

Wellness Tourism in India: Issues and Challenges

Dr. Monika Prakash*, Dr. Ramesh C. Devrath**, Aditya Ranjan***

In modern way of living, people are working in stressful conditions, rigorous lifestyle and dependency on the fast food has roused an alarming condition for the society. Diseases like diabetes, obesity are slowly gripping the people all across the globe. Even having awareness of the facts people are forced to ignore, may be because of the working conditions, financial situations and even sometimes family circumstances. But, the desire to be a well being lies with every individual.

The wellness is now becoming a priority for the society to remain healthy and sound life. And this has given an opportunity for the flourishing of a new niche market for the wellness tourism. People either in their locality or travel to different places for the learning practices and attainment of wellness. A number of people from different parts of globe are travelling to India for wellness

In India, wellness is a concept which has been in vogue since ancient times. Traditional medicinal and health practices like Ayurveda and yoga have always stressed on 'a healthy mind in a healthy body'. Government of India through Ministry of AYUSH is developing and promoting the India as a hub for wellness. Recently, central government has also announced to come up with a new National Health Policy with special emphasis on AYUSH system.

The current paper discuss about the issues India is facing in branding and developing as Wellness tourism destination and upcoming challenges afterwards.

Keywords : Ayurveda, Siddha, India, Issues, Challenges, Tourism, Wellness, Yoga

Introduction

"Wellness is the result of personal initiative, seeking a more optimal, holistic and impartial state of health and well-being across multiple dimensions."

-Valenty (2007)

It is always being said Health is Wealth. The wealth of a country is also reflected by the health of its citizen. Here health doesn't mean the physical only, rather it constitute of the physical, psychological, spiritual and societal well being of the citizens. In modern lifestyle people around the globe are living in stressful conditions. Rigorous lifestyle and dependency on the fast food has roused an alarming condition for a number of countries. Diseases like Diabetes, Obesity, Cardiac disorders are slowly enthralling the people all across the world. Even knowing the facts people are forced to ignore, as because of one or more reasons like the working conditions, financial situations and even sometimes family affairs. But, the yearning to be a well being deceit within every individual.

The wellness is the now becoming the priority for the society to remain healthy and for sound life. And this has given an opportunity for the flourishing of a new niche market for the wellness tourism. People either in their locality or travel to different places for learning the practices and attainment of wellness.

The other reason for the inclination of society towards wellness activities is the failure of modern medical technologies and practices to cater the disease like Diabetes, AIDS, Cancer and more recently Ebola and Swine Flu.

Now wellness tourism is grabbing attention of people all over the globe. Every year the new trends and practices are

*Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, NOIDA, India

** Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Gwalior, India

***Assistant Professor, University Institute of Hotel Management, Chandigarh University, Mohali, India

being introduced in this area especially through spas. A lot of countries especially those of South East Asia (Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines) realizing its potential has started promoting themselves as the desirable destination for wellness tourism. Not only South East Asian countries but now-a-days most of American (Brazil) and European (Spain, Turkey) and even African Countries (South Africa, Kenya) are promoting themselves as the hotspot for wellness tourists.

Recently Caribbean Countries has come up with vision 2018 document to develop them as wellness tourism destination specially trying to tap the American market.

India is one of the desirable destinations among the tourists seeking for wellness activities. But, India till date is not able to utilize its platform as wellness tourism destination. With its historical regimes and vast stretch of different landforms, India is still getting stiff competition from the adjacent South East Asian countries. Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy), realizing potential of wellness has moved forward with the announcement to come up with new National Health Policy focusing on wellness and developing India as wellness tourism hub.

Need for Study

"Wellness Tourism" which developed few decades back as a niche market is now a global phenomenon. Stanford Research Institute International in its recent study has mentioned that, the global wellness industry corresponds to a market of nearly US\$ 2 trillion as divergent to the Indian Wellness Industry, which is a US\$ 9.8 billion market; constituting therefore, for less than 2% of the global wellness industry. These figures seems more throbbing for a country like India, from where the 7 different Wellness products (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha Homoeopathy and Sowa Rigpa) are now in the demand globally. This also indicates there underlying issues and challenges which are hindering the path for India to becoming the global wellness hub.

Although FICCI in 2013 has predicted that the projected growth of the wellness tourism for India is at the Indian wellness industry will grow at a CAGR of 20% to reach INR 875 billion from current INR 430 billion in next three years, still the question arises is Indian stakeholders are equipped to defy such demand on a positive note. It is also being said that Indian wellness tourism market will continue to grow with 10.4% till 2017, but how this can be so accurately portrayed, especially when its major proportion is highly unorganized.

This study is commenced to focus on different pre-discussed current issues and upcoming challenges in wellness tourism along with the suggestions to overcome such issues which is India's need of the hour to congregate global ethics and competitions.

Objective of Study

The objectives of study are:

1. To have critical insites, what actually Wellness Tourism is all about especially in India context.
2. To examine what are the current issues and upcoming challenges for wellness tourism in India.
3. To observe the opinion of various researchers regarding wellness issues and challenges in India.
4. To find out the suggestions given by various researchers to counter those issues and challenges regarding growth of wellness tourism in India.

Methodology

As this is a complete secondary research paper, the facts and figures are collected from the various sources i.e. research reports, journal articles, policy drafts, websites, videos etc. regarding wellness tourism in India and world. Around 55 such different sources have been refereed for this paper and wide-ranging wellness tourism trends in 2014 and 2015 and related issues are also taken into consideration. The refereed can be further classified as per following:

1. Wellness Tourism background (1959 – 2015) – Refereed includes 34 Journal Articles, 7 Reports, 14 Websites and 7 other sources (Include Newspaper Article, Videos, etc.)
2. Indian Panorama (2011-2015) – Refereed includes 6 Journal Articles, 7 Reports, 11 Websites and 6 other sources (Include Newspaper Article, Videos, etc.)
3. Issues and Challenges (2011-2015) – Refereed includes 5 Journal Articles, 3 Reports, 4 Websites and 7 other sources (Include Newspaper Article, Videos, etc.)

The time frame of study and literature review was from January 2015-August 2015. Only such issues and challenges are taken into deliberation which are mainly common (among the refereed) and not been countered by the Indian wellness tourism sector yet.

What is Wellness?

Human is a social and sensual being, affected by all senses. To remain sound physically and mentally, it is necessary that all senses should work in effective and cordial way. Wellness is the realization of our true potential to live a healthier, happier and more successful existence (Wellness.com, Inc, 2015).

The term "wellness" entered the mainstream glossary in 1970s and still only hazily understood by most populace. In popular usage the term can be applied to anything that makes one feel good or that is "healthy" (Global Wellness Institute, 2013).

Halbert L. Dunn (1959), an American Doctor developed the concept of wellness and wellness perspectives asserting wellness as "A special state of health consisting an overall sagacity of well-being which sees 'Man' as comprising of body, mind and soul, and being dependent on his environment".

Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer (1998) affirmed wellness as being "a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which the body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community".

University of Miami (2015) and University of California (2015) propounded "Wellness is the vibrant procedure of becoming aware of, captivating responsibility for, and making choices that directly put in to one's well being and that of the common good."

President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports (2001) cited other researchers and concluded that

Wellness is a multidimensional state of human being describing the existence of optimistic health in an individual as exemplified by quality of life and a sense of well-being.

This description was adapted from the definitions of Corbin, Lindsey, Welk, & Corbin, (2002), Bouchard, Shephard, Stephens, Sutton, & McPherson (1990), Corbin, Pangrazi, & Franks, Definitions: Health fitness and physical activity (2000), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000). Quality of life has elucidated "As the satisfaction of an individual's ethics, purposes and needs through the actualisation of their abilities or standard of living" (Emerson, 1985).

World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) has describe Health as "a state of absolute physical, psychological and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

Global Wellness Institute (2013) explicate, this definition goes beyond mere freedom from disease or infirmity and emphasizes the proactive maintenance and improvement of health and well-being.

Vincent & Furnham (1997) suggested that there are various push and pull factors which explain the inclination of people towards wellness therapies. The push factor comprises the factors that wellness therapies are "More natural, effectual, soothing and sensible, that one could take an active part in it" and "Easy availability and their cost

effectiveness". The pull factor includes "Specific letdown of orthodox medicine to bring them relief", "Adverse side-effects of orthodox medicine" and "Poor communication between patients and orthodox medicine practitioners".

In India, wellness is a concept which has been in vogue since primordial times. Established medicinal and health practices like Ayurveda and yoga have always stressed on 'a healthy mind in a healthy body' (FICCI-PwC Knowledge Publication, 2011). Most of the ancient wellness concepts have largely focused on the basic needs of an individual within the need hierarchy, explicitly a focus on health, nutrition and relaxation (FICCI, 2013).

Global Wellness Institute (2013) has arrive to a question that:

Why is wellness important to people, business and government?

They suggested six motives for the question raised which are as follows:

Worldwide obesity has nearly doubled since 1980.

Almost 10% of the world's adult population has diabetes.

Chronic disease is responsible for 60% of deaths.

Over half the worldwide business population has experienced an appreciable rise in workplace stress in recent years.

- From 2002 to 2020, health spending in OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries will more than triple, to \$10 trillion.
- From 2000 to 2050, the percentage of the world's population over 60 years will double.

and involvement of both the mind and body. The following principles can also be considered as the characteristics or principles of wellness :

S.No	Principles	Assorted aspects	Citation
1.	Multi- dimensional	The most commonly described sub-dimensions are: Source : Wellness.com, Inc. (2015)	Adams (2003), Global Wellness Institute (2013), Bruess & Richardson (1992), President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports (2001), Global Spa Summit (2010), Corbin, Lindsey, Welk, & Corbin (2002), Eldin & Golanty (1992), Barwais (2011)
2.	Holistic	Importance of quality of life - a sense of happiness and satisfaction with our lives	Adams (2003), President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports (2001), Global Spa Summit (2010), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000)
3.	Individualistic	It is your body, mind, and spirit that do all the healing. There are different principles given by various author to define fundamentals of living well	Adams (2003), Global Spa Summit (2010), President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, (2001), Total Health Method (2012) Hopper Institute (2007), Barwais (2011)
4.	Self-responsibility	Possessed by the individual.	Global Spa Summit (2010), Hopper Institute (2007), President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports (2001)
5.	Attribute of Balance	Maintaining balance in our lives.	Adams (2003), Barwais (2011)

Wellness Tourism

In numerous ways Wellness Tourism is one of the most ancient forms of tourism. If one considers that careful attention was given to well-being by Romans and Greeks, the pursuit for spiritual enlightenment of mediaeval pilgrims, or the therapeutic seaside and spa tourism of the 18th and 19th Century European privileged. Possibly, however, there has been an unparalleled amplification in the pursuit of wellness in the history of tourism in recent years. The proliferation of wellness centers, holistic retreats, spas, and spiritual, pilgrimages, complementary and alternative therapies is unprecedented (House of Lords Report, 2002).

Wellness tourism is sum of all the affairs and phenomena ensuing from a journey and residence by people whose main motive is to protect or uphold their health. They usually stay in a specific hotel which provides the suitable experts knowhow and individual care. They require a wide-ranging service package consisting of physical fitness/ beauty care, healthy diet/ diet, relaxation/ meditation and psychological activity/ edification (Mueller and Kaufmann, 2001).that maintain or enhance their health and well being, and who are looking for exclusive, genuine or location based experience/ treatment not available in the home country (Global Wellness Institute, 2013).

Wellness tourism is also a much newer concept than medical tourism. So, it is difficult to pin down sources that define and explore the concept of wellness tourism on its own (Global Spa Summit, 2011).

Wellness and medical tourism are synchronously and frequently used across the globe. But there exist the differences between these two terms. The following table further explains the differences as:

Descriptions	Medical Tourism	Wellness Tourism	Cited
Definition	Includes populace who travel to a different place to proactively pursue activities that sustain or enhance their health and well being, and who are seeking unique, genuine or location based experience/ therapies not available in the home country.	Includes populace who travel to a different place to proactively pursue activities that sustain or enhance their health and well being, and who are seeking unique, genuine or location based experience/ therapies not available in the home country.	Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and RNCOS (2014), Global Spa Summit, (2011), Voigt (2013)

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Wellness Tourism	Medical Tourism	Descriptions	Cited
Definition	Includes populace who travel to a different place to get treated for an ailment, disorder, or a condition, or to undergo a superficial procedure, and who are seeking lower cost of care, higher quality than what they could availed in the home country.	Includes populace who travel to a different place to to proactively pursue activities that sustain or enhance their health and well being, and who are seeking unique, genuine or location based experience/ therapies not available in the home country.	Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and RNCOS (2014), Global Spa Summit, (2011), Voigt (2013)

Wellness tourism engages natives who travel to a unlike place to proactively pursue activities

Tourist typology	These tourists are generally ill or looking for Superficial/ dental surgical procedures or enhancements.	These tourists generally seek integrated wellness and preventive approaches to improve their health/ quality of life.	Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and RNCOS (2014), Global Spa Summit (2011), Voigt (2013)
Motivation for travel	Treat a specific disease, condition or ailment, and to access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost medical Care? • Higher quality medical care? • Different medical care? 	Proactive attention in maintaining or enhancing health /wellness / well-being? Access to different, authentic, or location-based offerings not available at home? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In quest of to practice a certain lifestyle? 	Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and RNCOS (2014), Global Spa Summit (2011), Voigt (2013)
Components	Untainted focus on disease & ailment cure	Focus on holistic well-being of mind, body and soul	Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and RNCOS (2014), Global Spa Summit (2011), Voigt (2013)
Therapies	This involves the conventional medicinal practices/surgeries completely inclined towards treating diseases and disorders of human body.	These include traditional/ Vedic healings like Yoga, Ayurveda, Salt baths, vital oil massage, rejuvenation therapies among others.	Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and RNCOS (2014), Global Spa Summit (2011), Voigt (2013)
Responsibility	Clinical responsibility	Individual responsibility	Global Wellness Institute, (2013), Voigt (2013)

Why India?

Global Spa Summit (2011) supported that “India is one of the oldest countries in terms of wellness tourism and one of the leading countries now in medical tourism. Many Indian traditional wellness therapies are being practiced by different countries worldwide (e.g., Ayurveda, Yoga and Meditation). India along with other Asian countries is one of the typical nations which understand and practice body-mind-spirit balance and use holistic or integrated medical systems that are also based on lifestyle.”

"India is perceived globally as one of the true spiritual abode of the modern wellness movement and has a powerful and unique 'wellness aura with its primeval, rich history of Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchkarma, Siddha, Unani and Meditation,"

Susie Ellis, chairman and CEO, Global Spa & Wellness Summit

British rock band “The Beatles” inadvertently set the trend for international celebrities visiting India on wellness tours? In 1968, they travelled to *Rishikesh* to attend an advanced Transcendental Meditation (TM) session at the ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (Sawan, 2013). Afterward Prince Charles, Camilla Duchess of Cornwall, Mia Farrow, Steve Jobs, and Oprah are just a few of the many Westerners who have congregated to India for life-changing excursion to visit meditation retreats and spiritual sites (Gregoire, 2013). Low entry barriers and growth potential of the wellness industry in India has attracted international players and domestic new entrants (FICCI-PwC Knowledge Publication, 2011).

Global Spa Summit (2011) concluded that the key attractions for wellness tourism in India includes “Low costs of treatments relative to other countries”, “High quality of care”, “Lack of language barriers (most speak English well)” and “Long history of traditional and alternative healing therapies (e.g., Ayurveda).”

In India, in addition to continuation of modern medicine, native or traditional medical practitioners continue to practice throughout the country. Popular aboriginal healthcare traditions include Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, Unani, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, and Yoga (Bansal, 2013).

The objective of wellness tourism is fulfilled in India by providing an opportunity to be away from the daily routine, hustles- bustles and coming into a different surrounding for relaxation. During their stay, the tourist receives an orientation that helps them to improve their life in terms of health and general well being through Ayurveda and Yoga. It is just like rejuvenation and cleansing process at all levels for an individual - physical, mental and emotional.

Issues and Challenges

India is now becoming the hub for global wellness tourism. Apart from such a vast spread and development of wellness tourism in India, there lays certain factors which are hindering the growth of this industry. If not focused it may appear as a threat in the future:

1. Negative image about the Country

In past few years, the increasing numbers of the cases of molestations and harassments against the international/ domestic tourists and natural calamities like floods in Utrakhand in 2013 and Jammu and Kashmir in 2014 has created a dark atmosphere, which in turn has resulted into decreasing inflow of the tourist. Apart from that the fear of terrorist attacks and activities has always a major consent among tourists.

2. Alarming diseases

Outbreak of diseases like Swine Flu, Dengue Malaria, and Meningoencephalitis has raised the questions on the wellness components like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy, etc. If alternative therapies are being so successful, why till date no cure has been developed or even cures has been developed, why people (Indian) are hesitating to go for such therapies. This also deviate prospective wellness tourists form undertaking such therapies.

3. Meager visiting experience

Customers who are visiting India have somehow met with the poor experience due to certain reasons like infrastructural facilities, poor hygienic conditions. Limited amenities, even unsatisfactory outcomes of the wellness

therapies have also contribute to the meager visitor experience. Sometimes the therapies are so heavily charged it goes beyond the customer's pocket, this also act as add on to the poor customer experience.

4. Lack of talent:

The rapid growth of wellness industry in the recent years, has led to the huge demand of the talented professional. FICCI-PwC Knowledge Publication in 2011 has projected for the additional skilled personnel requirement would be 600,000 additional over the next five years and also major concern would be their availability of such pool. There are only Few institutions which offer reliable education with adequate practical training. Lack of universally accepted accreditation or education standards affects the training quality imparted in local academies, thus leading to the gap between the demand and supply of the trained professionals for this industry. This also restricts the prospective students for thinking about such courses as a viable carrier alternative.

5. Service space is highly fragmented

The wellness industry is highly fragmented industry and thus it become challenging for the consumers to distinguish between a good service provider and a mediocre player. This is happening so because of the low-entry barriers which provide easy accesses of anyone get into the business. This is also resulting into the pricing pressure on the organized players who are forced to curtail the prices of the services and products offered. The entry of unorganized players and their misconducts has led to negative image of the industry. Even the costumers are sometimes being heavily charged for the services and customers find it fooled by them.

6. Wellness Insurance

Till date there is no such criteria is defined for the wellness in terms of insurance. The insurance companies as well as wellness providers are not able to secure the person who is travelling for seeking wellness services. Consumers are always being at the peril suitability of products or services and risk injury by untrained professionals. Therefore, it is desirable to have wellness insurance as similar to health insurance for Wellness customers.

7. Accreditation of wellness courses

Acceptance and penetration of QCI-NABH (Quality Council of India - National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers) guidelines in wellness industry is negligible. There is no accreditation body in India to accredit and monitor the wellness courses running in country. This also led to development of large pool highly untrained professional and as a result degradation of the quality services to customer. Customers find it difficult to distinguish between accredited and non-accredited center

8. Quality guidelines and compliances:

There are no quality guidelines and compliances which should be made mandatory for the service providers from government part. The industry is also providing services and products as per there availability not what actually being required by the customers. As a result customers are not aware of the quality of products or services they are availing. Consumers are always being in a doubt with unreliable quality of services and products.

Suggestions

1. Setting up a Regulatory Body/ Association for Accreditation:

The first and foremost step should be taken from government side is to set up a Regulatory body or Association to provide accredit and monitor the wellness centers throughout the country. This will also help the industry for getting talent inputs which are required to run the business.

2. Security:

The government must focus on the negativity which has being aired or airing about the country like cases of molestations and harassments against the International/ Domestic tourists and ensure about the submissive steps must be taken in that regard. Initially the security of foreign tourists must be taken into priority.

3. Collaborations and tie ups:

The wellness must come up with the tie ups or collaborations with the companies providing health insurance facilities to come up with the wellness Insurance for the tourist who are especially visiting India for the wellness purpose. This will act as add on for the safety of the tourists.

4. Quality guidelines:

The government should lay down the quality guidelines and compliances for the products and services offered to the tourists by the wellness centers. Also the integrants, quality and quantity must be made available to the public like of allopathic medicines. This will help the user to know about the products and its quality before availing that

Research and development:

The wellness centers must develop research and development cells for the developing new process and therapies for the diseases which are causing stern life loss across the country like Swine Flu, Dengue, etc. This will help in the people in remedial from these diseases and also restoring trust on these wellness therapies.

Conclusion

No doubt, wellness tourism is a booming industry and is in initial stage all across the globe. Since, India is home for ancient wellness therapies like Ayurveda, Yoga and Siddha, it has got the added advantage. But it is lagging far behind utilizing these advantages. If, mentioned issues are not focused and actions are not taken immediately, India would fall behind the countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Philippines which are currently giving stiff competition in the wellness sector. As wellness tourism is penetrating in India at a very fast pace, Government should come up with a strategic plan to overcome these challenges in wellness sector to improvise the quality of services, and also strengthening the base of wellness tourism in India. The government should also lay down the laws to prevent this grooming industry to develop into a mushrooming industry. Though the Government of India has announced to come up with the new National Health Policy focusing AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) at its centre, the focus should also be on the allied sectors which help the populace to meet the desired alternative therapies at the best available price with quality services.

Now the time has come when there is need of relevant primary qualitative and quantitative research can be done having this secondary research as one of the reference.

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