

# WELLNESS: A NEW MODE OF TOURISM

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## ABSTRACT

**L**ike all other sectors of the world economy, tourism is also feeling the pinch of the crisis that has resulted from the global economic turmoil. World economic situation since 2007/2008 has put an extra pressure on people's psycho-physical state of health. People are increasingly looking forward to new ways of relaxation and re-energizing themselves. Some modes of tourism, globally, due to the economic downturn, have slowed down, but the tourism sector itself has done remarkably well during the last two-three years by offering the new model i.e. facility generally called *Wellness*. Within tourism, wellness is relatively a new trend that has registered an impressive growth rate. World-wide more and more people are traveling to destinations that provide wellness facilities. The rise of 'wellness' concept can be attributed to two factors. First, the WHO has now long been pushing forward an integrated concept of «well-being» and «fitness» into its global health policy. Second, the overall education of people has increased the human awareness of personal health. Tourism service providers, especially the luxury hotels were quick to cash upon these facts and created a palette of wellness services such as spa and health treatments, occupational health therapy, beauty treatments, sports' facilities, spiritual activities, massages, and rehabilitation programs, etc.

Since sufficient data on the subject have not yet emerged, the paper basically discusses some conceptual aspects of wellness tourism only.

Wellness: A new mode of tourism



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the world is undergoing far-reaching changes in attitudes, behavior and economic life of the people. Frequent natural disasters and global economic crisis have resulted in economic miseries of the people. Long existing widespread hunger and under nourishment, poverty and unemployment have not only resulted in economic decline (fall in consumption, savings and investments, deterioration of standards of living etc.) but also in social discontent and fall in the happiness index<sup>2</sup>.

Economic crisis that is underway has been affected by the negative growth effects. Practically, all sectors of the national economies have been experiencing the effects, and tourism is no exception.

By nature, humans are resilient and in face of odds and always try to find *via media* solutions. In the tourism sector against all the economic odds, dissatisfaction and depression among people has found refuge in ways of relaxation of soul, body and mind. People, during the last five years, have increasingly turned towards the ways of health and wellness activities. Tourism providers have, accordingly, made good on the opportunity and offered attractive wellness packages in specialized destination.

While in the late 1980s and 1990s most of the such destinations were primarily located in SE Asia, however, in the current decade, more and more European destinations are becoming popular. With Switzerland and France being the cherished destinations of the rich, highly competitive European destinations like Austria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Turkey and others, have been successfully offering wellness facilities and having some comparative advantages. Naturally, the already established destinations in the SE Asia remains strong competitors in the market. However, at least in Europe, increased number of people is looking for nearest locations. Although, leading luxury hotels are among the top providers of such services, modest wellness service providers have successfully entered this emerging market. Not only more and more new destinations and service providers are emerging but also new wellness services are being developed offering the tourists attractive choices.

## II. THE CONCEPTS OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The term '*health tourism*' has not been well defined. Since the 1970s it has implied 'the provision of health facilities utilizing the natural resources of the country, in particular mineral water and climate'. Goodrich and Goodrich (1987, 217) define it as:

<sup>2</sup>The neo-classical economic theory subjectively defines happiness and has long been the standard of measurement used interchangeably with utility as well as the general welfare. Modern classical economics no longer attempts to quantify happiness or satisfaction through measurements in consumption and profits. Instead, argues that individual's preference is revealed through choice. The idea that modern neoclassical economics define happiness on the basis of consumption is widely disputed.

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is an index of human well-being and environmental impact that was introduced by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in July 2006. The index is designed to challenge well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Human Development Index (HDI), which are seen as not taking sustainability into account. In particular, GDP is seen as inappropriate, as the usual ultimate aim of most people is not to be rich, but to be happy and healthy. Furthermore, it is believed that the notion of sustainable development requires a measure of the environmental costs of pursuing those goals.

«an attempt on the part of a tourist facility to attract tourists by deliberately promoting its health-care services and facilities, in addition to its regular amenities. These health care services may include medical examinations by qualified doctors and nurses at the resort or hotel, special diets, acupuncture, trans-vital injections, vitamin complex intakes, special medical treatments for various diseases such as arthritis, and herbal medicines”.

Hall (1992, 151) provides an analysis of health tourism within the context of adventure and sport tourism. Health tourism is compared to tourism based on its activities particularly

- Sun and fun activities
- Engaging healthy activities
- Motivation for travel is primarily health
- Travel for sauna, massage, and other health activities
- Medical treatment

Muller and Kaufmann (2000) make a distinction between health and wellness. They regard wellness tourism as a subset of health tourism. According to Dunn (1959) wellness is a “state of health, which comprises an overall sense of well being and sees a person as consisting body, mind and spirit. Lifestyle and self-responsibility for health see paramount in the quest for a better quality of the life. In some countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland, there is a considerable emphasis on ‘medical well-ness’.

It is believed that the term wellness has emerged from the WHO notion of ‘well-being’ and the concept of fitness. In the Central and Southeast European countries, there is an enhanced emphasis on sunshine, sea air, and thalassotherapy. Physical fitness is also seen as an integral part of everyday wellness. In Asian countries, many spiritual activities such as yoga, meditation, and massages are considered important daily activities.

The concept of wellness clearly means different in contexts and countries. We can demonstrate the wide range of health and wellness products and facilities as shown in Table - 1.

TABLE – 1. Concept of Health and Wellness Tourism

<b>Health Tourism</b>				
	<i>Wellness</i>		<i>Medical</i>	
Holistic	Leisure and Recreation	Medical Wellness	Therapeutic	Surgical
Spiritual	Beauty Treatment	Therapeutic Recreation	Illness related Rehabilitation	Cosmetic Surgery
Yoga and Meditation	Sport and Fitness	Lifestyle related Rehabilitation	Healing and Recuperation	Dentistry
New Age	Pampering	Occupational Wellness	Thalassotherapy, Nutritional and Detox Programs	Operations and Transplants
<b>Types of Health Tourism Facilities</b>				
Retreat		Spas		Clinics and Hospitals
Ashram		Hotels and Resorts		
Festivals	Leisure Centers			Cruises

SOURCE: Adapted from Smith and Puczko (2009:7)

### III: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the concept of wellness is of a relatively recent origin, the subject is not loaded with substantial scientific literature. A few books, reports and surveys are available around the world. Following is a selection of some recent available material we provide in this paper some insight on the subject matter that may facilitate the scholars to undertake some serious research on related issues of wellness.

(2002) **The Wellness Revolution: How to Make a Fortune in a Trillion Dollar Industry**, Paul Z Pilzer, (New York: Kindle Ed.), is an easy to read a book for mass readers. The author stresses the growing significance of wellness therapy in health tourism calling it a 'revolution' in the industry. The book explores varied possibilities for new entrepreneurs in the wellness and health care industry.

(2008) **Understanding the Global Spa Industry** (ed.), Marc Cohen & Gerard Bodekar (London: Butterworth-Heinemann) Examines the management practices in the spa industry and offers a groundbreaking and comprehensive approach to global management. He book examines the spa services and development of the spa business from its historical beginnings to the size of the market today: business development and planning, spa operations and business models; spa products and technologies and the application of branding and market strategies; infrastructure, design and environmental issues, including the sustainability and social and environmental benchmarking; human resources from education and training to professional and regulatory issues and professional and corporate ethics and values.

(2008) **Fitness and Wellness** is a short report prepared by the Research Group of (San Francisco/Boston: Merriman Curhan Ford). It focuses on the obesity problem in the US costing millions of dollars annually in lower productivity, higher absenteeism rates, as well as higher health care costs (estimated to be around 957 billion US\$ by 2030. As a result spa industry, along with Yoga and Pilates practices is striving to provide integrated services for mind, body and spirit with exercise. The study provides an insight as to how the consumers can lose weight, lower cholesterol, reduce weight and achieve overall well-being. The report also provides basic information on fitness equipment market, gym and spa industry in the US.

(2008) **Health & Wellness Tourism**, Caribbean Export Development Agency: Barbados) is a statement of ten point strategy of success of wellness tourism. It provides an insight in the CSME (Caribbean Single Market & Economy) tourism market in four segments (1) medical tourism; (2) wellness and spa; (3) nursing and elderly care; and (4) diagnostic service. It stresses upon identifying target market, overcoming potential barriers, knowing what the competitors are doing, and differentiation of product and employing promotion strategy.

(2009) **Health and Wellness Tourism** (ed), Melanie Smith and Laszlo Puczko, (London: Butterworth-Heinemann), takes an innovative look at this rapidly growing sector of today's thriving tourist industry. The book examines the range of motivations that drives this diverse sector of tourists, the products that are being developed to meet their needs and the management implications of these developments. A wide range of international case studies

(e.g. Belgium, Finland, Italy, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, The Netherlands, UK and the US) illustrate the multiple aspects of the industry and emerging trends including spas, medical wellness, meditation, festivals, pilgrimage and yoga retreats. The authors also evaluate marketing and promotional strategies and assess operational and management issues in the context of health and wellness tourism. Special attention is drawn to the motivations and profiles of the wellness tourist and segmentation and management of market demand and supply.

(2010) **Spas and the Global Wellness Market: Synergies and Opportunities**, Palo Alto, California: Stanford Research Institute) is an elaborate (104 page) market report on the spas and the global wellness market. It is not only a study of the wellness concept and methodology but also of the growing global wellness market, the wellness consumers and of opportunities for spas in the industry.

## IV. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Many visitors to modern day health and wellness centers are often unaware of the cultural origins of treatments they enjoy. They may not realize that Indian Ayurvedic practices go back as far as 5000 BC, or that the Egyptian women around 3000 BC used same sort of cosmetics as today. Chinese medical practices go back to 1000 BC. Earliest reference to healing waters of spas (Latin *sanitas per aqua*) is about 1700 BC. Greeks, Romans and Ottomans have left a legacy of baths to the Europeans. Ancient civilizations of Asia and the Middle East have been well aware of benefits of massage, yoga, meditation, herbal medicines, and other forms of healing and spiritual practices for many more centuries than in Europe. While the Siamese (Thai) practiced massage even before 100 BC, the Japanese used natural therapy springs in 737 AD, the Indians have practiced Ayurvedic treatments in their Ashrams.

The history of health tourism in Europe has tended to be based around spas and seawater treatments. Hydrotherapy or water-based treatments are the cornerstone of what European spas have traditionally had to offer with a focus on health and physical well-being. It is only in the recent years that cosmetic and beauty treatment has become more popular, as well as more spiritual and psychological activities. As with the improved health standard of people in Europe improved, spas increasingly shifted their focus from physical and medical (mineral water, thermal water, seawater, mud, climate and oxygen therapy, special diets, etc.) to more relaxing and body pampering activities (focused on body and beauty treatments including massage, steam and sauna, and relaxation in pools and baths).

After the World War II, while in Western Europe spas became stagnant, in the East European countries they were boosted by the State under communism. In many EE countries these specialized in medical treatments and changed their professional appearance after 1990.

Lee (2004) suggests that the European health and wellness model is based on four elements: water, fire, earth and air. *Water* therapies help to heal and soothe the body; *heat* treatment induces body sweating and accelerating blood circulation; *earth* offers numbers of herbs, flowers, plants, fruits and mud; and fresh *air* and oxygen are the essence of life. A balance between these elements was considered essential by the Greek philosophers. However,

it must be noted that Indian<sup>3</sup> and Chinese<sup>4</sup> philosophies have for millenniums practiced models based on the harmonization of these elements. Siamese, Australian Aborigines and Maoris too have used herbal remedies, massages, deep spiritual beliefs in holistic ways to preserve the good health and enhance wellbeing. Tribal Africa has traditionally drawn from the desert's mud or clay, salt from the ocean and plants and herbs from forests, and used them for remedies and healing. Relaxation through massage used by the Masai tribes; spiritual and psycho-physical training technique for Zulu warriors; trance dances by Ancient Bushman are known practices in the African continent.

## V. VARIOUS CONCEPTS RELATED TO WELLNESS

Wellness should not be confused by health. It is supposed to create harmony in mental, physical, spiritual or biological health in general and has stronger ties with changing lifestyle or doing something healthy than with curing a specific disease. As stated above, the concept of wellness is the co-product of the awareness of sound health, well being and happiness. The three elements differ in understanding.

As stated above, the concept of wellness was developed as a special state of health comprising an overall sense of well being which sees human being as consisting of body, spirit and mind and being dependent on their environment. In the western world people have attempted to define wellness by understanding as the harmony of body, mind and spirit, self-responsibility, physical fitness, beauty care, healthy nutrition, relaxation, meditation, mental activity, education, environmental sensitivity, and social contacts as fundamental elements. Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices towards, a more successful existence. It advocates positive and optimistic outlook, and a holistic and balanced approach to life. The concept embraces physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and occupational aspects of life.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia (2007) well being can be defined as 'what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person'. It is more than just happiness. As well as 'feeling satisfied and happy, well being means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community' (NEF). Diener and Saligman (2004) consider following constitutes of high well being:

1. living in a democratic and stable society that meets material needs;
2. have supportive friends and family;
3. have rewarding and engaging employment with adequate income;
4. be reasonably healthy and able to treat physical and mental health problems;
5. have one's own value goals; and
6. have a philosophy/religion providing guidance and purpose to one's life.

Though the term 'quality of life' (QoL) is difficult to define, it has come to understand

<sup>3</sup> Prime healing tradition of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma and the Far East countries the *Ayurveda*, is regarded by the scholars as the oldest healing system in the world. A harmony between the three universal forces: air (*vata*), fire (*pitta*), and earth (*kapha*) is essential. According to this tradition *yoga* and *dhyana* (meditation) helps to keep and achieve this harmony.

<sup>4</sup> Traditional Chinese medical practices focus on the individual and provide a combination of three elements: energy (*chi*), governing force of vitality and longevity (*jing*), and the mind (*shen*). The complementary forces *yin* and *yang* govern the *chi*.

‘peoples’ satisfaction with their lives, their physical, mental, social and emotional health, and the nature of the environment in which they are living. It can be measured with quantitative indicators which are subjective and objective in nature. Objective indicators include: life expectancy, employment status, marital status, education, working hours per week, housing conditions, crime rates, poverty level, healthcare provisions and legal rights. The subjective indicators relate to happiness, job satisfaction, sense of community, family relationships, stress level, use of leisure time, degree of spirituality, sense of safety and number of enjoyed holidays. QoL is considered to have a balance of most of these mentioned elements. Researches in the field have shown that travel and tourism and travel have a positive correlation with QoL.

Happiness is a complex and almost an indefinable term. However, researchers believe that happiest people are those surrounded by family and friends; engage themselves in relaxing activities; are not focused on materialism; not obsessed with image, social status, and fame; are grateful for and satisfied with what they have; are altruistic; trust others and cooperate; and live in politically stable nations. Travel without doubt creates happiness on many levels. By visiting friends and relatives, participating in voluntary activities creates a feeling of belonging and love that forms an important part of happiness.

A wide spectrum of health and wellness tourism has developed in recent years (see table 2). These range from those which focus on physical or medical healing to those which have psychological or spiritual dimension. The holidays which take place within these environments would in some cases be radically different from one another. Depending upon motivation, life-stage, and interests tourists will select the form of wellness required and this could be purely physical with a focus on sports and fitness; medical with focus on disease treatment or surgery; mental or psychological with a focus on mind control; relaxing and pampering; entertaining and recreational or meditation and spiritual.

As wellness should focus on the balance of body, mind and spirit, Smith and Puczko (2009) suggest the spectrum of health tourism, which is also the base of holistic tourism. This can be shown as under in Table 2 and Table 3.

Since lately wellness tourism is on rise there is a trend to balance the high-touch aspect with the high-tech equipment applied to the monitoring, enhancing and maintenance of well-being.

TABLE – 2. Spectrum of Health Tourism

Physical Healing	Beauty Treatments	Leisure/Entertainment	Life/Work Balance	Relaxation/Rest	Psychological	Spiritual
Medical spas/baths	Cosmetic Surgery trips	Spa resorts with fun-waters	Holistic Centers	Pampering Spas/baths	Holistic Centers	Meditation retreats
Mofetta			Occupational wellness workshops	Wellness hotels		Workshops
Surgery trips	Hotel/day spas	Sport/fitness holidays		Thalassotherapy Centers		Pilgrimages
Rehab. Retreats						

SOURCE: Smith and Puczko (2009:84)

TABLE 3: Body-Mind-Spirit Spectrum

B O D Y	Medical (therapeutic) tourism	Leisure spa tourism	S P I R I T	
	Thalassic tourism	Medical (surgical) tourism		
		Holistic tourism		Yoga and Meditation tourism
		Occupational wellness tourism		Spiritual tourism
M I N D				

SOURCE: Smith and Puczko (2009:85)

Wellness assessment technologies include a wide range of methods designed to obtain information and then analyze and interpret it in order to form an understanding of a person’s health and then use this information along with existing knowledge to inform the design and implementation of the most effective therapies. There is a very wide range of wellness assessment technologies that can be summarized as under:

1. Data recording

- Body measurement
- Electrophysiological measures
- Sleep studies
- Pedometry
- Bioenergetic testing

2. Direct questioning

Through formal and informal medical history on current and past illnesses, family, occupational, travel, dietary, lifestyle, and sex details.

3. Tissue sampling

Blood and urine analysis; hair, sweat, semen, breast milk, ear wax, finger nails and tissue biopsies.

4. Functional testing

Lung function, cognitive performance, auditory and visual function as well as fitness assessment, cardiovascular stress testing, nutritional challenge tests etc.

5. Data analysis and knowledge management

- Information and communications technology
- Electronic health information systems
- Knowledge management and bibliographical databases
- Clinical decision support and tele-medicine



## CONCLUSION

From the above contents of wellness activities and the growing popularity of the concept within the health activities as a symbol of future trends in the consciousness of the people throughout the world is fast becoming a part of life style. It has now well been recognized by most people that for the longevity of life and general happiness it is important to devote a considerable part of leisure-time in health, sport, and other wellness activities. Economists are anxiously observing this trend and trying to understand and establish a correlation between wellness and productivity. Some experts in tourism are looking decades ahead and are optimistic of the rising trend. Investment and employment in this segment of market are expected to grow rapidly.

Unfortunately, for the time-being, there is not enough statistical data is available at sectoral, national or WTO level and thus it is rather difficult to make any serious economic analysis of this emerging phenomenon. Nevertheless, a trend is being evidenced at the microeconomic level and the tourist sector is positively responding to this specific demand. There definitely is a need for further research and exploration of the subject.

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## WELLNES: NOVA MODA U TURIZMU

### SAŽETAK

*Poput svih drugih sektora svjetskoga gospodarstva, turizam je također osjetio pritisak krize koja se javila kao posljedica globalne gospodarske krize. Svjetska ekonomska situacija nakon 2007/2008 postavila je dodatni pritisak na psihofizičko stanje ljudi i njihovo zdravlje. Ljudi sve više traže nove načine opuštanja i regeneriranja. Neki oblici turizma, na globalnoj razini, zbog ekonomske krize, su usporeni, no turistički sektor u cjelini iznimno dobro stoji tijekom posljednje dvije-tri godina nudeći novi model turizma koji se općenito naziva Wellness. Unutar turizma, wellness je relativno novi trend koji registrira impresivan rast. Širom svijeta sve više i više ljudi koji putuju na odredišta koja pružaju wellness sadržaje. Jačanje 'wellness koncepta' može se pripisati dvjema faktorima. Prvo, WHO odavno podupire integrirani koncept «blagostanja» i «fitness» u svoje globalne zdravstvene politike. Drugo, ukupno obrazovanje ljudi povećalo je ljudsku svijest o osobnom zdravlju. Ponuđači turističkih usluga, posebno luksuzni hoteli su se brzo prilagodili i stvorili paletu wellness usluge kao što su SPA i zdravstveni tretmani, zaštita zdravlja na radu, kozmetički tretmani, sportski objekti, duhovne aktivnosti, masaže, i programi rehabilitacije, itd. Budući da ne postoje baze podataka na temu wellness turizma ovaj članak u osnovi razmatra neke konceptualne aspekte wellness turizma.*

**Ključne riječi:** sreća, meditacija, rekreacija, terapija, opće dobro.

