

Name: **Bushra**

Notification No: 545/2023

Name of the supervisor: **Dr Abdul Qadir**

Date of Award: 22-08-2023

Department: **Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management**

Year of registration: **2018**

Topic of Research: **Profiling of wellness tourists in India**

Findings

Wellness tourism- a special interest tourism is rapidly growing, turning into one of the fastest developing sectors in India. Wellness tourism has emerged as an addition to healthy lifestyles. The main aim of wellness tourists is to maintain or enhance their health and well-being. Despite the fact that wellness tourism has a long history and this competitive sector has gained the attention of academicians and practitioners, to date there is less research exists focusing on the motivation, needs, and behaviour of wellness tourists in the Indian context. Thus, in this research strategic efforts have been put to fill this gap. Targeting the right market segment is necessary for efficient tourism marketing and management. The identification of a distinct and clear market helps in more effective promotional programs focusing on a specific segment. The market segmentation strategy is crucial for the development of new products and for positioning marketing materials to the targeted section of visitors with similar needs, wants, and interests. This study is an attempt to uncover the important motivational factors of wellness tourists.

For the survival and success of a destination, it is necessary to understand the motivations of tourists. Tourism is entirely about the destinations. Destination richness has an important role in attracting tourists around the world. For proper destination marketing and achieving a competitive position, this study has also identified the major wellness tourism destinations and their attractive factors. This will help the tourists in knowing the best wellness destinations in India which will further build the curiosity to travel among tourists. Further, the researcher has identified and categorized the existing wellness market based on tourist motivations and other variables which will enable the service providers to adapt their products and services to enhance tourist satisfaction. Also, the identified segments will help in positioning and marketing the wellness products to the target customers. The researcher has also identified the distinctiveness and buying behaviour pattern of each segment formed in existing wellness markets which can further be used to promote and advertise wellness tourism in India. Lately, the study has proposed marketing and branding strategies to make India the most preferred wellness tourism destination.

The study is descriptive and uses a quantitative research method approach to achieve the stated objectives. The study was conducted in two phases. The development of the survey instrument (questionnaire) using secondary sources is the initial phase, while online data collection and field survey is the second phase. A total of 386 usable questionnaires were collected from famous wellness destinations in India using purposive and convenience sampling. The data was collected in two phases from Rishikesh (Uttarakhand) (on-site survey), Kerala, and Delhi-NCR (online survey). The target population from which the samples were chosen is defined as domestic tourists (primary or/and secondary wellness tourists) who have stayed and undertaken wellness services in India in the last five years (2018-2022). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the collated data from the domestic wellness tourists using SPSS. Eight motivational factors were identified: Escape and Relaxation, Personal self-fulfillment and Basic wellness, Luxurious Experience and Prestige, Stress Reduction and Rejuvenation, Accessibility and Destination Quality, Quality of services, Recreation and, Safety and Destination Image. Next, the segmentation was done using K- means cluster analysis in order to divide the data homogenous subgroups in accordance with some predetermined criteria. The three identified segments of wellness are indifferent tourists, wellness escapists and self-focused, and value seekers. These segments were then further profiled using cross-tabulation and the chi-square method based on variables that constitute demographic, socio-economic, and travel related factors. The study contributes to the understanding of the Indian domestic wellness tourism market. Further, the identified major wellness destinations in India are Uttarakhand, Kerala, Karnataka, and, Maharashtra. Four attractive factors of wellness destinations were identified: natural conditions and relaxing environment, price competitiveness, wellness treatments, and lastly, food attractions and hospitality. It will help the destination manager to understand the destination attributes and develop strategies for destination planning, development, or promotion. Also, the study suggested that India has the potential of becoming the best wellness tourism destination at the global level. But extra effort is needed at various levels to enhance or showcase the potential that the country holds. Destination marketers and service providers need to brand and market wellness tourism through different strategies. Hence, the study suggests marketing and branding strategies to make India one of the sought wellness tourism destinations. Discussions, conclusions, and future research implications were presented.

Keywords: Domestic Wellness tourism; Segmentation; K-means clustering; India