

New Avenues of Wellness Tourism in Untouched Aspects of Healing in India

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Abstract: India is known as a therapeutic centre for effective treatments. Tourists are travelling to India to visit wellness centres for treatment. The ancient Ayurveda, yoga and Unani medicines keep stress at bay, encourage a positive attitude, and heal the mind, body, and soul with a balanced diet and traditional therapies.

The lockdown imposed by countries led to a decrease in footfall of foreign tourist arrival, thus impacting the foreign exchange earnings. At the same time, revenue from domestic tourism had fallen rapidly. A dearth of opportunities and loss of revenue was observed in the Indian tourism sector. The paper's objective is to identify the new dimensions of the Wellness Industry in Domestic tourism. This exploratory research paper is based on the literature on the wellness tourism industry.

COVID-19 has revived the demand for wellness products. In tourism, India offers a range of Wellness initiatives, i.e., Yoga Centres and Natural Food Markets. This paper identifies unexplored and underexplored avenues of wellness tourism that can revive domestic tourism. The paper recommends various locations across India that can promote the untapped avenues of wellness tourism.

Keywords: Wellness Tourism, Wellness tourist spots, COVID-19, Incredible India

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations; World Tourism Organization Barometer for March 2017, India climbed 16 spots up to 24 in the International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) ranking amidst the Asian Market. India emerges as a preferred destination for tourists with many potentials to grow as a tourism market due to the vast availability of tourism products, i.e., cuisine, culture, adventure, rural, spiritual, and religious tourism, etc. Incredible India campaign promotes domestic tourism with programs like Swadesh darshan, Bharat darshan, Dekho Apna Desh. India is a land of unity in diversity. India is united by a multi-culture society, diversity of art, craft, dance, and music. The "Incredible India" campaign is led by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. This campaign promotes India's authenticity, sanctity, spirituality, serenity, and beautiful culture and offers customized packages to tourists based on demographics, i.e., age, sex, education, and spending capacity. Mesmerizing sites of beauty, nature, culture, adventure, different cuisines, crafts are bundled together and sold to aspiring tourists, who are willing to mould as per the cultural diversity of democratic India.

In the tourism industry, handicrafts from across the country are brought together in one platform to showcase talent and culture. Tourists celebrate the unique diversity of Indian traditions and culture ambiance, different dance styles, vivid art and craft, ethnic cuisines, fascinating culture and rural ethos. Different states and union territories of India attract tourists from all the circles. Tourists travelling to the states are amazed by the vibrancy of beautiful India. The Rich Culture of India displays beautiful artifacts, handicrafts, clothes, and jewellery of different regions. Tourists can interact with artisans and artists to develop customized tours. The visit to India offers a glimpse of myriad cultures. Tourists visiting India appreciate and admire the beauty of each state as they travel to various state emporiums to explore exquisite handlooms, handicrafts, and handmade fabrics, i.e., Silk, Tapestry etc. They also enjoy the varied cuisines of different states like Rajasthan and Maharashtra, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh

sold during fairs and festivals. Tourism becomes a delightful experience for the tourists, as they experience the essence of beauty, nature, culture, adventure, different cuisines, crafts in the rural part of India.

India has an amalgamation of beautiful tourist spots. Delhi, the capital of India, is known as the "City of Cities." Northeast India has a range of entire villages, the monuments of Mamallapuram have a storyline in every stone, French quarters of Pondicherry, Tradition and Culture of Bhopal and Varanasi, Craft Caravan of Karnataka, Bengal, Odisha, Goa, Utrakhnad, Himalayas, Kutch and many more tourist destinations offer mesmerizing beauty. India is a hub of Eco & Wildlife Tourism, MICE Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Cruise Tourism, Golf Tourism, Polo Tourism, Medical Tourism, Wellness Tourism. These niche sectors and potential avenues have not been utilized fully. Their potential to increase tourist footfall is underrated, and the revenue generation is less due to partial opportunities.

The growing demand for holistic health and a robust immune system has made people realize the significance of obtaining a healthy lifestyle. Wellness tourism is an influential segment of the Tourism Industry, Global Tourism Industry has a turnover of \$2.6 trillion, and the global wellness industry has a turnover of \$4.2 trillion. According to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy Summary of 2018, "An international wellness tourist spends 53% more than the average international tourist A domestic wellness tourist spends 178% more than the average domestic tourist".

Wellness tourism is a source of maintaining good health, which is the primary motivation to travel to distant locations (Times, 2020). Health-conscious travellers are the target clientele of hotels and resorts with health products, i.e., Ayurveda and Yoga centres. The Ministry of Tourism's Incredible India Campaign promotes wellness centres, Wellness Conferences, Wellness Fairs. The rise of wellness tourism entices different players in the travel, hospitality, Spa, Fitness, and retail worlds to distinguish themselves from competitors. India earns US\$2.3 billion yearly from its health and medical tourism (Majeed, 2018)

In India, the wellness industry is as per the requirement of consumers. People are opting for health and wellness holidays. A sought-after wellness segment is staying in Babba Ramdev's ashram with accommodation and a modified diet. NiraYog Gram, Meditation Center, Gangotri, Patanjali Yogpeeth, Patanjali Chikitsalay, Patanjali, Aryogyakendra Patanjali Mega Store are the valued segment of Wellness. The International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres are widespread across the globe offering Art of Living Meditation sessions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourism and hospitality industry makes a mega contribution to boosting our country's economy. Indian Tourism and Hospitality Industry Analysis reflected that "Contribution of the Travel and Tourism sector to India's GDP is likely to increase from Rs 15,24,000 crore (US\$ 234.03 billion) in 2017 to Rs 32,05,000 crore (US\$ 492.21 billion) in 2028. Total earnings from the sector in India stood at US\$ 28.6 billion in 2018 and is set to reach US\$ 50 billion by 2022" (IBEF, 2019).

Wellness is an optimum stage of mental, social and physical well-being. It is a state of being disease-free: Hale and the hearty state of body, mind and soul known as wellness. Collins Dictionary defines wellness as the state of good health and happiness attained through proper diet and exercise. The productivity of people is associated with good health. Wellness helps in maintaining the harmony of mind, body and spirit. It is the active process of achieving desired health objectives.

The term Well-being encompasses the functioning of healthy well-being. "Well-being is a multi-faceted theory as a state of physical, psychological, and social health (Pressman, Kraft, & Bowlin, 2013). "Well-being is a term used synonymously with a wide range of concepts including self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-determination, resilience, quality of life, mood enhancement, positive mental health, life satisfaction, and worthwhileness" (Huppert, 2017).

Wellness and well-being terms are discussed in the literature of economics, social science, food marketing and general social commentary (McMahon, Tapsell, & Williams, 2010). These terms also encompass mental, physical and emotional health and life satisfaction such as happiness and contentment. The terms wellness and well-being are also used ubiquitously and variably in health practices. The concept of wellness focuses on physical, social, and mental well-being (Seppälä, Nykänen, & Ruotsalainen, 2012).

3. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INDIAN ECONOMY AND TOURISM

The primary motive of this research paper is to promote the different facets of wellness tourism to prospective buyers in unprecedented times of COVID-19. There have been 10,672,035 Coronavirus Cases, 153,525 Deaths and 10,334,850 people have recovered so far (Worldometer, 2021).

The worse impact of Coronavirus led to the worldwide lockdown. Travelling and cancellation of existing bookings created havoc in the tourism industry. For avoiding the Corona advisories, the Government issued the guidelines. The tourism industry was severely affected due to the closing down of borders. As per Times (2020), The Indian economy suffered a setback of Rs.7-8 lakh crore due to the lockdown of factories and businesses, suspended flights, halted trains, and restricted movement of vehicles and people. International tourist arrivals fell by 72% in January-October 2020 as per the UNWTO (2020) barometer. Asia and the Pacific observed an 82% decrease in arrivals in January-October 2020. While the demand for international travel remained subdued, domestic tourism was improving owing to initiatives of the Ministry of Tourism India., More jobs could be created in the Indian tourism industry by rebooting domestic tourism.

The tourist market has implemented stringent practices to control the spread of disease by breaking the chain. Hotels, Tourist attractions, and other accommodation units started following COVID-19 safety protocols, i.e. social distancing, safe practices, regular fumigation of rooms, contactless technology. COVID-19 changes resulted in adverse impacts, i.e. variation in the socio-economic status of people.

4. KEY INITIATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM

The Ministry of Tourism initiated a Dekho Apna Desh webinar series to rejuvenate the tourism industry to boost domestic tourism and spread awareness about local destinations with various cultures. The webinar touched upon states and Union Territories to promote unknown tourist locations. These webinars under the theme of Dekho Apna Desh covered India as a yoga destination, Delhi's Personal Diary, Calcutta – A Confluence of Cultures, The Monuments of Mamallapuram, Humayun's Tomb, Ladakhs, Visual treats of food, Exclusive Villages, Awadh, Pondicherry, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Bengal Punjab, Goa, Odisha, Mysuru, Uttarakhand, Bhopal, Tigers and Tourism, Northeast India, Kutch, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal, Vishakhapatnam etc.

By 2022 this industry is likely to grow at 7.5%. It encompassed mental and spiritual health. Various wellness destinations need to be marketed, i.e., the Ayurvedic practices of Kerela are its USP, and backwaters offer a beautiful retreat. Utrkhand's serene surroundings, holistic approach to yoga and a healthy lifestyle, pristine beaches of Goa are the fast-emerging tourism destinations. Ministry of Tourism's "Incredible India Campaign "also promotes the ancient practices of Yoga, Ayurveda and Wellness.

This research study discusses the future and potential of the wellness industry in India. There are multiple challenges, which could be overcome by following a healthy lifestyle, naturopathy, yoga, meditation etc.

5. EXISTING AVENUES OF WELLNESS TOURISM IN THE DOMESTIC CIRCUIT

Wellness is a quality or state of well-being, a holistic approach to life. Wellness can be attained in different dimensions and can transform people's behaviour. The wellness tourism business consists of the following dimensions.



Figure1. Existing avenues of Wellness Tourism

SPA The spa industry is growing in different forms to attract more buyers of this health segment. i.e., Day Spa, spas in hotels and resorts, and destinations with natural hot springs. Ayurvedagram Heritage Wellness Center in Bengaluru, Shreyas Yoga Retreat, Bengaluru, The Leela, Kovalam, Kerala, Devaaya, Goa, Vana, Dehradun, Sarovaram Ayurvedic Health Center, Ashtamudi, Kerala and Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre, Mysore, Karnataka are the famous wellness centres of India.

DAY SPA offers bountiful of services to their customers for rejuvenating good health, beautiful body with wellness practices of massaging, relaxed mind through the treatment of facial exfoliation, electrolysis, manicure, pedicure, hair services for cutting, styling, colouring, hair wraps, face and bodypack, mud pack, chocolate pack and medication

MEDICAL SPA offers treatment for deteriorating skin, fine lines, wrinkles, hyperpigmentation, skin problems like acne, laser hair removal, peeling, tissue tightening, microdermabrasion, photo rejuvenation, Botox treatment and therapeutic facials. This holistic massage is guided and extended by experienced therapists. Some famous centres are Keraleeyam - An Ayurveda and Panchakarma Centre, famous for Fitness & recreation.

The Spa's in Hotels are upscale and luxurious, targeting high-end clientele. Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort, Greater Noida, has the best fitness centre and six senses treatment. Tamaya – Spa, Salon and Wellness is famous for soothing services for healing the mind, body and soul. In Gurgaon, The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa pampers and indulges its patrons with the nourishment of the skin, facial treatments to cleanse and boost beauty. It is a plethora of luxury face, hand, and hair care treatments with the combined features of yoga, peace and meditation.

Spa's offers customized services to retain its customers (Tabacchi, 2010). The Spa extends the facility of maintaining a healthy weight, relaxation and rejuvenation in different locations, i.e. Ananda in the Himalayas, Rishikesh in Uttarakhand, a fitness centre, and an open-air temperature-controlled swimming pool with comfy hydrotherapy facilities for its patrons.

YOGA CENTRES

Wellness consists of physical fitness, a healthy ecosystem, a nutritious diet, meditation, and mental activities, i.e. Yoga, Nirvana, Meditation, which can help deal with depression and chronic diseases. Yoga is a treasure of deep-rooted Indian culture; it is a way of life with different Asanas. It may have taken the form of Power Yoga, but its ancient origin lies in India. In India, Uttarakhand is the World's capital of yoga and Rishikesh island of yogis, and there are yogic gurus.

VITAMIN SHOPS

These stores are spread all over the World and prominently located in PAN India, with multiple stores to cover the altered and customized need of health enthusiasts. They assist people with a virtual nutritionist who can recommend the health supplement of proteins, vitamins, whey products, herbal products, super foods and natural beauty products.

FITNESS CENTRES

The fitness centres have the best facilities, i.e. recreation facilities, i.e., sports, exercising machines, muscle building, Cardio training, weight loss combined with detoxification and other activities., These centres also offer outdoor activities, i.e., jogging track, volleyball, cricket, skating, swimming. The fitness industry is growing uninterruptedly. Revenue in the Fitness segment is projected to reach US\$2,152m in 2021 (Statista, 2020). The fitness industry also consists of wearable smartwatch, smart wears, fitness apps with calorie and step counters, tracking of meals and water, by detecting the movement of users states the worldwide revenue of US\$16.8 billion in 2019 is expected to increase to US\$21.4 billion by 2024 (Statista, 2020).

NATURAL FOOD MARKETS

This market comprises Power/Superfood and its components in providing the essential nutrients to our body. Power food nourishes the body with essential omega acids, minerals, fats, proteins and calcium, thus forming a protective layer. This natural food can boost immunity to guard the human body against chronic ailments. They are a rich source of energy and improve the overall health of human beings. A few examples of Power food are blueberries with rich content of Vitamin C and fibre. Superfoods have high nutrients (antioxidants, vitamins, minerals), which offer multiple benefits. Natural or unprocessed foods are cheap, nutritious, readily available and digestible.

Hazelnuts, Cashewnuts, Pecan, Almonds and Walnuts are good sources of proteins. Olive oil, Wholegrains, Maize, Common bean, Amarnath, Quinoa, Chia seeds have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. For a healthy and optimum lifestyle latest diet trend, i.e., Keto, Vegan, Probiotic, Vegetarian, Carnivorous, gluten-free, Paleo is made available in Vitamin stores with online order and delivery options.

6. UNEXPLORED ASPECTS OF WELLNESS TOURISM

Various avenues of wellness tourism exist globally but remain underexplored in India. Fig 2 describes different types of wellness tourism that are offered worldwide. We have identified some wellness tourism products that have the potential for growth in India. As per the Global Wellness Institute, these are the various wellness tourism products offered globally.



Figure2. Global wellness tourism initiatives (GWI, 2021)

SAFARI SPA

Safari Spa is a wellness segment of Zambia where a Safari is combined with the attractive feature of Spa. The Spa facility can be availed in Tented Suites, where the customer can enjoy viewing antelope grazing in the wildlife forest or sanctuaries. In India, Safari Spa therapy can be introduced in the outskirts of Sanctuaries to offer a view of wildlife. This will increase the footfall of tourists, and the Wellness product of Safari Spa will attract more buyers. Famous wildlife sanctuaries in India, i.e. Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka, Kaziranga National Park, Assam, Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan, Satpura National Park, Madhya Pradesh, Hemis National Park, Jammu And Kashmir, Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park, Andaman Islands, can be a potential destination for offering the Safari Spa in India.

SAND BATH

Sun and sand are the main product of bathing. Hot sand baths (psammotherapy) treat chronic problems, i.e., respiratory diseases (Antonellia & Donelli, 2019). For sand therapy quality of sand needs to be checked for hygiene and neatness to avoid skin infections. In India, Sand bath therapy is offered in Jaisalmer and can be extended in other desserts. Sun, sand and sea form an essential component of wellness tourism. Sunbath is known to strengthen our bones, and sand baths can offer relaxation to their patrons. Both sunbath and sandbath are popular among health-conscious tourists, but sometimes dirty beaches and poor quality of sand can demotivate customers from trying these segments.

BALNEOTHERAPY

It is a therapeutic form of bathing in mineral-rich springs. It is similar to hot springs as it also uses thermal water like hot springs. The only difference is that water is naturally rich in minerals due to its origin, i.e., water in some cities is highly enriched in minerals. This therapy involves bathing in natural thermal lakes or ponds and swimming pools filled with thermal water or a direct tap to the thermal source. Balneotherapy is also known as water therapy, aquatic therapy, pool therapy and Hydrotherapy. This nature therapy uses water in different forms and temperatures for sustaining healthiness, avoiding,

and treating ailments. Mineral water comes out from natural underground reservoirs and mineral springs for this therapy. Gradually this is gaining popularity in India but not a well-known segment in India.

HOT WATER SPRINGS

Hot water springs are formed naturally in some places. These springs have a temperature ranging from 47 °C to 70 °C. These hot water springs can cure skin diseases, joint pains, and therapeutic effects. Hot water springs can attract tourists from around the World. They are nature-built Spa's accessible to tourists for healing therapy. These springs are relaxing and stressbusters for tourists. These hot water springs with the ability to cure and heal can attract many tourists for wellness tourism.

Hot water springs are hydrothermal springs where hot water is generated from the earth and is equipped with high mineral content, i.e., calcium, lithium, and radium found in geographical locations. These springs have medicinal value and cure microbial diseases; therefore, they are popular among tourists (Bisht, Das, & Tripathy, 2011).

Hot springs are a rising segment for wellness tourists as it offers "relaxation," "peace and tranquillity," "indulgence," and "escape." Hot springs are estimated to be a \$50 billion global industry. Tourists believe that hot water springs offer abundant health benefits combined with better sleep" (Cohen, 2017).

Therapeutic healing practices are linked to the Hot Water Springs as they form the principal reason for travelling to a particular region for health benefits (Mihaela & Unnikrishnan, 2012).

We have 340 hot springs in our country, which can be an exciting destination with their detoxifying and relaxing nature. The Government of India needs to develop an inclusive strategy to market these unknown destinations for strengthening domestic tourism, where tourists can rejuvenate themselves with healing elements connected to hot springs landscapes.

The unstructured hot springs can be developed into well-designed pools to attract this segment's buyers. Hot water springs are a significant natural resource for cultural, religious (sacred/Holy Water) and wellness benefits (Jānis Bikse, 2021). These springs have minerals and health benefits. They have natural landscapes and can be a significant reason for attracting potential buyers of the wellness segment. Tourism and Hospitality Marketers need to design a sustainable planning module for promoting the hot water springs as a Wellness tourist destination in India.

India's prominent hot water springs are Panamik in Nubra valley, Kheer Ganga hot water spring, Manikaran Sahib, Tattapani hot water spring, Gaurikund, Yumthang and Reshi, which are known to heal skin and bacterial diseases due to the availability of natural resources.

7. IMPACT OF WELLNESS INDUSTRY

The Global Wellness Summit's 2018 trends report emphasizes that it takes experiential travel - focusing on authentic cultural experiences - to a deeper, more emotional level.

Wellness Industry has a broad scope in India. Due to the Pandemic, people avoid leisure activity and opt for domestic tourism only. People have restored their faith in our ancient therapy system; that is why the wellness travel market and retreats validate the satisfaction of the ancient medical health system. By following the wellness practices, health can be regained and preserved, i.e., skin and hair disorders due to ageing can also be cured.

Rising demand for Wellness -Spa during travelling has led to the establishment of Spa at Airports; Cathay Pacific has set up Yoga and meditation space as part of the business class lounge in Hong Kong. Medical and wellness tourists are crossing borders to treat themselves with meditation and massage therapy. The clientele of this business belongs to multi-generation ranging from the age group of 30-60. Senior age people are taking wellness to cure themselves of diseases like Alzheimer's. Vegan, Keto and Flexi diets are moderated according to consumer needs.

India is turning out to be a lucrative wellness segment. In India, Tourism practices are developed to increase footfall in a particular location, i.e., tranquillity in the Himalayas, making it a perfect spot for spiritual tourism, power yoga, aromatherapy, etc., and adventure tourism. Wellness destinations can awaken the mind and soul with human connectivity, and integrated yoga and meditation practice can heal people with insightful experiences and a feeling of awe and surprise. Wellness tourism will rule the market and cater to the needs of well-being clientele. Newmarket strategies may be required to introduce new wellness products in different countries (Jessica Mei Pung, 2020).

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The tourism industry in India needs to adopt the new changes for assuring the best services to its customers:

- The destination is safe for travelling with proper authentication and certification. Wellness is likely to be the future. Staying safe will be the priority for people during COVID-19.
- Wellness tourism promotes the mental and spiritual health of human beings. Therefore, Hotels and Resorts brochures must promote their Spa and Ayurvedic Centres.
- Ministry of tourism is extending financial help under the Market Development Assistance Scheme (MDA) to renowned wellness and Ayurveda centres accredited by NABH. The scheme will help the participants in Tourism Fairs, Wellness Conferences, Wellness Fairs and allied Road Shows.
- The focus of the Government is on promoting health tourism at various international platforms such as World Travel Mart, London, ITB, Berlin.
- The Ministry of Tourism has formulated guidelines for Wellness tourism, which addresses various issues, including available quality publicity material, training and capacity building for the service providers and participation in international and domestic wellness-related events. Tour operators must follow these guidelines to market India as a Package deal of health and wellness.

9. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that India is a popular destination of wellness tourism, but considering the halt on International tourism, India needs to diversify this sector for domestic tourists, who can visit these places for curing and healing themselves. The holistic development of wellness destinations can be a fruitful offering of calmness and tranquillity away from the humdrum of hectic life. The benefits of the wellness industry can be popularised via advertorials and electronic media. The wellness industry has more female clientele in comparison to its male counterparts. Therefore the wellness sector needs to leverage this segment to attract more female buyers.

Wellness tourism can be the saviour of travel and tourism in India. The new avenues identified in the study, Safari Spa, Sand Bath, Balneotherapy and Hot Water Springs, promise to revive the domestic tourism sector. The recommended destinations can generate revenue through direct and indirect employment.

The Government needs to formulate steps for marketing the wellness locations. Ministry of Tourism must identify, diversify, develop and promote wellness tourism. Entrepreneurship opportunities in the global wellness sector, Yoga centre, Vitamin Shops etc. International seminars and conferences on varied aspects of wellness, health talks must be conducted regularly to boost wellness tourism in the domestic sector. The domestic tourism industry can bring back the revenue to state tourism by changing the socio-economic status of the local community. Local communities and accommodation marketers need to participate in marketing the unknown destinations and strengthening the faith of domestic and international tourists. The holistic approach of Indian wellness therapy has a vast potential to attract more tourists from foreign countries.

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