

## WELLNESS TOURISM - MODERN FORM OF TOURISM

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**Abstract:** *For decades, tourism research has focused on issues such as tourist benefits, tourist behavior, socio-cultural and environmental impact of tourism activities, tourist-host interaction, tourist motivation, tourism planning and development, tourist satisfaction or the economic significance of tourism in tourist destinations. The latest research trend in tourism shows that, although the economic importance of tourism is recognized, the evaluation of the value of tourism activities focuses more and more on the quality of life of tourists, their satisfaction and wellness, abstract forms of value, quality of life, sustainable business practices and the feeling of wellness. Although it has many elements in common with health tourism, this modern form of tourism, wellness tourism, differs from it being an alternative or supplement to an over-the-counter medical treatment, focusing more on the pleasure or sensations that the tourist or visitor you can feel them at a destination during your stay, adding added value to tourist products.*

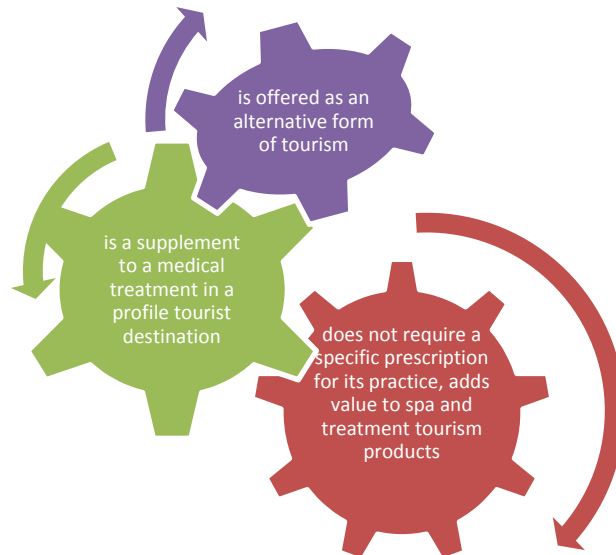
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### INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (21), health is a state of wellbeing: physical, mental and social complete and not just the absence of disease or infirmity. Wellness is a much more complex construction that refers to the experience and optimal functioning of the individual (16).

The phrase wellness tourism reproduces the English phrase wellbeing tourism, in which the word well-being means “the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy”, without the material dimension of the Romanian word of well-being. Although this modern form of tourism has many elements in common with health tourism, wellbeing tourism differs from it in the following points of view (1,4,12):

- is offered as an alternative form of tourism;
- is a supplement to a medical treatment in a profile tourist destination (10);
- does not require a specific prescription for its practice;
- focuses on pleasure, a sensation that the visitor of a spa can feel during the stay;
- adds value to spa and treatment tourism products.



**Figure 1.** Characteristics of wellbeing tourism

Well-being can be approached according to the opinion of most specialists from two general perspectives:

- hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being from the perspective of achieving pleasure and avoiding pain;
- eudaimonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being as the degree to which a person is fully functional.

It should be noted that wellbeing differs from one group to another with a very low level in the case of single-parent families, people with disabilities or the elderly (9). The factors on which a person's well-being depends are (Figure 2.):

- regular physical activity;
- healthy eating;
- ability to adapt to change in society;
- fulfilled career;
- financial gain;
- spiritual and religious beliefs;
- fun hobbies and relaxation activities;
- realistic (achievable) objectives;
- relation with close friends;
- happy relationship with a partner;

- the feeling of belonging;
- enough sleep;
- self-esteem.



**Figure 2.** Factors influencing human well-being.

It is found that well-being has the following components: environmental (pollution reduction, respect for limited available resources - water, air, soil), emotional (acceptance of others, self-acceptance, adaptation to change, reaching potential, joy of living, management effective of difficult experiences, forgiveness, self-love, sharing feelings, optimism, maintaining mental balance, self-respect, living a wide range of feelings - including the feeling of security), financial (increasing social status, improving living conditions), physical (abstinence from unhealthy habits, proper nutrition, regular medical check-up, knowledge and identification of signs of illness, exercise, proper hygiene, protection from accidents and injuries), intellectual (opening to the new, experiencing new things, getting out of the comfort zone, improving and maintaining cognitive and memory skills, learning new skills, sati breakdown of intellectual curiosities), occupational (attitude towards work, building a career, balance between personal and professional life, useful membership of society), social (empathy, getting out of the comfort zone, feeling of belonging to a group - colleagues, family, friends) and spiritual (beliefs, principles, purpose in life, values) (6). In other tourist destinations, the indicators of well-being stage are: standard of living, health, achievements,

relationships, safety, relationship with the community and the safety of tomorrow (4). According to other bodies (20), indicators of human well-being are employment and civic governance, quality of the environment, social ties (with the community), work-life balance, housing, employment and earnings, level of education and skills acquired, personal security (safety), subjective well-being, health and income and wealth. Other researchers (2) have identified four categories of instruments for measuring well-being:

- four instruments for measuring quality of life;
- five instruments for measuring the eudaimonic component;
- twelve instruments for measuring the hedonic component;
- seven instruments for measuring wellness.

All these categories of well-being assessment tools show the growing interest in the new form of tourism - wellness tourism.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

In this scientific approach, to analyze this modern form of tourism, wellness tourism and the differences from health tourism, we explored wellness as a business opportunity in areas with vocation and tourism products that can be enriched by practicing this form of tourism, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses but also the opportunities and risks of its practice in terms of quality of life in a particular area and how these activities tend to affect some components of cultural, leisure, social and family life. We try to find out if there is a relationship between happiness and how to spend a holiday at a certain tourist destination.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Well-being has been explored by various authors (14, 19) as:

- business opportunity in areas with health tourism vocations;
- as a resource to increase the value of profile tourist destinations;
- as a means of improving the tourist product.

It is found that the practice of this modern form of tourism - wellness tourism - has:

- strengths, brand, finances, infrastructure, perception, networks, tourism market trends;
- weaknesses, the consumption climate, the culture of the local administration, the management-marketing, the value of the tourist product;

- from the perspective of psychological well-being stage, strategies must provide how they can be used to generate:

- a. better results for marketing;
- b. new opportunities for managers from tourism field.

Regarding the quality of life which interest from the perspective of **wellness tourism**, it has according to specialists the following subjective elements: self-knowledge, ability to enjoy life, cognitive complexity, personality integration, ethical orientation, orientation towards productivity, feeling of autonomy and efficiency, self-esteem and easiness of interpersonal relationships (15, 17, 18)

We believe that the experiences of tourists in health centers and various welfare activities tend to affect, either positively or negatively, many of the components of life, such as cultural life, leisure life, family life or social life, but these activities can have a significant effect we consider on:

- a. the general satisfaction of the life of the tourists who travel to these destinations;
- b. the blissful state of the locals from the balneoclimateric and medical treatment resorts;
- c. the relationship between tourism development and happiness from the perspective of the inhabitants;
- d. the association between tourism and happiness which is positive but often not stable and not at all exclusive (15).
- e. sustainable tourism that contributes to the happiness of locals more than conventional tourism (8);
- f. less developed tourism that will be able to contribute more to the happiness of the locals than more developed tourism;
- g. to domestic tourists through the great contribution to the happiness of the locals.

Although some researchers believe that well-being and tourism can be classified into four main areas (13) along with the development of tourism and new modern forms, we consider adding a new field that we call happiness and spending the holiday according to fashion for a particular destination due to reorientation of tourist flows and improvement of tourist products offered to loyal visitors:

- the well-being studied from the perspective of certain types of tourist products;
- subjective well-being;
- the concept of "well-being" as destination marketing;
- the relationship between happiness and well-being;
- the relationship between happiness and spending the holidays.

We consider that this modern form of niche tourism, **wellness tourism** has the following characteristics in common with:

- cultural tourism
- adventure tourism;
- risk tourism;
- ecotourism;
- forestry tourism;
- medical tourism;
- health tourism;
- social tourism;
- thermal tourism;

- wellness tourism. Figure 3 shows the common characteristics of wellness tourism with the following forms of tourism



**Figure 3.** Common characteristics of wellness tourism with the other forms of tourism

Tourists, visitors who practice wellness tourism are represented by visitors or groups of tourists who travel in search of quiet places and relaxing treatments for mind and body - in other words, in search of physical, mental and social well-being - outside their place of origin. This type of tourist activity can be practiced by tourists of all ages - from children to adults, pensioners - who can choose their destination according to their

preferences. The literature from the field of tourism in general and welfare tourism in particular tried to clarify the subjective value of the tourist experience, starting from the theory that happiness means satisfaction and pleasure, to open new paths in researching the potential benefits of the tourist experience on the mental health of tourists and to offer new directions in branding and tourism promotion. To find out if there is a relationship between happiness and vacationing, some researchers compared the intensity of happiness of those who spend their vacation with those who do not spend their vacation and the level of happiness post-trip (7) showed that those who were going on vacation:

- had a higher level of happiness pre-trip - holiday anticipation;
- only those who had a very relaxed vacation - were very happy post-trip;

- others were not happy because they did not anticipate the holiday.

Analyzing the degree of happiness in pandemic conditions at the local level, from 2020 we find:

- at the beginning of the year a large number of future tourists had a high degree of happiness - because they planned their destinations without knowing that their trips will be limited to certain destinations;

- some had a holiday, few tourists, but it was not relaxing because they could not benefit from specific forms of leisure and after the trip some had to go into quarantine;

- some tourists giving up foreign travel went to domestic destinations and were happy because the accommodation was generally done in small accommodation units and spent the holiday with family and friends in small groups.

Tourists who practice wellness tourism and look for the following elements of happiness on holiday in normal travel conditions (6, 11):

- affection, joy, serenity - subjective state of well-being, emotional, hedonic -psychological happiness;

- feelings of happiness and actions that generate professional growth, life satisfaction - prudent happiness;

- well-being, self-realization, mental health, bliss - perfectionist happiness.

The pursuit of happiness in the holiday season we believe can be synonymous with positive mental health whose dimensions are (5):

- acceptance of the other tourists in the group, from the destination;

- self-acceptance during the holiday period;

- autonomy;

- contribution to the life of society;

- control and protection of the natural environment at the destination;
- personal economic growth;
- growth and social potential;
- positive emotions;
- social integration;
- interest and social coherence;
- positive relations with other tourists and locals;
- declared satisfaction with life;
- satisfaction with the purpose in life.

**Welfare tourism**, at local level, in Timiș County can be practiced in: Surduc Lake area, Luca Mures Natural Park, Cenad Forest, Bazos Dendrological Park, Lunca Timis, along the Bega Canal, Buzias and Calacea Resorts, Delta Banat Chinese Village, as well as places where leisure, cultural, spa, sports, ancestral practices, alternative therapies can be practiced or where exhibitions and rhythmic movement therapy can be visited, which can be considered an effective tool for increasing the state of well subjective in the context of wellness tourism whose fundamental elements are mental activity, harmony of body, mind and spirit, self-responsibility, social contacts, education, fitness, beauty care, meditation, healthy nutrition, relaxation and sensitivity to the environment. Welfare in cultural tourism consists in offering tourist services in accordance with the originality of the cultural tourist site (Cornesti, Parta) participation in activities specific to historical cultural tourism (cities and castles) and maintaining the uniqueness of cultural sites with the potential to improve welfare.

## CONCLUSIONS

The experiences of tourists in health centers and various welfare activities tend to affect, either positively or negatively, many of the components of life, such as cultural life, leisure life, family life or social life, but these activities can have a significant effect on the general satisfaction of tourists' lives, the bliss of the locals and on the relationship between the development of this form of tourism and happiness. In the practice of wellness tourism, the consumers of this new form of niche tourism look for the psychological, prudential and perfectionist elements regarding the happiness in holidays and in places where recreational and leisure activities, cultural, spa, wellness or archeological sites can be practiced.



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