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Demand and Preference for Massage Services as Part of Well-Being among Generation Z and BB – Selected Issues

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Abstract

Theoretical background: Well-being, recreation, and relaxation, including massage, are now important elements of a healthy lifestyle. The market for massage services offers a range of options for different recipient groups with varying preferences, but the market in Poland remains relatively unknown. Therefore, it is essential to identify consumer demand and preferences and develop an offering that meets their needs.

Purpose of the article: This study presents pilot results regarding the demand for and preferences for massage services, conducted among representatives of Generations BB and Z in Central Europe (Poland, Lublin), as a component of well-being and a measure of societal development. The research sample was

purposive. It stemmed from the need to identify and compare the demand for massage services between two generations, differing in many respects, allowing for the creation of profiles for both client groups.

Research methods: The research was conducted in 2024 among 236 Gen Z and 78 Gen BB using a survey method, with PAPI and CAWI techniques, as well as snowball sampling. The obtained data were subjected to descriptive statistics measures, including structure, mean values, standard deviation (SD), and correlation.

Main findings: Despite their age differences, the groups analyzed often showed similar preferences regarding massage services. Both groups prefer relaxation and therapeutic massages lasting 30–60 minutes. They are almost equally interested in anti-wrinkle massages at SPAs and wellness centers, though older customers are also interested in home services. An assessment of the factors indicates a rise in demand for these services in both groups, showing a strong correlation. The survey results can serve as a valuable source of market information for companies providing such services, helping them tailor their offerings to meet customer needs and achieve various marketing objectives.

Introduction

In recent years, the service sector has experienced remarkable growth worldwide. The increasing importance of services, which meet a broader range of human needs, results from the development of civilization and directly impacts changes in consumption patterns. Consequently, the expansion of the service sector remains a key trend in modern economies. As the third sector of the economy, services encompass all activities (excluding agriculture and industry) that provide intangible benefits rather than tangible goods. This encompasses activities such as trade, banking, transportation, tourism, healthcare, and others (OECD, 2000). Well-developed economies are characterized by the interaction of two important trends: an increased role of services in the economy, and an increased role of knowledge in the technological and social innovation development process (Matysiewicz, 2017). A crucial indicator of well-being in a developed society is the overall quality of life, which includes physical and mental health, as well as the ability to function socially (Bartyzel-Lechforowicz et al., 2011). These aspects are part of sustainable development, which aims to make progress in three main areas: the economy, society, and the environment. They are particularly important in unstable and, in many respects, unclear realities resulting from constant changes in the socio-economic, legal, technological, and environmental spheres (Stepanok, 2024). Therefore, “we can talk about wellbeing when a person, among other things, realizes his or her potential, can cope with stress, builds mental resilience, feels satisfaction and joy in life, appreciates himself or herself, develops relationships, remains physically active, and takes care of his or her health” (Ryff, 2014, p. 11). The issue of well-being, referring to various contexts of human functioning, has become extremely popular in contemporary social sciences (Baran et al., 2024). Well-being, recreation, and leisure have become important elements of a healthy lifestyle. A key factor in the success of services in the market is understanding how consumer opinions and preferences develop. Therefore, there is a noticeable rise in researchers’ interest in consumers’ attitudes, motives, and behaviors across various markets, given the impact of current economic, social, demographic, and cultural changes. Learning what consumers expect

from services and the factors that influence their choices helps improve offerings, adjust features, and include the most desirable options. Consumer preferences are subjective judgments that guide consumers when choosing a service. The presence of preferences depends on the ability to select from many options. Studying preferences allows for the comparison of subjective evaluations and the gain of insights into the needs and desires that influence consumer decisions.

This study aimed to identify and compare the demand and preferences for massage services among young Generation Z individuals (Jayatissa, 2023) and retirees from Generation B (Slagsvold & Hansen, 2021). The study examined preferences for massage, the location and timing of the treatment, factors important in choosing a treatment location, and factors that could encourage more frequent use of this service. The literature on the subject lacks in-depth analyses of the specific role of massage services as an element of well-being in an intergenerational perspective, which is the main research gap addressed in the article. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the demand and preferences for massage services in Poland. The following research problems were set:

What are the preferred types of massage among Gen BB and Z respondents?

What are the types and frequency of massage use among Gen Z and BB respondents?

What are the preferences for massage and massaged body parts of Gen Z and BB respondents?

What is the declarative future demand for particular types of massage among Gen Z and BB respondents?

What factors are important in choosing a massage place among Gen Z and BB respondents?

What are the factors determining the increase in demand for massage services among the Gen BB and Z respondents, and those who have not yet used massage services?

What is the profile of the consumer of massage services – the customer of Gen Z and BB?

Literature review

Additionally, economic growth and advances in medical science are driving demographic shifts, including a steady rise in life expectancy and a growing share of older adults in populations. The Silver Tsunami refers to the large-scale aging of European societies. This senior segment is now a significant, diverse, and increasingly wealthy group of consumers with varied needs. It includes individuals from Gen BB, born between 1946 and 1964, who are now in their fifties, sixties, and seventies, many of whom are or are nearing retirement. More often than not, they are not just recipients of medicines and standard medical services but are also actively interested in

services provided by fitness clubs, dance classes, SPA & Wellness centers, including massage therapies. Since a considerable part of this group values life, health, and new experiences, the stereotype that they are inactive is becoming outdated. Conversely, the stress-related effects of modern civilization have increased demand for massage services among younger people, fueling rapid growth in the sector (Barković Bojanić et al., 2024). Furthermore, there is a rising level of consumer activity across demographic groups, with members paying close attention to self-care and showing concern for their health. For example, the massage market includes segments Gen Z, born between 1995 and 2012 (Jayatissa, 2023), and Millennials from the 1980s, who have grown up in a culture emphasizing self-care and healthy lifestyles (Grobelna & Marciszewska, 2013). Resiak-Urbanowicz (2012) believes that the main trends in the development of massage services are the aging population and socio-cultural changes, including lifestyle changes. For example, an aging population can create new health needs that can be addressed through SPA treatments. At the same time, it is becoming essential to develop offerings for young people, who will benefit from the relaxing properties of such services for their health. Changes in consumer trends and lifestyles, and increased health awareness among both older and younger generations, are driving demand for these services. Additionally, today's consumers seek sensations and unique experiences; therefore, the popularity of services offering new, hedonistic experiences is rising. The growing individualism, exemplified by the increase in single-person households and the trend of life singularization, also influences demand for personalized services tailored to individual needs.

It is predicted that the growth in demand for massage services will be driven by two main factors: rising population wealth and rapid aging, partly due to longer life expectancy among European citizens. In 2023, life expectancy for both genders was 78.21 years (men: 74.65 years, women: 81.99 years) (GUS, 2023a), and projections indicate it will continue to increase, reaching an average of 83 years and almost 89 years in 2050, respectively (GUS, 2014). Advances in medicine now allow for earlier and more accurate disease diagnosis, leading to more effective treatments, along with healthier lifestyles, changing diets, and government initiatives that create better conditions for life, work, education, physical activity, and recreation, all of which help improve the health of Poles and extend their life spans. Life expectancy is also significantly influenced by education level. The higher the level of education, the more likely individuals are to adopt a health-conscious lifestyle, follow proper diets, reduce alcohol and nicotine use, increase physical activity, and seek medical advice when necessary (Li & Powdthavee, 2015).

An important factor driving change and shaping new market trends, including the use of massage services, is the increase in consumer wealth, which allows more money to be allocated to the upper needs. Idzikowski (2014) emphasizes that a key element in the development of the beauty market, including well-being and massage services, is the media content delivered, highlighting the cult of beauty. For example, the BB generation, described as “forever young,” aims to define its place in life

and society differently, aided by its financial prosperity and ample free time, which leads to, among other things, a willingness to use services that support maintaining a youthful body and mind (Angus & Westbrook, 2019).

As mentioned above, with the increasing spread of societies, the increase of civilization and infectious diseases, changes in consumer trends, a large part of society is interested in a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Hence, an important aspect of a healthy lifestyle is well-being, prevention, treatment, and part of experiencing and achieving it can be undergoing massage treatments. Massage is a form of influence on the human body through mechanical stimuli, which are various touch techniques, performed at a specific pace and with the appropriate force. The techniques used during a massage make this treatment pleasant and relaxing, and positively contribute to the healing process. Massage is a safe and effective therapy. It brings beneficial effects, especially in chronic ailments (Cherkin et al., 2003). Massages are performed in rehabilitation centers, SPAs, wellness centers, massage parlors, beauty salons, and individually at the client's home. There are about 12,500 independent massage parlors in Poland unrelated to medical or recreational activities (Kozicka-Puch, 2011).

In general, massages can be categorized as Eastern and Western. Eastern massages have a much longer history, dating back to 3000 BC. The earliest records of massage were discovered in China, India, and Egypt. Western massage, however, was pioneered by Greek physician Hippocrates (Iorio et al., 2018; Jutrzenka-Jesion et al., 2018). Another category of massage is therapeutic, cosmetic, and relaxation. Therapeutic massage is used in the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of many orthopedic, pediatric, gynecological, and neurological conditions. Recently, many new forms of massage have been developed and are increasingly utilized in treatment, such as lymphatic massage (Williams, 2010), isometric massage (Boguszewski et al., 2020), periosteal massage (de Permentier, 2014), connective tissue massage (Goats & Keir, 1991), tensegrity massage (Kassolik & Andrzejewski, 2010), centrifugal massage (Perlman, 2006), segmental massage (Kobza et al., 2017), deep tissue massage (Wytrązek et al., 2013), sports massage (Brummitt, 2008), and others. Cosmetic massage is typically performed on the face, neck, and décolleté, but is also recommended for the entire body. The goal is to maintain skin and muscle supplementation (Marxen et al., 2023). Relaxation massage is performed similarly to therapeutic massage, but its primary focus is on promoting relaxation rather than offering therapeutic benefits. According to the principles of natural medicine, relaxation massage helps restore psychosomatic balance disrupted by stressful situations. An indirect factor influencing the effectiveness of relaxation massage is the overall ambiance of the space, including calming music, warm-colored lighting, pastel wall hues, and the aroma of candles or essential oils (Lee et al., 2011; Palejko et al., 2020).

The beneficial effects of massage on human health have been proven. Massage, depending on its duration and location, has localized and overall effects on the skin, connective tissue, muscles, and ligamentous system, as well as on various circulatory, nervous, respiratory, urinary, and digestive systems. Therefore, it influences the

body's metabolism and vitality. It is recommended for skin conditions, musculoskeletal issues, and weaknesses in specific systems (circulatory, nervous, respiratory, and digestive), as well as for rheumatic, pediatric, and occupational diseases.

Massage helps treat pain by decreasing muscle tension and mental stress. Frey Law et al. (2008) showed that people receiving massage use fewer medications and that massage has positive, long-lasting effects on chronic lower back pain. Many other studies also confirm the effectiveness of massage as a supportive treatment for back pain (Chatchawan et al., 2005; Field et al., 2007; Furlan et al., 2009; Orlikowska et al., 2017; Preyde, 2000). Robison and Smith (2016) demonstrated that massage reduced pain, fatigue, nausea, and anxiety in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy or biotherapy.

Massage increases oxytocin levels, a hormone that triggers positive emotions and promotes social interactions. It also decreases adrenocorticotrophic hormone, which stimulates the release of the stress hormone (Morhenn et al., 2012). Darabpour et al. (2016) studied the effects of Swedish massage on improving mood disorders in women with breast cancer undergoing radiation therapy. According to evidence-based research, IM therapies such as massage, meditation, and relaxation enhance the management of pain, anxiety, and stress symptoms, and increase feelings of well-being and satisfaction in hospitalized patients (Boguszewski et al., 2020; de Permentier, 2014).

Massage activates the circulatory system through reflex, hormonal, and mechanical mechanisms, leading to dilation of blood vessels, increased blood flow, and improved delivery of oxygen and nutrients to tissues. Heart rate is slowed by impulses from pressor (baroreceptors) in the carotid sinus wall, which respond to stretching during blood ejection from the heart, sending signals to the vagus nerve nucleus and the depressor part of the vasomotor center (Fahim, 2003). Supa'at et al. (2013) compared the effects of Swedish massage and one-hour rest on blood pressure, heart rate, and vascular endothelial adhesion molecules, finding that both activities significantly decreased these parameters. Additionally, head and face massage has proven to be an effective nursing intervention for improving sleep in patients after coronary artery bypass grafting. Because head and face massage are simple and rewarding for patients, it is recommended as a useful adjunct to medication and postoperative care in these patients (Ozudi et al., 2023).

Massage enhances muscle endurance, strength, efficiency, and flexibility. It also benefits bone health by promoting ossification through better nutrition of bone tissue and preventing degenerative changes (Weerapong et al., 2005).

Research methods

Data for analysis were collected through empirical research conducted in Central Europe, specifically in Poland (Lublin), from January 2025 to April 2025. A proprietary questionnaire was used, consisting of 11 closed questions (single- and multi-

ple-choice) and two open-ended questions for self-answering. The survey targeted individuals aged 18–29 who are full-time and part-time students at the University of Life Sciences in Lublin (majoring in Biocosmetology, Bioengineering, Economics, Crisis Management, and Dietetics) and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (majoring in Journalism and Social Communication and Political Science). Additionally, the study included people over 60, mostly members of the University of the Third Age or involved in activities such as Senior Citizens' Clubs. Respondents from these groups represent Generation Z and Baby Boomers, respectively. The sample was deliberately selected to compare the demand and preferences for massage services between two very different generations, considering their consumption of goods and services. To eliminate design errors, the sheet was validated, i.e., piloted among ten students and five retirees, and the questions were corrected. As a result of the research, a data set consisting of 314 responses was collected, including 236 students and 78 retirees. A triangulation of research techniques was employed: face-to-face interviews using the PAPI method with an anonymous questionnaire, and the CAWI method with an online survey distributed via a link to potential respondents (Table 1). Both surveys contained identical questions and covered the same topics. To reach retirees, who are harder to access, snowball sampling was used, where participating retirees, after giving consent, recruited others from their circle of friends and family, following brief instructions on how to conduct the survey. The questionnaire explained the purpose of the research, how to answer questions correctly (both closed and open), and assured the anonymity of responses. Since buyer preferences vary widely, efforts have been made to profile the massage consumer and their preferences. The analysis incorporated demographic (age) and economic (income) factors. For simplicity, respondents aged 20–29 are referred to as students or Generation Z (Gen Z), while those over 60 are retirees or Generation BB (Gen BB) (Table 2).

Table 1. Respondent characteristics based on selected economic and demographic factors

	In total		Students		Retirees	
	Amount	Structure in %	Amount	Structure in %	Amount	Structure in %
All	314	100.0	236	100.0	78	100.0
Income (PLN):						
≤3,000	264	84.1	216	91.5	48	61.5
3,001–5,000	43	13.7	13	5.5	30	39.5
>5,000	7	2.2	7	3.0	0	0.0

Source: Authors' own study.

First, the demand and preferences for massage services were examined among individuals who answered affirmatively to the inclusive question: Have you ever used massage services? The survey questionnaire then asked about, among other things, the type and frequency of massage use, preferred body areas for massage, preferred payment methods, place of service, duration of treatment, the significance of other factors influencing the choice of service location, and factors that could

increase future demand for massage services. The importance of factors that might influence the interest of people who have never used such services was also evaluated. A 5-point Likert scale was used. The interpretation of the average responses, based on the 5-point scale, was as follows: 1–1.5 – *unimportant factor*; >1.5–2.5 – *somewhat unimportant*; >2.5–3.5 – *moderately important*; >3.5–4.5 – *important*; >4.5–5 – *very important*. The obtained average numerical values were assigned ranks, forming ranks of massage preferences for the surveyed groups of respondents. To assess the degree of correlation between the ranks of the determinants of choice in both groups of respondents, Spearman's rank correlation analysis was used. The correlation levels proposed by Akoglu (2018) were used to interpret the results.

The study has some limitations, including the fact that the survey was conducted among non-representative groups of Gen Z and BB and in only one city. The work is exploratory in nature. The main contribution of this study is not the generational comparison itself, but the application of this analytical framework to a specific and relatively under-researched category of services, namely massage services as part of wellness and well-being consumption. In the future, the authors plan to expand the survey to broader groups, taking into account various socio-economic factors. However, these results provide a benchmark for other researchers to study the services and business activities offered by massage parlors. The results can also be a valuable source of market information for companies that provide this type of service, helping them adapt their offerings to customer needs and achieve various marketing goals. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to analyze demand and preferences in the field under study in Poland.

Results and discussion

Massage is considered an alternative treatment, cosmetic service, or SPA therapy. Regardless of its purpose, it is viewed positively by consumers when performed by a professional. Ho et al. (2009) examined how the cerebral cortex is activated during a massage conducted by a trained massage therapist versus an untrained individual (control). Overall, all participants expressed satisfaction with the massage given by the therapist compared to the control. The study revealed that the brain's reward centers (nucleus accumbens, caudate, pons, thalamus, and OFC) were activated, corresponding to known dopamine projection areas and indicating a connection between pleasure and massage. Besides feelings of pleasure, clients also expect the therapy to be effective. Stewart-Richardson et al. (2024) demonstrated that simply being a professional massage therapist who executes techniques correctly is not enough for treatment success. It is crucial to address clients' individual needs and tailor massage techniques accordingly. A survey by the AMTA (American Massage Therapy Association) found that 39% of American adults have received a massage at least once in their lives (AMTA, 2024). In Australia, it was estimated that 20% of the population visits massage therapists

annually (Preyde, 2000). In a U.S.-Australian study by Li and Powdthavee (2015) involving health science students, just over a third (36%) reported having experienced a professional massage. According to a study by Harris et al. (2014), the percentage of the general population in six countries – the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Singapore, and South Korea – that visited massage therapists in the past 12 months ranged from 0.4 to 20%, with a median of 5.5%. In Australia, as many as 64% of middle-aged women visited massage therapists in the past year. Regardless of age, consumers in these countries were more likely to visit a massage therapist than practitioners of acupuncture (median 1.4%), homeopathy (median 1.5%), osteopathy (median 1.9%), or medical herbalism (median 0.9%). Only chiropractors (median 7.5%) were visited more frequently, primarily in Australia, Canada, and the US (Munk et al., 2020).

The results of the present study show that 42.4% of young consumers and 65.4% of older consumers have used massage services at some point in their lives. Among these respondents, different types of massage and varying frequencies were reported. The highest percentage of Gen Z representatives, 64.0%, are interested in relaxation massage, while Gen BB respondents mainly prefer therapeutic massage services, at 66.7% (Figure 1).

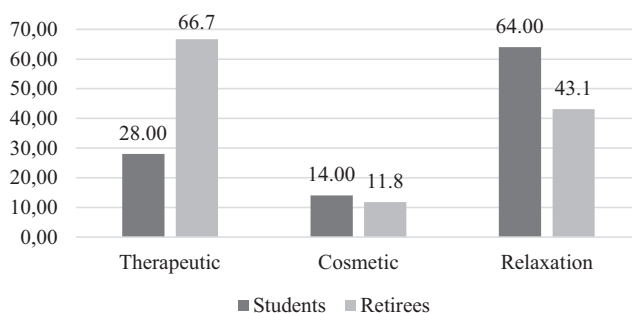


Figure 1. Preferred types of massage among surveyed representatives of Gen Z and BB ($n = 51$ and $n = 100$, in % of each group)

Source: Authors' own study.

In both respondent groups, therapeutic and relaxation massage were the most popular, with 80% and 60% of students and 98% and 52.9% of retirees, respectively, having used them at least once. However, therapeutic massage was more frequently used by members of Gen BB, with 37.3% having used it more than 10 times, and 25% having used it 3–4 and 5–6 times in their lifetime. The use of relaxation massage was less frequent in both groups, most often once, with 29.0% and 21.6% of respondents from each group, respectively (Table 2). This is confirmed by respondents' preference for paying for single sessions, with 55% and 39.2% of respondents from each group, respectively, preferring to pay for single treatments. This highlights the importance of informing the public that such treatments have short-term effects compared to a series of sessions. In an experiment by Groninger et al. (2023), it was shown that

among hospitalized patients with advanced disease receiving massage to improve quality of life, a “dose” of 10 or 20 minutes over three days produced a similar, and generally better, effect than a single 20-minute session.

Table 2. Type and frequency of massage use among surveyed representatives of Gen Z and BB (in % of each group)

Frequency of use	Type of massage					
	Therapeutic massage – selected parts of the body	Relaxing classical massage of the whole body	Lymphatic drainage of selected body parts	Head and face massage	Anti-wrinkle face massage	Anti-cellulite massage
Students						
Never	20.0	40.0	84.0	56.0	82.0	87.0
1 time	20.0	29.0	9.0	14.0	7.0	5.0
2–3 times	24.0	18.0	4.0	12.0	6.0	3.0
4–5 times	12.0	9.0	1.0	10.0	2.0	3.0
6–10 times	14.0	3.0	1.0	5.0	2.0	2.0
>10 times	10.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	0.0
Retirees						
Never	2.0	47.1	74.5	60.8	64.7	90.2
1 time	3.9	21.6	3.9	19.6	7.8	0.0
2–3 times	23.5	3.9	11.8	0.0	11.8	5.9
4–5 times	25.5	15.7	5.9	11.8	3.9	0.0
6–10 times	7.8	7.8	0.0	0.0	3.9	0.0
>10 times	37.3	3.9	3.9	7.8	7.8	3.9

Source: Authors’ own study.

Holistic body massage is preferred by 56% of students and 49% of retirees, respectively, and a specific body part is preferred by 44% and 51% of these respondents. Among them, 28% in both groups prefer a back massage. Retirees are also more likely to be interested in neck massage, while younger respondents tend to prefer head and face massages (Figure 2 and 3).

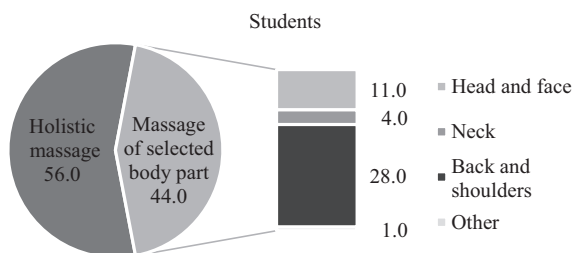


Figure 2. Preferences for massage and massaged body parts by surveyed representatives of Gen Z (in % of each group)

Source: Authors’ own study.

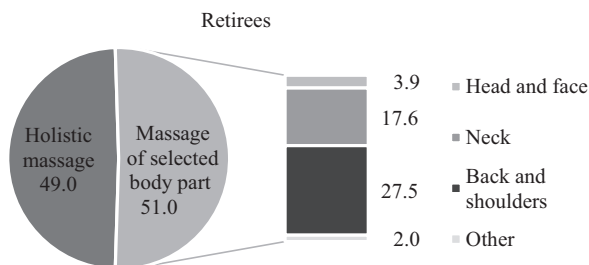


Figure 3. Preferences for massage and massaged body parts by surveyed representatives of Gen BB (in % of each group)

Source: Authors' own study.

Furthermore, respondents indicated that they might be interested in different types of massage in the future, but age had little influence on their preferences. Generally, members of Gen Z expressed more interest in various massage services (Figure 4). The highest percentage of Gen Z respondents indicated a need for neck, back, and shoulder massages (98%), classical massage (91%), and full-body relaxation (84%). Among retirees, the top three preferred massage treatments also included neck, back, and shoulder massages (82.4%), whole-body relaxation (76.5%), and an anti-aging facial (68.6%). Interestingly, even though they are young, 63% of students showed interest in anti-wrinkle facial massage. This may reflect the strong influence of beauty and appearance trends in the younger generation.

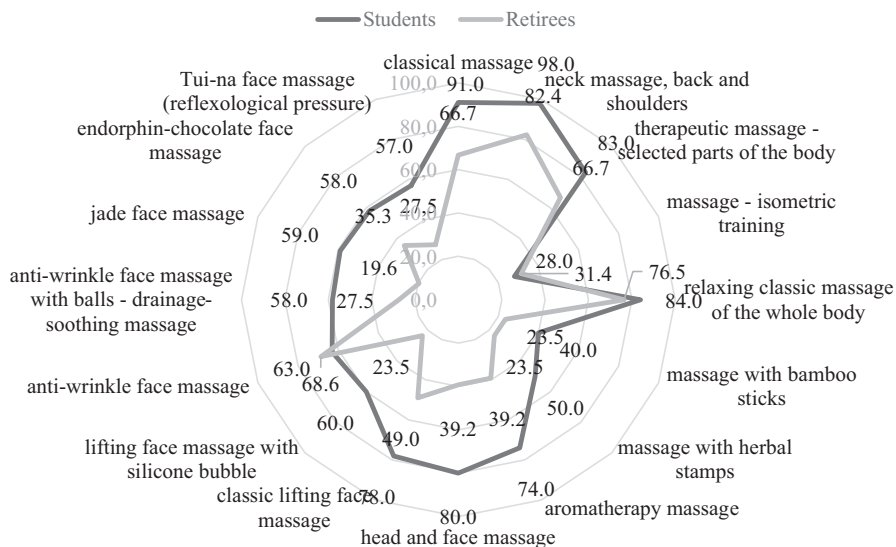


Figure 4. Declared, future-oriented demand for specific types of massage among surveyed representatives of Gen Z and BB (in % of each group)

Source: Authors' own study.

Furthermore, differences were observed in the preferences of both groups regarding more detailed service specifications. The majority of respondents from both groups preferred individual massage services, with 57.0% and 76.5% representing Generation Z and BB, respectively. Only younger respondents (16.0%) showed interest in massages with others, such as a partner; no respondents from the older age group indicated such a preference. Conversely, a higher percentage of BB generation members than Z generation members (41.2% and 21.0%, respectively) favored non-enriched massage treatments, 56% of young people preferred massage services enriched with additional substances (aromatizing or nourishing: chocolate, honey), compared to only 19.6% of older consumers. This suggests the potential to develop services that enhance treatment effectiveness through additional experiences, such as olfactory experiences. It has been shown that essential oils not only alleviate muscle pain but also help relax or stimulate the mind. The results of Hongratanaworakit et al. (2018) demonstrated that consumers most preferred and accepted an essential oil blend consisting of rosemary, lavender, patchouli, eucalyptus, and peppermint oils (BEOP1). Consumers were generally satisfied with carrier oil formulas made from sweet almond, grape seed, avocado, jojoba, and macadamia oils. The massage oil formula containing BEOP1, vitamin E acetate, isopropyl myristate, and carrier oils provided the best physical properties.

Regarding the duration of a massage treatment, most respondents from both groups prefer to spend 30–60 minutes (Table 3), with 65.2% of young consumers and 84.4% of older consumers. A small percentage from both groups are interested in short treatments of up to 30 minutes (13.5% and 15.6%), and about one-fifth of young consumers are interested in 60–90 minutes, while none of the BB generation representatives are. This shows a low awareness that even short massages, such as 5–15 minutes, can be very effective for certain conditions. Bayrakdaroglu et al. (2024) found that incorporating short-term Swedish massages (10–15 minutes) into pre-competition exercises can be a good strategy to improve dynamic balance. These massages can be done efficiently, making them suitable for athletes with busy competition schedules.

Table 3. Profile of massage service consumers – Gen Z and BB customers

Gen Z	Gen BB
Mainly interested in relaxation and therapeutic massage	Mainly interested in therapeutic and relaxation massage
Intrigued by whole body massage, but also selected parts, mainly neck, back, and shoulders, as well as anti-wrinkle massage	Mainly interested in massage of selected parts of the body, mainly neck, back, and shoulders, relaxation massage of the whole body, as well as anti-wrinkle massage
Preferred massage time 30–60 min	Preferred massage time 30–60 min
Preferred services in specialized offices, SPA & Wellness centers	Preferred services in specialized offices, but also at home and SPA & Wellness centers
Factors important in choosing a massage place: staff service, price, and range of services	Factors important in choosing a massage place: price, proximity to your place of residence, and staff service

Source: Authors' own study.

The experiences and preferences of the surveyed groups regarding where they used massage services also vary. Most respondents from both groups used massage services in specialized massage parlors, with 54.0% of surveyed Gen Z respondents and 76.5% of Gen BB doing so, or in beauty salons (Table 4). Older adults were far more likely than younger people to use massage services elsewhere. On average, one in five respondents aged 60+ received massage services at home, compared with only 4% of young consumers. Interestingly, a similar percentage of respondents from both groups – 18.0% and 19.5%, respectively – had massages at SPA & Wellness centers. The popularity of these centers reflects socio-economic changes, including increased societal affluence. Less than 4.0% of older consumers have used such services at a SPA. These survey results show that part of the “silver” segment is interested in new experiences, even with massage treatments, challenging the stereotype of retirees only using such services during SPA visits.

Table 4. Usage of massage services (in % of surveyed groups)

A place to use the massage	Students*	Retirees*
Massage parlors	54	76.5
Beauty parlors	17	23.5
Home	4	21.6
SPA & Wellness centers	18	19.6
Others, including:	15	23.5
• rehabilitation center	4	19.6
• shows	5	–
• sports centers	2	–
• physiotherapy offices	4	–
• sanatoriums	–	3.9

*the possibility of indicating multiple answers

Source: Authors' own study.

Among the factors important when choosing a massage place, students ranked the top three as staff service ($\bar{X} = 4.80$, $SD = 0.42$), price level ($\bar{X} = 4.43$, $SD = 0.60$), and assortment of services ($\bar{X} = 4.24$, $SD = 0.59$) (Table 5). Retirees' responses differed slightly, with older recipients mainly focusing on price ($\bar{X} = 4.41$, $SD = 0.49$), proximity to their residence ($\bar{X} = 3.96$, $SD = 0.78$), and staff service ($\bar{X} = 3.90$, $SD = 0.93$). When comparing the overall set of factors influencing the choice of massage service location, it is notable that the ranks of these factors among students and retirees showed a correlation of $R_s = 0.31611088$, considered moderate or somewhat weak in social sciences (Akoglu, 2018). The weak correlation was mainly due to different assessments of the importance of proximity to the place of residence and interior design. The mean importance ratings for these factors were 3.45 and 4.01 among students, respectively, and 3.96 and 2.92 among retirees. Moreover, in the verification question in which respondents indicated the three most important factors when choosing a massage service, their answers were generally consistent with their initial assessment. Retirees mainly cited proximity to their residence (78.43%), prices

(76.47%), and staff service (68.63%), while students cited staff service (91.00%), prices (70.00%), and the range of services (42.00%). In an Indonesian study (Prasetyo, 2024), based on responses primarily from young people (53.3% aged 18–24 and 40.1% aged 25–34), it was shown that the most important attribute when selecting a massage place was opinion (68.5%), followed by the gender of the masseur (12.4%), type of massage (9.6%), room type (4.5%), duration (3.6%), and price (1.4%). Indian consumers preferred female masseuses, 90-minute massages, rooms for two couples, and services like acupuncture and Chinese bubble massage.

Table 5. Factors important in choosing a massage place according to both groups of respondents (\bar{X} – from responses on a scale of 1–5, where 1 – *unimportant factor*, 5 – *very important factor*)

Factors of choice	Students				Retirees			
	\bar{X}	SD	Ranks	Top 3*	\bar{X}	SD	Ranks	Top 3*
Proximity to residence	3.45	1.14	10	–	3.96	0.78	2	1
Assortment of services	4.04	0.59	3	3	3.88	0.95	4	–
Interior design	4.01	0.82	4	–	2.92	1.17	10	–
Staff service	4.80	0.42	1	1	3.90	0.93	3	3
New massage services	3.60	0.81	8	–	3.02	0.97	9	–
Type of music during treatment	3.72	0.92	7	–	3.35	0.92	6	–
Prices	4.43	0.60	2	2	4.41	0.49	1	2
Habit	3.55	0.95	9	–	3.12	1.15	7.5	–
Promotional campaigns	3.79	1.06	6	–	3.12	1.48	7.5	–
Opinion/recommendation of friends	3.98	0.94	5	–	3.53	1.26	5	–
Spearman's rank factor	$Rho = 0.31611088, p < .01000$							

*in the verification question

Source: Authors' own study.

While the evaluation of factors influencing the demand for massage services among both groups of respondents showed weak convergence, the correlation in the importance of factors that could increase future demand was, as mentioned by representatives of Gen Z and BB, strong with $Rho = 0.893621$ (Table 6). Among the top three most important factors, students cited lower prices or promotions ($\bar{X} = 4.35$, $SD = 0.70$), earning a higher income ($\bar{X} = 4.19$, $SD = 0.77$), and increased health and aesthetic needs ($\bar{X} = 4.16$, $SD = 0.82$). Retiree respondents also rated lower prices as the most important factor ($\bar{X} = 4.22$, $SD = 0.94$), and they placed equal importance on health and aesthetic needs and proximity to the service location ($\bar{X} = 4.14$, $SD = 0.82$ and $\bar{X} = 4.14$, $SD = 0.66$, respectively). Therefore, it can be concluded that both young and older customers primarily consider economic factors and aesthetic needs important, but for surveyed members of Gen BB, proximity to the location is highly significant and may influence increased usage.

Since a significant portion of respondents had never used massage services (i.e., 67.80% and 44.6% of Gen Z and BB, respectively), an analysis of the factors that could influence their decision to use such services was also conducted (Table 6). The results show that the distribution of responses in this regard aligns with the responses

of current massage service users. Among the three most important factors, students who had not previously used massage cited lower price/price promotions ($\bar{X} = 4.26$, $SD = 0.87$), higher income ($\bar{X} = 4.27$, $SD = 0.91$), and increased health and aesthetic needs ($\bar{X} = 4.17$, $SD = 0.85$). Conversely, retirees identified lower prices and increased income as the most important factors encouraging the use of massage services ($\bar{X} = 4.42$, $SD = 0.63$; $\bar{X} = 3.92$, $SD = 0.78$) and cited proximity to the service location ($\bar{X} = 3.65$, $SD = 1.14$) as influential as well.

Table 6. Factors determining the increase in demand for massage services, in the opinion of respondents of both groups who have not used massage services before (\bar{X} from responses on a scale of 1–5, where 1 – *unimportant factor*, 5 – *very important factor*)

Demand growth factors	Students			Retirees		
	\bar{X}	SD	Ranks	\bar{X}	SD	Ranks
Expanding range of services	3.44	1.09	5	2.19	0.83	9
More attractive appearance of offices	3.64	1.11	4	3.15	0.82	6.5
Lower price/price promotions	4.26	0.87	2	4.42	0.63	1
Earning a higher income	4.27	0.91	1	3.92	0.78	2
Age, including an increase in health and aesthetic needs	4.17	0.85	3	3.58	1.28	4
Persuasion from friends/family	3.10	1.08	7	3.42	1.15	5
Fashion/trends	2.61	1.10	9	2.88	1.22	8
Actions to promote this type of service, e.g., advertisements	2.95	1.15	8	3.15	0.82	6.5
Place of service, including provided at home	3.14	1.16	6	3.65	1.14	3
Spearman's rank factor	$Rho = 0.863226, p < .01000$					

Source: Authors' own study.

Conclusions

The results of the study illustrate the opinions and preferences of Gen Z and BB representatives in Lublin regarding the demand for massage services. Young people use massage services less often than older adults, usually 2–3 times for therapeutic massage and once for relaxation. They most often get massages at specialized massage parlors, rarely at home. When selecting a massage place, they mainly consider the staff's service, the price, and the range of services. Their interest is primarily in relaxation and therapeutic massage, covering the whole body, focusing on specific areas like the neck, back, and shoulders. More than half of older respondents have used massage, most often therapeutic and less often for relaxation. They also reported visiting a wider variety of places for massages. When selecting a location, they mainly consider price, proximity to their home, and staff service. They are interested in therapeutic and relaxation massages to specific body parts, especially the neck, back, and shoulders, as well as full-body relaxation massage. Both groups use SPA & Wellness centers equally and prefer treatments lasting 30–60 minutes. They are similarly interested in anti-aging facial massage. A strong correlation was found between the importance of factors that could drive future demand for these services, namely, economic considerations and aesthetic needs.

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