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Comprehensive Analysis of Wellness Tourism Programs in India



Abstract

Wellness tourism in India has gained significant traction due to the country's rich heritage in Ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, and holistic healing practices. This study comprehensively analyzes wellness tourism programs across various destinations, including Kerala, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, and Goa. Key components such as Ayurvedic retreats, meditation centre, spa resorts, and medical wellness programs are examined. The research highlights the economic impact, government initiatives, and challenges the sector faces. finding suggestions that India's wellness tourism is evolving with a blend of traditional and modern wellness approaches, attracting both domestic and international travelers.

1. Introduction

The state of being fit and well on all fronts, mentally, physically, and emotionally, is frequently referred to as "wellness". Wellness is the confluence of mental clarity, relaxation, spirituality, health and leisure. Excellent health is indeed both a gift from god and a legitimate sign of affluence. The growing demand for wellness travel and growing concern for one's health have created a buzz among wellness seekers worldwide. The Latin abbreviation for "

sanities per aqua” or health via water, is where the word “spa” originates. It's also recognized as a sort of facility that offers both non-water and water-based therapies, including relaxation, health and beauty services, additionally, appropriate natural resources like mineral springs, breathtaking scenery, or perfect weather are taken into consideration when developing spas. Wellness and spa patrons are more inclined to seek out traditional tourism incentives or medical treatments. In general, tourists are eager to discover new locations and seek out genuine, distinctive experiences.

According to Smith and Puzko (2009), health and wellness tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the global economy in the twenty-first century. The global fitness and health movement has created a long-term demand for products and services related to health and wellness (Erfurt, Cooper, and Cooper 2009). Due to yoga’s widespread appeal, many people have travelled to perform it (Connel 2006). This travel gave rise to yoga tourism (Lethi et al., 2006), which is now an important indication for visitor motivation (CBI, 2016: SRI international, 2016).

2 Evolution of wellness Tourism

2.1 Ancient origins of wellness

A yoga practice may begin with a class that the interested attends and then leave, but frequently a desire to learn more develops. Elements come together to form the yogi traveller, or the person who practices yoga tourism. One aspect of the phenomenology of the tourist experience is the pursuit of self-fulfilment. According to Dewey (1938), experience is a process that arises from a person’s interactions with their surroundings, and human development happens as a result of learning from experiences.

The term wellness is not agreed upon by all, being disease-free and in good health is the definition of well-being according to science. It could be useful to know the following definitions to comprehend what wellness means: “the best possible bodily functioning and creative environment adaptation involving the whole person” is the definition of wellness.

2.2 Ayurveda and Tourism

Based on the teachings of the Atharva Vedas, Ayurveda is a historic Hindu medical system that dates back 5000 years and is considered one of the ancient sciences. Ayurveda, which

promotes “holistic healing” and the body’s innate ability to maintain balance, is defined as “knowledge (veda) of life” (Ayu). It is thought that Ayurveda provided the foundation for Tibetan, traditional Chinese, and ancient Greek medicine, which all adopted its ideas.

Ayurveda is regarded as an alternative therapy that emphasizes the use of natural herbs as medicine and helps achieve “Arogya” (health) through food, herbal remedies, and yoga breathing techniques. The discipline holds that the qualities of the human body and mind are primarily caused by three causes. The three basic energies are associated with transformation, pitta(fire), and kapha(earth), in Sanskrit. The doctor uses ayurvedic theory and suitable therapies such as nutrition, herbs, massage, yoga, music, and panch-karma to try to attain an optimum state of inner harmony. The traditional systems have many characteristics, whether it was Indian ayurveda, traditional Chinese medicine, or the medicine of ancient Rome and Greece, which laid the groundwork for modern medicine and frequently referred. They also contained various theological and philosophical systems that disrupted the social order.

The technique of natural medicine that dates supposedly derived from the Vedic civilization of India. supported by the Ayurvedic literature and principles, the Ministry of AYUSH. Government of India. 2020 proposed self-care practices for enhancing immunity and preventing health problems. During his speech to the country. India’s prime leader also discussed using ayurvedic remedies to boost immunity against COVID-19. It also increased the demand for Ayurvedic medications. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed people’s perceptions of wellness and health. this gives Ayurveda and health travel a chance to promote themselves during the post-pandemic phase.

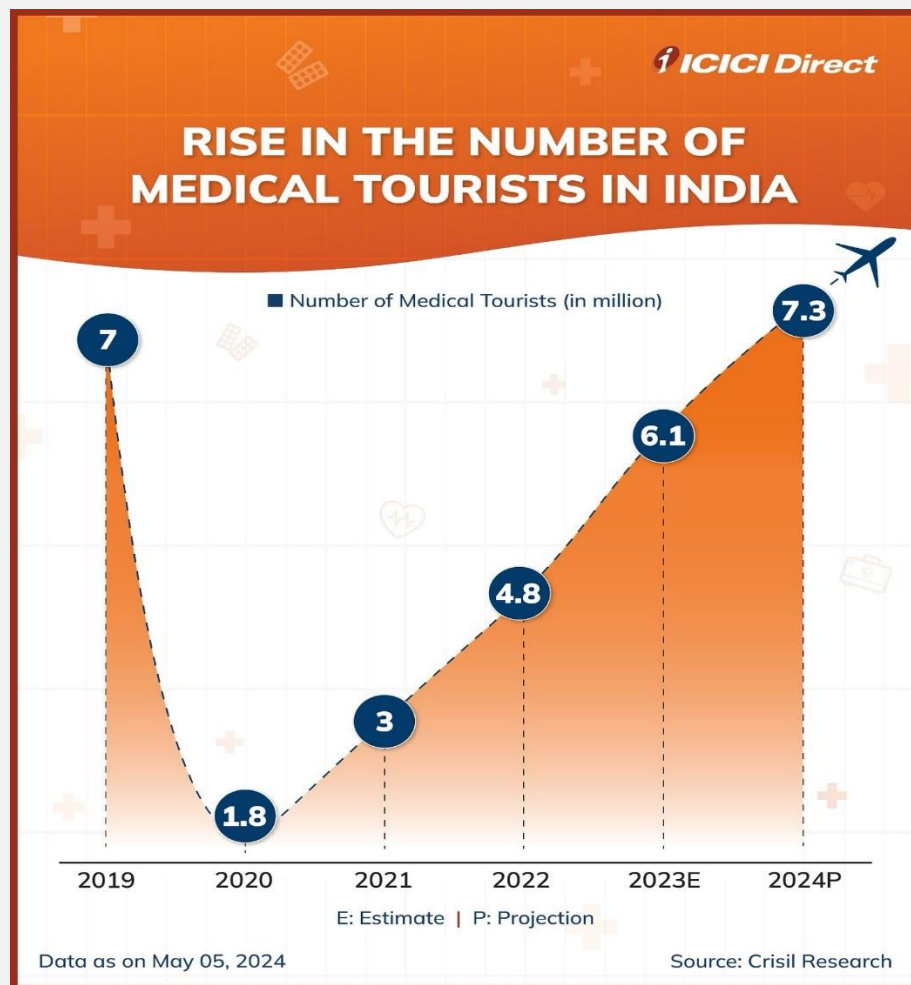
3. Wellness Tourism in India

India’s wellness offering includes yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda, these things are resonating with people. People in the west have a lot of interest in the Indian system of medicine, such as ayurveda and yoga. Yoga and meditation help people to detoxify themselves and be in a state of mindfulness. Visitors coming to India for wellness-based trips, often spend a fair amount of time visiting here, learning about the ancient art of yoga and meditation, as well as ayurveda. Ayur means life and veda is the science of knowledge. Ayurveda is a system that uses inherent principles of nature to help maintain health in a person by keeping the individual’s body, mind and spirit in perfect equilibrium with nature. Thus, it is providing an opportunity to earn a good amount of foreign exchange. In Ayurveda, there is the principle of panchakarma a Sanskrit term which translates to five therapeutic procedures used for

detoxification of the body. The five main methods of panchakarma are therapeutic vomiting (vamana), purgation (Virechana), enema therapy (Niruha Basti for medicated enemas and anuvasana basti for oil enemas), and nasal cleaning (Nasya). Depending on the health problem, one or more of these methods are used to cleanse the body and promote healing.

The foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India medical visa from approximately 38,000 medical visas issued in 2012, the number of such visas grew steadily, reaching nearly ten times that figure by 2019, with around 3.76 lakh visas issued this year. The data for 2018 is not readily available in the public domain. However, 2020 saw a sharp decline to less than half of 2019 due to international travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic, medical visa issuance nearly doubled in 2022.

Department of Commerce and service promotion council have launched a healthcare portal www.healthcaretourism.com as a single source platform providing comprehensive information to medical travelers on the top healthcare institution in the country in various languages. Government of India has formed a separate ministry named AYUSH in November 2014 to provide a dedicated institutional Framework to take forward the cause of promotion of wellness tourism covered by Ayurveda. Which covers yoga, Unani, siddha, and homeopathy (Ayush). With the wheels of the concept government estimates to reach US\$ 9 billion business in this field by 2020, to make India the fastest growing medical and wellness destination in the world.



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popular wellness programs in India

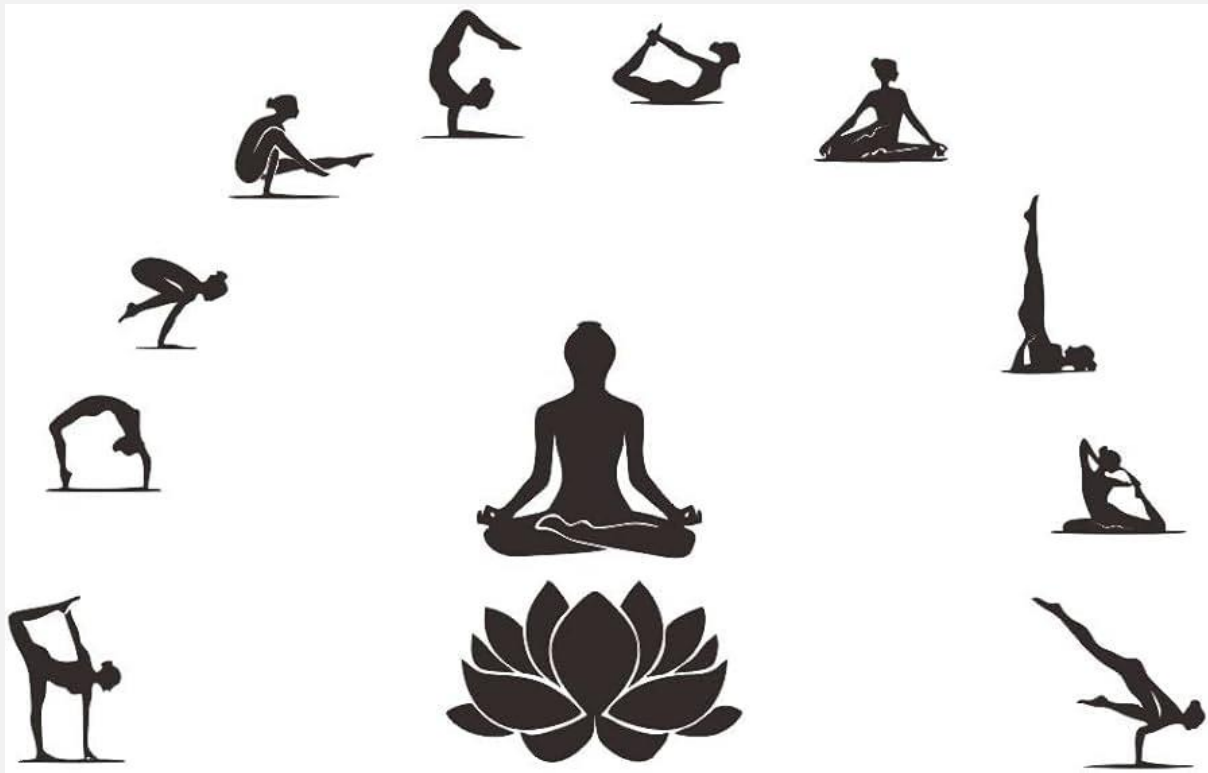
Ayurveda: Ayurveda means, the science of life. Ayurveda evolved from the assorted Vedic hymns rooted in it. It's fundamental philosophy about life, disease, and health. The Charka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, which were developed around 2500 BC, are the most complete treatises of ayurveda and are fully available today. Consistent with Ayurveda, fitness is taken as a precondition to get a life i.e., Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Ayurveda takes an integrated view of the physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects of a group of people and about the interrelationship among these aspects. Ayurveda believes that

man is influenced to a great extent by his environment, which affects his health status too. These schedules incorporate eating regimens, propensities, and overall mentality towards life.

Natural Healing Ayurvedic



Yoga: yoga is incredibly recognized as a form of medical therapy in India, with its roots deeply embedded in the country's traditional healing systems. Over the years, scientific research and medical communities have explored its benefits for treating various physical and mental health conditions. Yoga, originated over 5000 years ago in India, was traditionally practiced as a spiritual discipline. However, over time, it has evolved into a holistic system that integrates physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and meditation. It's now widely used as complementary or alternative treatment for various health conditions. In contemporary India, Yoga is integrated into mainstream healthcare, especially for the management of chronic conditions, rehabilitation, and mental health disorders. Yoga is seen as a preventive and curative method, helping to improve general well-being, flexibility, strength and balance, as well as to reduce the risk of many diseases.



Spiritual Healing: spiritual healing is a broad and deeply rooted practice that involves using spiritual, mental, and emotional processes to restore balance, harmony, and well-being. It is based on the belief that physical ailments and emotional suffering often arise from an



imbalance or block in the spiritual or energetic body. Spiritual practices include many forms such as Reiki, Pranic healing, meditation, yoga, faith healing, siddha medicine, astrology and gem therapy, and many more.

Luxury wellness resorts: a luxury wellness resort in India refers to a high-end, exclusive destination that offers a combination of lavish accommodations, rejuvenating spa services, and holistic wellness experiences. These resorts focus on promoting health, relaxation, and well-being through various treatments, such as yoga, meditation, ayurveda, spa therapies, fitness programs, and detoxification. They provide a serene environment, often in picturesque locations, such as hill stations, beaches, or in nature, designed to offer guests both physical and mental rejuvenation. Spacious, elegantly designed rooms or villas with top-notch amenities, private pools, and panoramic views of nature. With a wide range of wellness activities such as yoga and meditation sessions, ayurvedic treatments, detoxification, and personalized wellness consultations with experts. Additionally, signature spa therapies that combine traditional and modern wellness techniques, including massages, aromatherapy, hydrotherapy, and more. Moreover, organic, locally sourced meals tailored to specific dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, and ayurvedic meals aimed at improving health and vitality.



Research Design

To explore the recent trends in wellness tourism as practiced in the hilly state of Uttarakhand. We chose a qualitative research design in which we conducted interviews of 14 wellness tourism entrepreneurs. This profile of these 14 entrepreneurs is shown in Table 1, qualitative research that uses interviews helps us dive deep into people's stories and insights. By talking directly to these entrepreneurs, we aimed to understand what the consumers of wellness tourism are looking for in such retreats, hotels, spas, and resorts. Interviews allow participants to share their experiences in their own words, giving us rich and detailed information to analyze. This approach helps us uncover the specific factors influencing entrepreneurship in rural areas, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic. We made an interview schedule of six questions that asked the wellness tourism entrepreneurs in Uttarakhand things about the kind of businesses they are engaged in, what customers precisely ask, what are their offerings, and what sells the most in wellness tourism. The responses of the interviews were then coded and thematically analyzed to come up with the

results that comprise the latest trends in wellness tourism. We then ranked the key trends in wellness tourism based on the number of responses for every offering

Table 1 – Respondents Profile

<u>Wellness Tourism Enterprise</u>	<u>Entrepreneurship type</u>	<u>key offerings</u>
Enterprise 1	Hotel, spa, and retreat	yoga, sports, and fitness Culinary, wellness, and Aromatherapy
Enterprise 2	Yoga and Ayurveda Retreat	Ayurveda, yoga, neuropathy And spirituality
Enterprise 3	Wellness resort	ayurveda, yoga, spirituality
Enterprise 4,	Hotel, spa, and retreat,	Spa, Beauty Services, Sports and fitness, Culinary wellness , Aromatherapy
Enterprise 5	Yoga and Ayurveda retreat centre	ayurveda, yoga and spirituality
Enterprise 6	wellness resort	Ayurveda, yoga, and spirituality



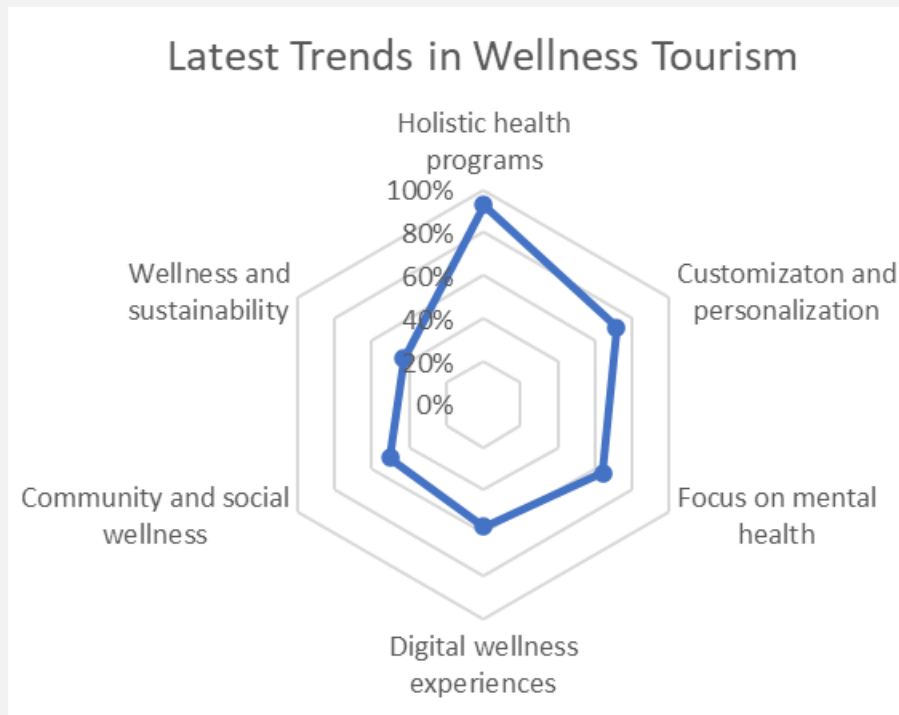
Key offering in wellness tourism in Uttarakhand

Current trends in wellness tourism in Uttarakhand

We calculated the ranks of the current trends in wellness tourism in Uttarakhand based on the frequency in which it was mentioned by the participants. The highest rank was given to the trend of holistic health programs, which the customers are looking for most of the time. The second rank customization and personalization, as every customer wants to have a unique experience. The third rank was given to focus on mental health, and it was followed by digital wellness experiences, community and social wellness, and wellness and sustainability.

Rank of current trends in wellness tourism

Rank	Current trends	% of enterprises	No. of enterprises
I	Holistic health programs	93%	13
II	Customization & personalization	71%	10
III	Focus on mental health	64%	9
IV	Digital wellness experiences	57%	8
V	Community and social wellness	50%	7
VI	Wellness and sustainability	43%	6



Key offerings in wellness tourism

According to the response of the participants of the study, we found that the most popular offerings in wellness tourism are yoga, which is being offered by 12 wellness centres from a sample. It's closely followed by Ayurveda, which is offered by 10 wellness centres. In addition to yoga and ayurveda, 8 centres offer spirituality services, and 7 centres offer spa services. Naturopathy, beauty services, culinary wellness, and aromatherapy are being offered by five to seven centres. Few wellness resorts also offer sun and fun activities, and sports and fitness activities. The number of wellness centres offering the above activities is shown in Figure 1, which is a Pareto chart. This Pareto chart shows that yoga and ayurveda alone account for the most popular offerings in the wellness centres. Other than these various practices in wellness tourism, also include Reiki, homeopathy, music therapy, indulgence, etc. These experiences are provided by a variety of health tourism institutions, which consist of hotels, retreats, spas, hospitals & clinics, ashrams, festivals, recreation centres, cruises, and resorts.

Holistic health programs: wellness retreats are offering more comprehensive programs that address not only physical health but also mental and emotional well-being. These often

include mindfulness practices, stress reduction techniques, and workshops on emotional resilience.

Customization and personalization: tailoring wellness experiences to individual preferences and needs is a growing trend. From personalized fitness routines to curated wellness menus, travellers are seeking bespoke experiences that cater to their unique health and well-being goals.

Focus on mental health: mental health and stress reduction have become central themes in wellness tourism. Retreats and programs often include meditation, mindfulness practices, and therapies designed to support mental and emotional wellness.

Digital wellness experience: the integration of technology continues to shape wellness tourism. Virtual and augmented reality, wellness apps, and online platforms offer travelers the ability to access wellness experiences remotely. This trend has likely expanded further with the ongoing influence of digital technologies.

Community and social wellness: wellness tourism is increasingly incorporating elements of community and social connection. Group activities, shared experiences, and opportunities for social interaction are integrated into wellness retreats to address the broader concept of social well-being.

Conclusion

The concept of the significance of wellness tourism is increasingly recognized in both the business and research domains. Scholars and researchers have played a crucial role in shaping and emphasizing the importance of this concept within the academic community. This study delved into the roots of wellness tourism in India, offering insights into its origins and exploring diverse perspectives through which this phenomenon can be comprehended. Our focus centres on Ayurveda and yoga as pivotal contributors to the genesis of wellness tourism in India. We provided a comprehensive overview of how these ancient practices have gained momentum, contributing to the growth and evolution of the wellness tourism sector. Furthermore, our examination encompassed a thorough discussion of various perspectives that shed light on the multifaceted nature of wellness tourism. In addition to unravelling

historical origins, our study presented a nuanced understanding of current trends within the wellness tourism landscape. By examining the contemporary scenario, we captured the dynamic and evolving nature of this industry, offering valuable insights into its present state and potential future trajectories.