



Wellness Tourism: Review and Growth

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ABSTRACT

The quest for the life is wellness, but where does it actually reside? Today, people are so busy in the race of success that their lives have become so stressful affecting negatively to their health, emotion and mental faculty. To get a breath of relief, one decides to travel, however, travelling leads to unhealthy and overeating, disturbing of fitness routine, poor sleeping and travel stress which means 'unwell travel'. Hence, one seeks for wellness tourism which rejuvenates tourists, offers authentic experience, includes healthy eating and staying and connects oneself with soul and god. Wellness tourism is defined as all travel associated with the pursuit of maintain or enhancing one's personal well being. The primary aims of this study are to review the emergence and growth of wellness tourism and to report its present status. This paper talks about the concept of wellness tourism, components and worldwide view of wellness tourism with the support of related reports, articles and secondary data.

KEYWORDS

Wellness, Tourism, Unwell, Travel

INTRODUCTION:

In general parlance, the word 'Wellness' refers to the state of being well and fit mentally, physically and emotionally. Wellness is the amalgamation of medical, spiritual, mental peace, relief and leisure. It is rightly said that good health is the God gift and the real wealth. The greater concern for the good health has resulted into the high demand for wellness tourism which has created a buzz among wellness seekers across the world. In fact, wellness tourism is as old as ancient civilization such as Greece, Rome and Asian. Wellness tourism can be defined as all the activities of tourists at destination, seeking the well being resulting into a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit. Wellness tourism encompasses various activities such as yoga, meditation, ayurvedic therapy, exercise, beauty treatment and spa etc offering the bundle of advantages namely rise in concentration power, enlightenment of thoughts, physical fitness, remedy of prolonged diseases, stress buster etc. As a matter of fact, wellness tourism is linked with Medical tourism and spiritual tourism due to the commonness of the characteristics and objectives. However, medical tourism is different from wellness tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Smith and Kelly (2006) opined that wellness tourism one of the ancient forms of tourism and the proliferation of wellness centres, holistic retreats, spas, spiritual pilgrimages, complementary and alternative therapies is unprecedented. Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) concluded that there is a need for clear demarcation of the wellness concept from the cure. And, special emphasis on quality management and wellness professionals (doctor, physiotherapists, wellness trainers and sports instructors) was also suggested. Upadhyaya (2014) carried out the study to explore the methods to develop the medical and wellness tourism strategy. He also stressed on building of brand image of India, proper policy frame work, good infrastructure and professional marketers for wellness tourism. Koncul (2012) stated that it is important to devote a considerable part of leisure-time in health, sport and other wellness activities. Shaik (2013) attempted to address the issues and prospects of medical and wellness industry in India and to outline strategies for making India as an ideal hub for medical and wellness tourism and also suggested to identify the macro and micro issues facing the tourism industry.

OBJECTIVES:

The primary aims of this study are to review the emergence and growth of wellness tourism and to report its present status.

METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has made use of purely secondary data and referred research papers, reports and articles pertaining to wellness tourism.

WELLNESS TOURISM – CONCEPT:

According to SRI, wellness tourism is defined as all travel associated with the pursuit of maintain or enhancing one's personal well being. Wellness tourism is for mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and environmental wellness. It cannot be regarded as medical tourism. Wellness tourism has a pro active approach while medical tourism has a reactive approach. Medical tourism involves people who travel to a different place to receive treatment for a disease, an ailment, or a condition, or to undergo a cosmetic procedure, and who are seeking lower cost of care, higher quality of care, better access to care or different care than what they could receive at home. Wellness tourism involves people who travel to a different place to proactively pursue activities that maintain or enhance their personal health and wellbeing, and who are seeking unique, authentic or location-based experiences/therapies not available at home (Global Spa Summit LLC 2011).

SPA tourism and CAM tourism are the core businesses of Wellness Tourism. The word SPA is derived from the Latin phrase Salus Per Aquam which means health by water (healing through water therapy). The International Spa Association has defined Spa as places devoted to overall well being through variety of professional services that rejuvenates mind, body and spirit. WHO defines CAM (Complementary & Alternative Medicine) Tourism as the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different culture that are used to maintain health as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses.

Why Wellness Tourism?

- Wellness tourism is opted to gain below benefits.
- To get rid of stress, anxiety and tension
- To get connected with soul
- To manage proactively chronic and fatal diseases
- To acquire the feeling of contentment
- To achieve high concentration power and control over the oneself
- To bring healthy balance into mind, spirit and body

Wellness Traveller – Who?

Wellness traveller is one who undertakes travelling seeking to

physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or environmental wellness.

Table 1 Wellness Seeker and Wellness Tourism

Types of Wellness Traveller / Seekers	Objectives	Activities	Destinations for Wellness Tourism
	SEEK	DO	VISIT
Physical Wellness	Spa & Beauty	Massage, bathing, body treatment, facial, hairs and nails	Spas, Salons, Baths & springs Thalasso, Healthy hotels, Wellness cruises, Health resorts & sanatoria
	Health	Health check up, diagnostics, integrative medicine, chronic condition management	Integrative health centres, CAM centres, Wellness centres
	Healthy Eating	Nutrition, weight management, culinary experience,	Organic & natural, restaurants, Health food stores
	Fitness	Gym visits, fitness classes, stretching Pilates	Gyms, Fitness centres
Mental Wellness	Mind-Body	Yoga meditation, Tai chi Qigong Biofeedback	Yoga studios, Martial arts studios
Spiritual Wellness	Spiritual & Connection	Prayer, volunteering time with family & friends, time alone	Yoga retreats, Spiritual retreats Ashrams
Emotion Wellness	Personal Growth	Retreats life coaches, stress reduction, reading music & arts	Lifestyle retreats, Wellness retreats
Environmental Wellness	Eco-Adventurous	Hiking, biking, taking walks, nature visits	Parks, Wildlife sanctuaries, Nature preserves

Source: The Global Wellness Tourism Economy Report 2013

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF WELLNESS TOURISM:

- Wellness Tourism Association:** Wellness tourism association not only promotes but also develops wellness tourism products/services. It is the group of wellness tourism service providers which decides framework of wellness tourism services and other related issues.
- Accreditation Authority / Board for Wellness Tourism:** Such board and accreditation authority recognises wellness tourism centres as well as assesses the services of such centres. Licence is also issued by such authority. For example, NABH, AYUSH
- Wellness Tourism Facilitators:** Wellness tourism facilitators are those who assist in wellness tourism such as Tour Operators, Travel Agent
- Wellness Tourism Service providers:** Hospitals, Spas, Ayurvedic health centre, retreat centres / ashram wellness centre where wellness services are performed.
- Wellness Seeker:** Wellness seeker is one whose purpose of visit is wellness.
- Government Agency:** Ministry of Tourism and State Tourism Department formulate policy pertaining wellness tourism and develop necessary infrastructure by the way of financial assistance.

GROWTH AND PRESENT STATUS OF WELLNESS TOURISM:

Globally, wellness tourism accounts about 6% (524.4 million) of all domestic and international trips and 14% (\$438.6 billion) of all domestic and international tourism expenditures.

Wellness tourism is expected to rise by more than 9% per year through 2017 which is approximately 50% greater than growth rate of overall global tourism

Wellness tourism generates 11.7 million direct jobs, delivering \$1.3 trillion of global economic impact (1.8% if global GDP in 2012)

Spa Tourism occupies the significant place in the business of wellness tourism which accounts about 41% of wellness tourism expenditure. It accounts \$179.7 billion market and 224.9 million spa trips.

Table 2 Wellness Tourism by Regions 2012

Regions	Wellness Tourism Arrivals / Trips (Inbound / International + Domestic) (Million Trips)	Wellness Tourism Expenditure (\$ Billions)
North America	163	181.0
Europe	203	158.4
Asia-Pacific	120	69.4
Middle East-N, Africa	5	5.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	2	2.0
Latin America	32	22.4

Source: The Global Wellness Tourism Economy, Global Spa & Wellness Summit 2013

The given statistics depict that the highest wellness tourism trips was reported of Europe region (203 million trips) followed by North America (163 million trips) and Asia –Pacific region (120 million trips). Similarly, the highest wellness tourism expenditure was reported of North America region (\$181.0 billion) followed by Europe (\$158.4 billion) and Asia-Pacific region (\$69.4 billion). While the lowest wellness tourism arrivals (2 million trips) and expenditure (\$2 billion) was of Sub-Saharan Africa region.

Table 3 Specific Products and Services popular in a certain region as of 2011

Regions	Products and Services related to Wellness Tourism (figure in %)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific	27	4	11	20	6	4	28
Far East (including India)	13	7	12	17	1	35	14
South East Asia	11	7	14	13	4	32	18
Middle East	13	8	22	14	6	10	26
Africa	18	4	8	16	4	13	37
South America	20	8	18	17	4	8	25
Central America	14	10	19	17	12	2	27
North America	19	6	30	12	5	***	28
Southern Europe	24	6	4	29	7	***	29
Central & Eastern Europe	19	27	8	27	3	3	14
Western Europe	22	18	14	25	***	***	19
Northern Europe	39	11	10	18	3	3	16

1- Leisure & Recreation Spas, 2 – Medical (Surgical) hotel / clinic / hospital, 3- Spa / Wellness Centre, 4 – Hotel & Resort Spas, 5 – Medical (therapeutical hotel / clinic), 6- Wellness hotel & resort, 7 – Holistic retreats & ashram.
 *** data not found in the original document
 Source: 4WR. Wellness for whom, where and what? Wellness 2020. Wellness Tourism Worldwide (Full Research Report, 2011)

As shown in the above table, 39% of product and service related wellness tourism namely Leisure & Recreation Spas are popular in northern Europe region while 27% of medical (surgical) hotel/clinic /hospital services are popular in Central and Eastern Europe. In North America Region, spa / wellness centre constitute 30% popularity and in Southern Europe region, hotel & resort spas, 29% popularity is gained by Medical (therapeutical hotel / clinic). In the same way, the popularity of wellness hotel and resort in Far East region including India is reported 35%. Surprisingly, in Africa region, holistic retreats and ashram are the most popular wellness tourism product/service (i.e.) 37%

Ayurvedic Practice is deeply ingrained in Indian tradition and culture. Historically, 'water' therapy gained popularity since people would travel to bath hot springs and seaside resorts for purification and spiritual rituals. Wellness Tourism in India is as old as the ancient civilization of Asia, Greece and Rome. As India is blessed with varied natural resources, it is the main hub for the wellness tourism. Other reasons for India being the hub for well tourism are cost effective naturopathy and ayurvedic therapies, quality of service, tourist friendly climate, spa and health care centres, yoga and meditation centres, gym and spiritual retreats ashrams. Similarly, internationally famous yoga and spiritual gurus of India attract wellness seekers across the world. Spa Tourism affiliation is with Indian Railways - Palace on Wheels and Royal Rajasthan on Wheels while CAM tourism affiliation is with Anandham Nature Cure Centre – managed by SWAS Healthcare Pvt Ltd, Ayurveda Clinics, Maharshi Atrey Health Centre, Global Health Foundation, AUN Swasthya Holistic Centre and Atharva Multispecialty Ayurvedic Centre.

The most frequent visited destinations of India for Wellness Tourism are Rishikesh, Kovalam (Somatheeram Ayurvedic Health Resort, Ideal Ayurvedic Resort, Shin Shiva Ayurvedic Resort and Shin Shiva Ayurvedic Resort and Niraamaya – Surya Samudra), Goa (Yoga Magic Eco Retreat, Little Cove Yoga Holiday Retreat and The Mandala), Thekkady etc. Following chart offers the correct understanding of organisation structure of Medical and Wellness tourism in India.

Organisation Structure of Medical and Wellness Tourism in India



Source: Research Report, Global Spa Summit LLC 2011 p 59

RECOMMENDATION:

- Following are the recommendations for Wellness Tourism in India
- Wellness tourism week should be celebrated with collaboration of wellness tourism centres
- In India, destinations should be rightly identified where wellness tourism centres can be established
- Policy framework for wellness tourism should be investor friendly
- Wellness tourism should be endorsed by celebrity
- On regular basis, Ministry of Tourism and State Tourism Department should arrange workshop and training programme for wellness instructors.
- Government should release funds for the development of infrastructure suitable for wellness tourism and also offer concession or relaxation to wellness tourism service providers.

CONCLUSION:

To conclude, wellness tourism is one of the healthy segments of tourism and the demand for wellness tourism products / services has been considerably increasing. The basic reason is that, it is concerned with one's well being and its pro-active approach. SPA tourism and CAM tourism are core businesses of wellness tourism.

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