

Opportunities and Challenges of Wellness Tourism in India

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Abstract—The new scientific temperament has surely granted some ease and comfort to the modern day residents of this global village called “World.” Fortunately this temperament has created an interest and zest for the visit of the places of this world. This condition gives birth of many types of tourism and certainly “Wellness and Health tourism” is the most suitable one. Halbert Dunn, an American doctor was the person who coined the term ‘Wellness’ in 1959, in the realm of health science. The body, spirit and mind of a human being are three main assets which enable him to enjoy the bliss of life on this beautiful planet. Ardell (1977, 1986) further expanded this concept, seeing wellness as a state of health featuring the harmony of body, mind, and spirit. Well-being is the desire of everyone. People do different activities for the attainment of well-being and tourism is one of the most effective ways to serve the purpose. Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) define wellness tourism as ‘the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey and residence by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health’. This paper tries to ponder over and suggest the immense possibilities of Wellness tourism in India. Wellness tourism is a western concept of putting the “old wine in a new bottle” as it is not new or unique for countries like India where wellbeing and fitness is a way of life for a large section of its population.

Keywords: Scientific, Temperament, Zest, Coined, Realm, Ponder, Immense, Wellbeing.

1. INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to introduce a relatively new topic in the area of travel and also, I hope to fill a huge information gap in our routinely stressed, often overworked, mostly not too healthy lives. Practically all urban people are now familiar with the word “stress” and we use it knowingly to explain a host of sorry symptoms, from allergic sneezes to advanced sclerosis. And, as more and more research would now have us know, they would probably be right. We live in times when a vast chunk of the citizenry wakes up in the morning to breathe in and out with TV yoga, when executives buy CDs of calming chants to play at road-rage time, and when even the most local of grocers is starting to keep multi-grain bread, maida, as we all know being terrible for us. The awareness that health is more than just striving to be rid of diseases when they pop up and that the state of the body is profoundly connected to the state of the mind is gaining around. But is it seriously possible

to take a holiday that can give your body-mind-spirit an overhaul pretty much as you would to your car? And would the machine function as well for the coming months? Is it a good idea to do yoga even I have back pain that won’t let me bend forward? Will it work even if I have chronic migraine for years? How do I know what’ll suit me: simple yoga or those luxury Kerala Ayurveda oil treatments? Will the expense be worth it? The Wellness tourism of India has all the answers of your questions. I have tried also to answer on behalf of wellness tourism of your questions, bringing you a smorgasbord of wellness offering in India—from luxury spas to naturopathy resorts, from yoga to meditation retreats. So, choose what suits you best. There’s something here for everyone. To understand the Wellness tourism first you should know the concept of Wellness, Tourism and then Wellness Tourism.

2. WELLNESS

There is no universally-accepted definition of wellness. The scientific meaning of wellness is the state of being healthy and free of diseases. The following definitions may be helpful to understand the meaning of wellness:

1. “Wellness is defined as the optimal functioning of body and creative adapting to environment that involves the whole person.”
2. “The fact or condition of being physically and mentally healthy.”
3. “The quality or state of being healthy” is called wellness.
4. “Wellness is considered the optimal state of health.”
5. “Wellness involves a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit which results in overall feeling of well-being.”

Wellness can be defined also as, “The pursuit of a healthy and balanced lifestyle.” In fact, wellness is the capability of an individual by which he leads a well balanced life. Wellness is made up of multiple dimensions such as physical wellness, mental wellness, emotional wellness, spiritual wellness, social wellness, occupational wellness and environmental wellness. In the recent years, the concept of wellness- staying healthy

and achieving the highest potential for wellbeing has become very popular. In India, some corporations have developed wellness programmes. These corporations are willing to invest in these programmes because they have found that these resulted in increased employee productivity, decreased absenteeism, better employee health and lower insurance costs.

3. TOURISM

One of the earliest definitions of tourism was in the year 1937 by the League of Nations, 'The term tourist shall in principle be interpreted to mean any person travelling for a period of 24 hours or more in a country other than in which he usually resides.'

In 1977, Jafri describes tourism as 'The study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host's socio-cultural, economic, and physical environments'.

Tourism is the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and includes the activities they indulge in at the destinations as well as all facilities and services specially created to meet their needs. Tourism does not only mean travelling to a particular destination but also includes all activities undertaken during the stay.

Tourism is not only a growth engine but also an employment generator. According to the Economic Survey 2011-12, the sector has the capacity to create large scale employment both direct and indirect, for diverse sections in society, from the most specialized to unskilled workforce. It provides 6-7 per cent of the world's total jobs directly and millions more indirectly through the multiplier effect as per the UN's World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The importance of tourism as a creator of job opportunities can be understood from the fact that in India every one million invested in tourism creates 47.5 jobs directly and around 85-90 jobs indirectly. In comparison, agriculture creates only 44.6 jobs and manufacturing a mere 12.6 jobs. Moreover tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner after gems and jewelry and readymade garments.

4. WELLNESS TOURISM

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. Wellness tourist generally seeking integrated wellness and prevention approaches to improve their health/quality of life. "WHO" defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". India has been emerging as the hottest wellness destination. With more than

two thousands spas and wellness centers run by both government and private sector across the country, India is adapting more professional approach in this segment. Spa and wellness tourism has become a very trendy tourism segment with high potential of continuous growth. It is nowadays recognized as a good alternative to conventional tourism since, inter alia, it does not depend on seasons and has a very good image within the society that gives increasing importance to "quality of life". The latest trends show that the modern consumer becomes more and more health conscious and therefore likes to use holidays for improving the physical and mental condition. Many European National Tourist Organizations have started to use wellness as a theme for their destination marketing (UNWTO). The Wellness Business is estimated around US dollar 1.9 trillion worldwide of which the Indian market is valued at US dollar 225 billion. The Indian wellness market is emerging as one of the fastest growing markets and is expected to have a 25% share of the international pie in five years (According to Michael J Robertson, CEO, Best Western Vedic Village SPA Resort). The potential for wellness tourism in India is amazing. Proper marketing and meeting world class quality standards will be the answer. The varied places for wellness centers from the mountains to the beaches, India has everything for wellness tourists.

5. WELLNESS TOURISM IN INDIA

The whole states of India have many tourists destinations with the possibilities of wellness tourism within its circumference because it does not only soothes the eyes but also satisfies the ethical needs of the visitors because many places in the country are the epitome of belief and dependence for the oldest religion, Hinduism. Wellness Tourism is about traveling for the primary purpose of achieving, promoting or maintaining maximum health and a sense of well-being. Wellness Tourism holds immense potential for India. The Indian systems of medicine, that is Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchakarma, Rejuvenation Therapy, etc., are among the most ancient systems of medical treatment, in the world. India can provide medical and health care of international standard at comparatively low cost. Most of the hotels/resorts are coming up with Ayurveda Centers. The leading tour operators have included wellness in their brochures.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF WELLNESS TOURISM

Wellness evolved as early as 4200 BC when the Sumerians recuperated their health by bathing in thermal springs and fountains located in temples; medical care can be dated back to 1500 BC with the Greeks laying a foundation stone in a temple in honor of their God of Medicine. Ever since, history has evidence of man travelling out of his country to avail himself of suitable medical treatment. Currently more than 50 countries are engaged in medical tourism with developing nations from Asia, Latin America and South Africa capturing a major segment. The reasons for growth in wellness

tourism stem from the following: One, high levels of uninsured population (as in the case of USA); two, lack of private participation and high waiting times (as in UK); three, pressures of aging population and over-hospital stay (as in Japan); four, dearth of sufficient and cost-effective healthcare facilities across various parts of the world; five, elective surgery with privacy (such as Botox treatment, rhino plasty, liposuction, etc); and six, inefficient healthcare systems in developing and underdeveloped world. In addition to the primary factors mentioned above, certain secondary factors have influenced the growth in wellness tourism as well: secular shifts across the developed and developing world (such as working versus leisure time, population pyramid, individualization, increasing demand regarding quality, etc.) have led to modified leisure and tourism behavior. Moreover, socio-economic factors such as flexible working times, higher incomes, more leisure time and the changing value of holidays (now seen as a part of life) have also resulted in new and changed lifestyles. Having identified the growing potential of wellness segments, several wellness tourism companies/facilitators promising end-to-end wellness tourism services have sprung up across the globe. They have strategically identified wellness needs and mapped them with expert wellness care services from various country destinations. Inarguably wellness tourism is an economic tool for nations striving to boost their economies through direct benefits such as increase in revenue, employment opportunities, investment in tourism avenues etc and indirect benefits that include spillover effects leading to growth in other industries. Though the benefits may apparently be micro-faced, the ripple effect is capable of touching innumerable spheres in the economy, namely, rise in living standards of people associated with tourism, need for education, demand for related educational courses, growth of ancillary industries, and so on.

7. OPPORTUNITIES OF WELLNESS TOURISM IN INDIA

The main products of wellness tourism are spas, ayurveda, naturopathy, *yoga* and meditation which rejuvenate one's mind, body and soul. There are many destinations and places in India encouraging Yoga Tourism. The mountain ranges of the Himalayas, Rishikesh, Kedarnath, Gangotri of northern India, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Goa and New Delhi are some of the places where one can get eternal peace and satisfy their spiritual quest and are the perfect destinations for Wellness Tourism. Some of the most popular places in India for wellness tourism draw regular tourists and travelers from all over the globe to various travel destinations in India that boasts of some of the natural healing procedures and life style changes to foster physical and psychic well-being of the deserving tourists. There are many popular places in India for wellness tourism that are renowned for their tranquil living atmosphere, natural environment, beautiful flora and fauna and organically validated traditional healing procedures for the mind and

body. Here we would name some of the most popular places in India for Wellness tourism.

- Ananda, Narendranagar, Uttarakhand
- Banyan Tree Spa, Udaivilas, Udaipur
- Golden Palms, Bangalore
- Vedic Village, Kolkata
- Amatra Spa, New Delhi
- Aturvedagram, Bangalore
- Jindal's Healthfarm, Bangalore
- Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai, Tamilnadu
- Sivananda Ashram, Madurai, Tamilnadu
- Iyengar Institute, Pune
- Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore
- Kaivalyadhama, Lonavala
- Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar
- Atma Vikasa Centre, Mysore
- Yog-Ganga Centre, Dehradun
- International Yoga Festival, Rishikesh etc.

8. CHALLENGES OF WELLNESS TOURISM IN INDIA

The first challenge is meeting quality standards. The quality of Spa's in India is now being questioned internationally. The quality Council of India and the Ministry of Tourism has taken the first step to extend the National Accreditation Board for Hospital and Wellness Centers (NABH) certification for Spas and wellness centers. This will be a first step to making a statement to the world that we have adopted the finest in quality standards and will give the clients tremendous confidence. The second challenge will be to develop trained and certified manpower. It is estimated that 600,000 jobs will be created in the wellness industry in next five years. A great deal will have to be developed to meet the human resource challenge. In fact this must be the focus during the next few years. The third challenge is safety and security. As we know that tourism is a fragile and delicate industry. Wellness tourists will come to visit our destinations for peace, calm, meditation, yoga, health and wellbeing therefore the first and foremost issue will be safety and security of the tourists because in the presence of the fear we cannot promote tourism worldwide.

9. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR WELLNESS TOURISM

The Ministry of Tourism also provides financial assistance under the Market Development Assistance Scheme (MDA) to approved wellness centers, i.e. representatives of wellness centers accredited by NABH or the State Governments. The MDA assistance is for participation in medical/tourism fairs, medical conferences, wellness conferences, wellness fairs, and allied road shows. Yoga/Ayurveda/Wellness have been

promoted in the past years in the print, electronic, internet and outdoor medium under the Ministry of Tourism's "Incredible India Campaign". Ministry of Tourism, Department of AYUSH and NABH brings Accreditation for Wellness Centers.

10. SWOT ANALYSIS OF WELLNESS TOURISM STRENGTHS

- Wellness is synonym to India
- World class wellness facilities at affordable costs established at aesthetic locations.
- International visitors are already well versed with the alternative therapies prevailing in India.
- State- of-the-art equipments, technology and procedure.
- Tourists are welcomed as 'guests' and made to feel at home in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Recognition and classification of centers facilitated by the Central and State Government.
- Ayurveda & spa available in all major resorts.
- Permanent cure of disease and rejuvenation of body, mind and spirit imparted by the Wellness therapies
- Predicted as best performing Country in wellness tourism by UNWTO.
- Wide range of tourism resources, equable climate, variety of cuisine and vivacious culture.
- The country has states for best services to the wellness tourists like Kerala, Uttarakhand, Himachal etc moreover Kerala has been selected by World Travel and Tourism Council as a partner State
- Wide usage of English.

11. WEAKNESSES

- Poor infrastructure in terms of roads, drainage and traffic systems.
- Unscientific waste management system and pollution control.
- The positive message and curative therapies of Ayurveda has not yet spread globally to the full extend
- Presence of a large number of unlicensed alternative medical practitioners.
- If Ayurvedic medicines need to be exported, many countries pose compulsion of a certification regarding non-existence of metals in medicines.
- Open latrines, contaminated water and sewers convey a negative image
- Spread of diseases like swine flu, chikungunya, birds' flue and leptospirosis.
- Irritating behavior from the local public towards foreign visitors.

- Lack of standardization in alternative Medicare and costing methods.
- Poor internet connectivity.
- Threat of terroristactivities
- Lack of international accreditation.
- Poor coordination among tourism providers.

12. OPPORTUNITIES

- Preventive healthcare
- Combination of Ayurveda, Spa, Meditation, Naturopathy or healthcarewith leisure tourism.
- More stress management and holistic treatment centers.
- Medical outsourcing.
- Government controlled information centers on Wellness in all countries.
- Organizing of International Wellness expos in India, annually.
- An exclusive website for wellness tourism facilities in India monitored by Government.

13. THREATS

- Commercialization of health care.
- Threat on public health system due to over emphasis on health tourism.
- Sexual exploitation and development of sex tourism.
- Travel agents stress only on the massage part of Ayurveda
- Unlicensed and unqualified medical practitioners getting established.
- Hike in charges
- Adverse effects on culture
- Unhealthy competition among Wellness providers.

14. OBJECTIVE

- This study aims to study the concept and potential of wellness tourism in India.
- To identify the problems of wellness tourism industry in India and suggest suitable measures to overcome the problems.

15. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary data was accumulated through various sources like internet, references materials, newspapers, magazines, books etc.

16. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, Indian tourism has vast potential for generating employment and earning large sums of foreign exchange

besides giving a flip to the country's overall economic and social development. Much has been achieved by way of increasing air seat capacity, increasing trains and railway connectivity to important tourist destinations, four-laning of roads connecting important tourist centers and increasing availability of accommodation by adding heritage hotels to the hotel industry and encouraging paying guest accommodation. But much more remains to be done. Since tourism is a multi-dimensional activity, and basically a service industry, it would be necessary that all wings of the Central and State governments, private sector and voluntary organizations become active partners in the endeavor to attain sustainable growth in tourism if India is to become a world player in the tourist industry.

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