
Editorial: Growing trends of wellness tourism across international destinations

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Tourism has been a long-standing industry, which has grown alongside the growth of human civilisation. The history of tourism reveals that leisure and travel have been embedded in the society over space and time as people desire to learn from the cultures of various destinations. Tourism is exploring new dimensions in the quality of life today. Tourism industry has undergone remarkable changes due to continuous advancement of digital technology and new trends emerging in tourism industry. Tourism today is commoditised because of manifold competition and has unveiled new marketing philosophy of learn, feel, and actualise (LFA). Therefore, tourism marketers attract potential consumers by creating learning stimuli in new areas of tourism, provide competitive experience to sensitise the feel of pleasure, and make consumers to actualise (update) their existing knowledge and symbolise the hedonic effects of new trends. The effects of trends in tourism on consumers can be seen today as the enhancement of individualisation, demographic transformations, shifts in the role of gender involvement, heritage and spiritual concerns, and the appreciation of wellbeing linking to value and lifestyle (Csirmaz and Peto, 2015). Such impact of the emerging tourism trends on consumerism has created community contexts for driving the demand for wellness products (organic and green products) and services (medical and wellness tourism).

The scope of wellness in tourism marketing has prompted small businesses to develop competitive business models and exploit existing opportunities for tourism in the emerging destinations in South-East Asia, French Polynesia, and Latin America and Caribbean. Costa Rican tourism entrepreneurs in the 21st century have reoriented their tourism marketing strategy towards eco-tourism and wellness, advocating the benefits of less polluted environment close to nature. In most countries such as Italy, Indonesia, Thailand, Costa Rica, the USA (Hawaii), and Canada, where tourism is the principal contributor to gross domestic product of the national economy, the public-private participation (PPP) to promote wellness tourism has been adopted as new strategy to attract tourists. The PPP is developed for effective business development through co-creation by adapting many existing features such as LFA to attract tourists and to share their experience in wider markets. The synergy between wellness and public health interests also brings potential benefits for the tourism workforce and the host community (Page et al., 2017).

Wellness tourism has attracted specific segments of population, as the concept has been very appealing to derive personal and social values. Players in tourism industries have emphasised the wellness tourism market as a strategy for revitalising life for the aging population. Many studies have indicated that strong customer service increases

competitive advantage. Among various promotions, the wellness tourism services emphasise natural health healing, mental learning, complementary therapies, relaxation and spiritual engagement, healthy diet, and psychosocial activities for feeling the worthiness of life (Chen et al., 2013). Beside diet perspective, the wellness tourism concept also holds the idea of emphasising on sunshine, sea breeze, and thalassotherapy by using seawater in cosmetic and health treatment. Physical fitness is also an integral part of wellness tourism services package. In Asian countries, many spiritual activities such as yoga, meditation, and massages are the principal attractions of the wellness tourism experience.

Thus, there exists direct relationship between behavioural intention of consumers and social factors, driving the growth of the wellness tourism industry in emerging destinations. Transformation of the self through physical, psychological or spiritual activities is central to the wellness tourism campaigns. Socio-demographic segments, travel behaviour, and the wellness touristic-benefits determine the inflow of tourists to the wellness destination (Voigt et al., 2011).

The wellness tourism is supported by the ancillary trend of cuisine tourism. Local cuisine with various organic and ethnic options is linked to the wellness tourism in the destinations that are engaged in reinforcing innovative business models. The convergence of key indicators of cuisine tourism with the wellness tourism attributes to self-image congruence of tourists and delivers desired satisfaction on the services. The local cuisine has the strongest influence on tourist satisfaction in view of natural and ethnic food experience. The local cuisine image is fundamentally developed with the factors comprising uniqueness and cultural heritage, food quality and price, and organic and nutrition benefits (Pestek and Cinjarevic, 2014). Behavioural tourism brands promoting wellness, ethnic, and cuisine tourism are engaged in portraying self-congruence among consumers in reference to personality that provides symbolic meaning or emotional value.

Multi-cultural cuisine and wellness tourism concepts are interrelated as they focus on diverse services providing naturalistic feelings and sustainable lifestyle. Multicultural tourism destinations provide insights into the complex social dynamics, underpinning the consumption of non-native cuisines. The cultural capital theory can be contextualised to converge the two concepts of wellness tourism and cuisine tourism to integrate within leisure and tourism industry. These two main service domains of wellness in tourism and the acceptance of local cuisine together establish competition against other conventional tourism streams. Accordingly, the local culinary infrastructure and cultural capital could be used to support and transform the wellness related touristic value (Mahachi-Chatibura, 2016).

This issue of the journal includes five papers that address factors influencing wellness tourism, Platform strategies, ground transportation and tourism, business networks in tourism, ecologically sustainable tourist attractions, and cuisine tourism. These research papers represent study areas of Tunisia, Italy, France, Mexico and Botswana. The papers included in this issue of the journal discuss contemporary research propositions and attempt to establish convergence of new trends among the consumers and companies in managing tourism marketing effectively. I hope the collection of research papers appearing in this issue will enrich the existing literature on the topic and stimulate future research.

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