsible. The selected statistical treatment data program was SPSS, version 12.0, to windows operative system. The elaboration or the respective evaluation instrument - TERGAL Questionnaire- had also a great orientation matrix, not only in exploratory results, through specialize connoisseurs, but also the great ten thermal paradigms (Ramos, A., 2005, p. 311):

**P1-** Except time periods well contextualized, along history the original thermalism was characterized for particulars euphoria and enchantment, where thermal resorts emerge like privileges places for meetings and pleasures associates to water and it’s stimulant strong ness territorial environment.

**P2-** The Thermalism was associated to a kind of elitism, where thermal resorts were displaced like excellence tourism locals for everyone who was looking for vigour, satisfaction and well-being in a social prestige and pleasure share, that pushed them there.

**P3-** Until the first final XX half century, the widely Thermalism hegemony appears included in a strategically vision applied to thermal resorts and a factors set associated with leisure, well-being and personal satisfaction and also, not understanding the thermalist like inertia condemned, consider him a excellence tourist.

**P4-** The thermal resorts increased, developed and assumed like uneven territories, associated with non work, where leisure was felt like a propitiator high standard well-being way, which evolved progress, better functioning potential and specially, the all BEING individuals integration (body, mind and spirit) in stimulant and harmonious environment.

**P5-** Although, the State interference the several great thermal tradition european societies, through social politics implementation, adulterated the reigning spirit until then, leading the thermalism to more or less profound crises and thermal image changes (portuguese, french and even german cases).

**P6-** On the other hand, along second half XX century, the State-step weakness, substantially reducing thermal citizens co participation, provoked high breakings in thermal frequency, which comes to accent Portuguese and European thermalism stagnation and discredit.

**P7-** The type of clients changes related to non-investment and lethargy originated irreversible debits in thermal image associating it specially to illness and melancholy, oldeness and dead.
P8- Such fact, associated to thermal massification, resultant from widely social com-participations, made dilute the symbolic issue thermal activity, originating the shunting line supported for elites, luxury and quality life, and thermal pleasure, which saw it selves reduced to social subventions each time more fragile, and accented non-investments, that resulted tragic to general thermal development.

P9- Although, the major Thermalism crisis emerge when illness overlaps health and tourism is deducted to thermal activity.

P10- Closed in this thermal adverse cycle to Thermalism, it seems to (re)born a new culture linked to water and it’s benefits, a new vitality wave, a new pleasure source and physical (re)equilibrium – a new thermal cycle – that urges to consolidate and not waste, facing the new emergent markets.

Due to the fact research became complex in research methodologies using, it was evidenced crucial the using of related techniques in quality and quantitative projects, like we tried to produced in figure 2, also evidencing fundamental, the diversified theoreticians contextualization background that could support obtained data from quality and quantitative analysis.

**Figure 2**

**Research Process**

In a global perspective, the inquiry supply evidenced a clear negativism facing the actual Portuguese thermal context. This negativism is well shaped in participants perceptions, due to the following factors:

a) the obsolete and non actualization legal support, excessive focus in illness and few attention to the new market segments (with the implicit plural public motivations unfamiliarity);

b) the unfamiliarity architectural, precharity thermal establishments infrastructures, lack hotels units quality and adapted to new sources that thermalism should considerate (illness treatments, preventive and playful), portuguese thermalism subordinated to Social Security subventions, as well as to seasonality, that has characterized the thermal time, portuguese thermalism necessity in constitute itself like an alternative tourism destination (offering diversified and quality services), necessity of thermal resorts recover the prestige and pleasure image of long ago;

c) worry due to a strong ness management model focalized in tradition (disclosed for weak diversification, with interaction and plural functionality almost inexistent and very supported for illness treatments), resorts relatively segregated from the environment community, economically survivors and necessitating progress;

e) the marketing is pointed out like inexistent or inadequate, the link to Trade and Tourism is reduce, focus in a restrictive public, few financial capacities and consequent restructuring and competitiveness difficulties, linkage necessity to local communities (to efficient interaction with closer thermal resorts, so as it can harness the existent resources and foment the regions development).

Thus, the inquiries declared urgency in implementing a new thermal cycle, in giving answers to emergent demand interests, to direct the supply to prevention, leisure and well being, revitalize and restructuring the thermal identity, because it’s adjournment can definitely implicate a shunting line from potential market to others supplies with less potentialities. From effectuated analysis, it was also possible to conclude that the responsible for thermal revitalization acknowledge the inevitable complimentarily, not only intern (complimentarily between the therapeutic and playful sources, infrastructures modernization and equipment actualization), but also, the external complimentarily (implementation of several playful-sport activities and preservation and planning physical spaces), that each time more emphasize and appeal, beyond Health Capital consolidation, the thermalism playful-touristic programs integration.

This appeal well evidenced for thermal supply to complimentarily is based in the figure of thermalist/tourist (concept complementarily), in the change thermal image apology focus in knowledge and divulgation of the multiple resorts potentialities and not in ignorance or non knowledge (culture complementarities), in the thermal resorts prestige increment near public opinion and in the diversification hotels units type, trough infrastructures readjustment trying to evidence the playful/touristic source (strategies complementarily), in the image change focusing health and not illness, in definition/clarification target segments and respective services introduction related to touristic source and tourism (models complementarily), as well as in the definition of a brand image, which promote a specific identity to each thermal resorts (objectives complementarily).

On the other hand, the inquiry supply is very conscience of possible difficulties that the thermal portuguese restructuring will cause, namely the bureaucratic difficulties, the partnerships development with environment community, investments captation, financial difficulties, legal-juridical difficulties,
diversified services operation and “thermal” brand affirmation while Portugal tourism destination. Thus, it were pointed out socio-political opportunities related to alternative tourism destinations emergence, to existent natural resources and to the affirmation thermal potentialities comparatively with financial captation opportunities, thermal sector investments and structural opportunities.

In short, the information and restructuring pointed out for the refereed specialized connoisseurs assume a dynamic background, where complementarily evidence a peculiar and systemic sense rambling between integration and differentiation in an intervention reconstructive attempt, internal and external thermal resorts levels, which was tried to translate for figure 3.

**Figure 3**
**Restructuring Thermal Model**

![Restructuring Thermal Model](image)

**Source:** Ramos, A., 2005, p.367; Ramos, A., 2007 (adapted).
“5. THE QUALITY AND INNOVATION IN THERMAL TOURISM DESTINATION”.

Considering that the total quality management importance in tourism industry have been increasing extraordinary, due to tourists preferences changes and to the competitiveness increasing of new tourism destinations, the quality became in a decisive efficiency factor and competitiveness in tourism market (Camisón, 1996, cited for Santos, R., 2004). Thus, in future, the touristic competitiveness will not base only in political prices, but fundamentally in quality service, in the capacity to reach high liability levels and guarantee service (Ceballos y Vidal, 1998, cited for Santos, R., 2004).

In this direction, the scientific thermal tourism destinations credibility has to consider the thermal treatments standardization with it’s certification end trough instituted norms for European Thermal Association (ESPA). The brand EUROSPA adhesion offer several benefits to thermal resorts adherents, namely facing tourism operators and offering to potential thermalists the possibility to find the best health-resort that better adapt to their necessities and preferences (Zálesáková, 2006; Plachý, 2006). The certification would be a way to bet in european thermal services valorisation, modernization and divulgation

Thus, the Quality System implementation will be possible trough a better work organization, a better processes control, the establishment of what and how it is made, the execution of what was written and proves offer, the actions definition to introduce and maintain the system quality and finally, the work recognition of each one (Instituto Português da Qualidade, cited for Santos, R., 2004). Although, in 1998 Gürtler said that the last System Management Quality objective must be the client satisfaction and this means to exceed their expectations. The client recognize the ratio price/performance and judge services in terms of what was offered and what was spent (value for money). If today quality norms still represent a recommendation, in near future will be an obligation and also, will be fundamental that economic agents has it’s previous knowledge, so that hasn’t to support additional costs in adaptations, that could be prevented if they maintain informed (Santos, R., 2007).

In other hand, it is precisely trough the new outbreak from European level Health Tourism expansion that thermal resorts should constitute it selves like privileged spaces to obtain and promote quality of life. If the thermal resorts don’t do it, other entities or enterprises groups will do it, becoming highly competition to thermal resorts, because easily moved, although reduced from the main issue – the mineral water. Thus, the research investment, that consider geologic/hidrogeologic regional and local studies, to obtain orientation lines for the mineral water protection (Silva, 2006; Storch, 2006), is another parameter that must be introduced in the quality and innovation thermal tourism destinations model, due to it’s characteristics and potentialities that are the differentiator element.

Being Tourism essentially a regional/territorial issue, it’s great challenge should precisely consider the enrichment, preservation and introduction of more values in those spaces, with the end that only the care integration environment and adequately to it’s function and dimension infrastructures, could direct to it’s sustainability. The European Thermal Resorts should also integrate those territories, with increased interest to tourism activities, where the inclusion of different economic actors should contribute to the areas harmonious development, most of it situated in less favourable regions. In this direction, the sector adaptation to sustainable development concept, that essentially focus:

“in the resources sustainable use, abusive consumption and wastes reduction, diversity maintenance, social economic support, local communities commitment, professionals and public advices, active people sector sustainable tourism integration capacity, responsible tourism marketing and research”
(OMT, cited for Eber, 1992: 3), which also constitute another innovation and quality guarantee parameter to introduce in the new thermal tourism destinations vision model.

A sustainable tourism destination is the one that adopts planning measures set globalize and executable in the long term, which extend itself to all life cycle stadiums and contemplate it’s general economic, socio-cultural and environment development (Valls et al, 2000). The principles and practices referred to environments, economics and socio-cultures aspects of tourism development and to an adequate equilibrium that must be established between the optimization using environments resources, the respect for local communities authenticity, socio-economic benefits supply to all stakeholders, to informed participation of those more relevant, as well as a strong leadership politic (WTO, 2004).

To reach this differentiator and quality guarantee parameter, thermal tourism destinations sustainability will depend, not only from those principles and practices concretization, but also must be faced like a continuous process, that implicate the continuous impacts monitoring and the high level tourists satisfaction maintenance. All of this will be reflected in better decisions making, in the identification of risk factors (prevention), in the responsibility evaluation and even, in the continuous improvement of these thermal tourism destinations.

Beyond the holistic sustainable boarding adoption in european thermal tourism destinations, it’s competitiveness must also considerate the determinants qualification and magnifying that interrelate to security, cost, image, load capacity, nature and relations interdependency with other destinies (see Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). Being these destinies the activities complex consume point that include the tourist experience to finally been commercialized trough tourist promotion market agencies, this innovator model still seats in sustainable thermal tourism destination singularity marketing, like privileges spaces to quality life improvement, not relinquishing the importance of services scientific quality promotion through certification, as well as thermal waters characteristics and potentialities, that are the differentiator element.

The creation of a thermal tourism destination brand, would be a way to reach a stable global and high value added support, that would fix in tourists mind, identifying and representing it’s products, values, feelings, experiences, style of life, as well as integrant entrepreneur groups from this wallet products, in a way that could clearly differentiate in terms of competence and translate symbols that would be recognize for their publics, offering them a liable information.

It is to point out, that some possible difficulties pointed for portuguese thermal supply inquiries related to thermal restructuring implementation, focused in bureaucratic difficulties, partnerships development with environment community, legal-juridical and financing difficulties, diversified services operation and in “thermal” brand affirmation, while tourism destination. The thermalism touristic-playful programs integration (so well implemented and evidenced for german case), the certification norms instituted through European Thermal Association (ESPA), the research investment in geologic/hidrogeologic regional and local studies and the implementation of a sustainable holistic boarding in thermal tourism destinations, still conjugated with a professional marketing based in thermal tourism destinations singularity, represent the innovation and quality elements with potential to be able to skirt actual difficulties in thermal supply, therefore the fact that these are today considerate like nuclear factors to increase the frequency thermalists/tourists number, the financial difficulties could be brightened up.
“6. CONCLUSION”.

Recognizing the german thermalism originality comparatively with traditional models analysed (portuguese and french), like a good practices case but, fundamentally as a thermal development model, where anticipation and wormness with necessities and motivations markets, were the helm of a well succeed politic, not only in thermal activity, but also to thermal tourism, the description of the german new thermal paradigm and it’s association to change strategies, more value stimulators in terms of performance and competitiveness, constituted one of the great research pillars, with the end to demonstrate that thermal resorts are today a services mix offer, where it is possible to conciliate the programs diversity with thermal illness treatment classicism, through the organizational knowledge integration translated in the uneven development sector.

It was with a empirical study base, supported for a previous theoretical body and in the german excellence example case, as well as from the possible measures and politics adaptations to lusa situation, that it proceeded to Delphi technique application and a portuguese thermal model quantitative analysis, being this last, contributed to corroborate and reinforce the results already obtained through the qualitative analysis. The conclusions allowed to confirm that thermal revitalization must consider the undeniable concepts complementarily, cultures complementarily, strategies complementarily, models complementarily and objectives complementarily, or either, not only internal level complementarily, but also external level complementarily, that emphasize and appeal even more, beyond Health Capital consolidation, the thermalism touristic-playful programs integration.

This is the way that is praises for portuguese thermalism, or either, to look to thermal resorts like credible tourism destinations with value added, with future and international projection, affirming itself like a product with unquestionable importance to touristic supply, a time that exist great quality raw material, natural and edified excellence patrimony, a long thermal tradition and an emergent demand. Therefore, the portuguese thermal resorts are armed with an enormous potential that the respective supply shall equalize, disclosing a great capacity to bet in therapeutic source, but also in quality component hotels supply, in nature contact, in local gastronomy, in environment requalification, in human resources qualification and in leisure products diversified supply.

In this direction, the european thermal tourism destination new vision model, point to reconversion and rehabilitation routes and strategies in thermal activity, through a professional marketing that seats in it’s more classical boarding articulation (illness treatments character) with a more playful boarding (leisure and well-being character), that not only respect these concepts complementarily and regional and local environment complementarily, but also consider the sustainable holistic boarding implementation, the quality services valorisation and modernization, through it’s certification and even, the singular thermal waters characteristics and potentialities, that are the differentiator element.

“7. REFERENCES”.


