

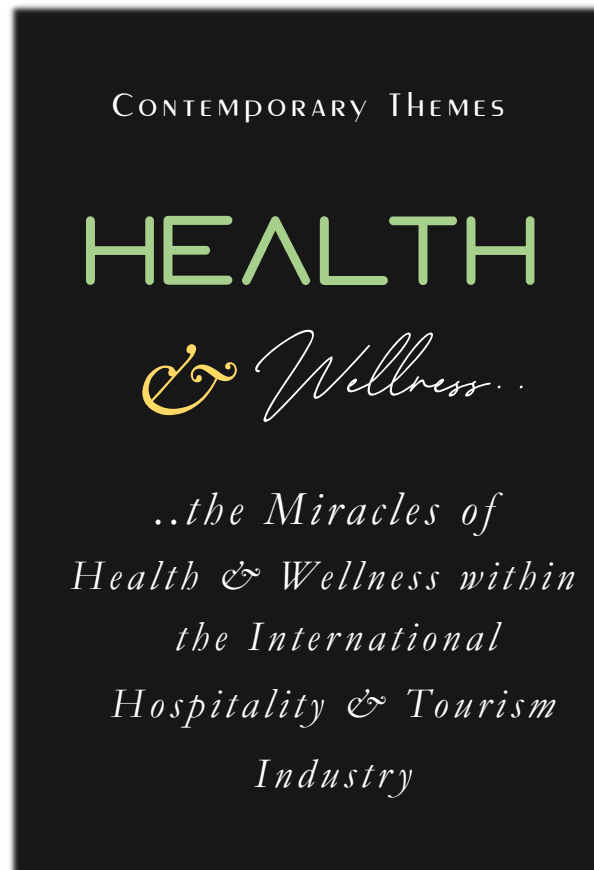
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BA (HONS) INTERNATIONAL HOTEL MANAGEMENT



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The twenty-first century is witnessing an extraordinary increase in wellness tourism as consumers are interested in maintaining or improving their overall health and wellness more than ever before. Wellness tourists now search for the most competitive, creative and innovative wellness venues before deciding on their next break. They are constantly consuming themselves in the internet in search for architectural, scientific and occasionally technological advancements in health and wellness within the international hospitality and tourism industry. Sometimes people prefer to simply disconnect from the digital world too. Organisations recognise this demand and they are also investing their time and funds in order to keep up with consumer demands. This can be seen through recruitment practices – more knowledgeable and experienced professionals, continuous professional development and training as well as technological, scientific and sustainable goals within strategic aims and objectives. **In 2017 The Global Wellness Economy was valued at \$4.5 trillion, of which Wellness Tourism was valued at \$639 billion, Global Wellness Institute (2018).** This paper will take a closer look at the Wellness Tourism sector and explore what Wellness Tourism is, the reasons why consumers turn to Wellness Tourism, the types of Wellness Tourism available and the future of this particular sector using several case studies.

Wellness Tourism is about maintaining or improving health and wellness whilst travelling, What is Wellness Tourism? - Global Wellness Institute, (2020). **The various motives for turning to Wellness Tourism** include (and is not limited to), for example, obesity solutions, maintaining or improving fitness and mental health, medical reasons: injury and recovery, detoxification and rehabilitation, cosmetic surgery, and relaxation. Other examples include the need for breaks from work and usual routines as well as personal stress relief or social reasons - to meet new people, new and exclusive experiences or competitive reasons which may be driven by social media – Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, Patel (2018).

The many types of Wellness Tourism include Wellness Spa's, Yoga Retreats, Medical Spa's, Fitness Adventure Travel, Educational Wellness Holidays, Detox and Weight-loss Retreats and Wellness Club Memberships.

Wellness Tourists can find a combination of Wellness Tourism types in one resort if researched carefully. For example, Oberoi in the Indian Himalayas provide

multiple facilities and services such as mountain biking on the Himalayan mountains, yoga, organic artisan farm to fork Indian cuisine, meditation and fitness as well as relaxation facilities; gym, sauna, steam room, hydro-pool and loungers, Oberoi (2020).

Wellness Spas have ancient history. They have been around for thousands of years, long before the Romans and Greeks. The word Spa is actually from a town in Belgium, which was a location called Aquae Spadanae, meaning scatter, sprinkle or moisten. One of the first written accounts of Spas was by a Greek philosopher named Hippocrates Between 360-370 B.C (over 2000 years ago). Hippocrates described the curated use and health benefits of bathing in spas, natural hot springs, thalassotherapy, hydrotherapy and treatments such as massages, which are available in wellness spas today, The history of spas and spa treatments | Champneys (2020). There are many wellness spas throughout the world. For example, Hotel Tannenhof in Austria is a Ski Hotel Resort that also markets itself as a wellness spa resort which offers extensive spa treatments provided by specialised therapists as well as relaxation facilities (thermal suites – sauna, steam rooms and hydro/swimming pools) and restaurants that offer many healthy gourmet food options. There is of course wellness benefits from making use of their Skiing facilities too – the exercise, views and fresh ski mountain air does wonders for the skin and blood circulation, Hotel Tannenhof *****Superior - stilvoll und elegant, (2020).

Medical Spas also known as Med Spas are available worldwide and they generally deploy the services of medical practitioners for example, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and dietetics to provide surgical treatments or non-invasive surgical grade treatments. They are able to offer wellness tourists a combination of the latest products and services from soaps to cosmetic surgery. For example, laser hair removal, liposuction and nose reshaping to name a few and cosmetic spa products such as skin and haircare. Altaire Medical Spa based in the U.S provide a variety of medical services for example, injectable, laser and dermatological treatments such as Botox, hair removal and skin cures. Med Spas generally attract Wellness Tourists who seek the addition of medical expertise to enhance their overall wellness and aesthetic appeal, Cosmetic Dermatology Clinic in Fargo, ND | Altaire Clinic (2020). Med Spas are usually situated in secluded, remote locations that lie within natural environments and where there is unharmed resources with great biodiversity, and the venues usually follow sustainable practices and serve organic artisan farm to table cuisine.

Some Medical Spas provide superb open views and clean oxygen in relaxing meditative spaces with expert guidance. They also provide rehabilitation and detoxification services, fitness (personalised yoga, gym sessions, guided tours, trekking and mountain biking) as well as luxury spa facilities (sauna, steam room, hydro-pool and swimming pools) and healing treatments by qualified/experienced therapists (facials and body massages). In addition, they include hair and nail parlours.

Yoga Wellness Retreats are trending world-wide and there are many benefits which largely comprise of breathing, relaxation and fitness improvements through stretching and expertly guided meditation. Absolute Sanctuary based in Thailand is an award winning Yoga Wellness Retreat. They provide over twenty-five classes per week, yogi experts and panoramic ocean sea views whilst doing yoga, Wellness Retreat Thailand | Detox, Fitness and Yoga Koh Samui (2020).

Wellness tourists who are on the lookout for a fitness adventure, Mountain Trek **Fitness Retreat & Health Spa** (or Mountain Trek as they prefer to be called) is one of the best places to experience fitness adventure. Mountain Trek is based in British Columbia and they offer an array of services in a remote location that is clean, green and serene. They are surrounded by natural landscapes and a forest or two which they use as a gym. They will ensure that tourists feel healthy and energetic through sports activities such as trekking in North America's glorious mountains, sunrise yoga and exercise classes. Healthy food is also available to fuel fitness workouts as well as spa relaxation facilities, treatments and nearby natural hot springs, Award-Winning Health Retreat | Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa (2020).

Educational Wellness attracts tourists who wish to have a travel break with a purpose of learning something new for example, a new language, sport or cooking. Some people find cooking therapeutic which in turn could be seen as relaxing and sport is fitness and therefore it may be argued that there is a clear linkage to wellness and subsequently fitting in with Wellness Tourism. This type of Wellness Tourism is sometimes available under one roof or venue. For example, The Pig Hotel in the UK has a cookery school called the Bertinet Kitchen Cookery School and the hotel also has spa facilities and treatments. Tourists could also request additional services such as local guided tours and sporting activities, The Pig - The Bertinet Kitchen Cookery School (2020).

Detox and Weight-loss Retreats are very popular in Wellness Tourism as there are many travellers who wish to improve their metabolism and feel recharged and invigorated. Vichy Celestines in Vichy France do just that. They include medical consultations, dietetics consultations, a wellness spa, through to healthy dining and spa treatments, Vichy Célestins, Spa Hôtel 5 étoiles pour cures thermales et séjours de remise en forme (2020).

Wellness Club Memberships are popular. This is suitable for domestic and global tourists. For example, Marriott, Hilton and Village hotels provide memberships that are used throughout the UK by locals and domestic tourists and they usually provide fitness and relaxation facilities (thermal suites). An example for global tourists is Soho House. They are more on the exclusive side – private members clubs; however, they have clubs, hotels and venues throughout Europe, North America and Asia. Their venues usually include gyms, and relaxations facilities (Wellness Spas/thermal suites). Soho Houses are known to hold a focus on cool and creative people from the arts rather than the wealthy or those with a financial, legal or science background, Houses | Soho House (2020).

The future of Wellness Tourism is looking promising. Wellness hotels, resorts, spas, tour operators and tourism boards are educating themselves in preparation of the growing sector, Patel (2018). This is due to many reasons for example, Wellness Tourism is increasing its capabilities in terms of designing the health and wellness experience through innovative architectural engineering and construction as well as adapting to the exponential advancements in technology (including AI), science and sustainability measures. For example, the **Wellness Architecture** initiative hosted a roundtable with the global wellness institute where they mentioned how the design and surroundings impact wellness tourists on many dimensions: physical, social, mental, occupational, emotional, spiritual and ways in which to improve, Wellness Architecture Roundtable - Global Wellness Institute (2020).

In terms of **technology**, wellness venues are improving their connectivity to the internet (moving to 5G), considering how to be more convenient and accessible (automated and intelligent services) resulting in less intrusiveness, TRAYKOSKA (2020). The increased use of AI in order to understand latest consumer demands in wellness is also contributing to the overall consumer wellness experience. In relation

to **sustainability**, wellness tourism is following the 2030 sustainability agenda and the sector is becoming more conscious of recycling, re-using and the **circular economy**, which in turn provides a more natural and holistic global wellness experience, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ... Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (2020). With regard to **scientific association**, the wellness sector is using more advanced skin, hair and metabolism enhancing supplements and products that are at the cellular and molecular level, which can be found in hotel spa resorts, medical spas and fitness retreats. In addition, healthier food options within the sector is influenced by scientific research.

A prime example of what the future holds in Wellness Tourism can be seen through the ongoing development of the Svart hotel in Norway, which is due to open in 2022. Svart lies within the Norwegian arctic circle. It plans to include the very latest in wellness architecture through innovative design and construction with panoramic views of the glacier, northern lights and fjord. It also intends to develop a 3,300 sq ft spa which will adopt traditional, and holistic Norwegian treatments as well as advanced natural and bio-tech approved medical treatments, relaxation facilities, four ultra-contemporary themed restaurants, 99 rooms and a natural energy generating capability and storage system that will produce more power than it consumes at a rapid pace to see it utilise over six decades.

Sustainable practices will include its own farm to fork cuisine and cutting edge science and technology education centre to illustrate the development of the hotel and how future wellness tourism is able to follow suit, Martin (2019). The concept and focus is to largely implement wellness elements that will be modern and self-sustaining. The wellness sector is becoming more self-sustainable, and international transport links are becoming more accessible and smarter, making wellness venues easier to reach than ever before.

As a consequence of diversification and collaboration with world leading organisations, wellness tourism is developing at a phenomenal pace and wellness tourists will benefit in many ways, for example, improvements in physical health, longevity and mental wellbeing. The Global Wellness Institute which uses extensive research by economists, academics and industry CEO's from high revenue corporations, released multiple reports, one of which predicts **the Wellness Tourism sector will reach \$919**

billion by the year 2022, Statistics & Facts - Global Wellness Institute (2020). A significant increase from \$639 billion in 2017. A report on Wellness released by Deloitte indicates that there were 62.2 million European gym memberships in 2018, an increase of 3.5%. Between 2013-2017, boutique wellness club memberships also increased by 121%, The International Health, Racquet and Sports Club Association, (2020). Wellness Tourism is connected to physical and mental health which is a high priority internationally. The international hospitality and tourism industry has recognised that travellers wish to maintain or improve their health and wellness whilst travelling, Tourism demand for 'wellness' holidays (2019). The hospitality and tourism industry have aimed to support this through the development of different services to improve health and wellness. As a result, there are gyms available in many hotels and leisure facilities as well as opportunities to relax. Using these services guests can experience tangible improvements in their health and wellbeing. Increasingly, the industry has become aware of the need to extend these services, which it is doing successfully. The Global Wellness Institute, Deloitte and International media demonstrate exceptional performance and they are all showing positive forecasts for the Wellness Economy. **It is a growing sector that is clearly contemporary from which all consumers can prosper in the short and longer-term.**

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