



## Wellness Tourism: Reviving Healthy Food and Lifestyle

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**Abstract:** Tourism has been widely considered to be a mentally & physically healthy pursuit. Travel essentially contributes to relax the mind and reduces the stress. People resort to travel usually to take a break from their hectic life schedules and enjoy some quality leisure time with friends and family if not for other reasons. This research attempts to provide a comprehensive review of healthy food and lifestyle practices that are required to lead a healthy life. Technological advances and modern work practices have brought in lifestyle changes coupled with drastic changes in eating habits and food items. Presently, the abundant availability of fast food and other unhealthy options have brought in various lifestyle disorders like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, etc. in the younger generations. Food provides beneficial nutrients like vitamins and minerals to humans. Also, rich source of certain compounds of foods which ultimately boost up human health when it is consumed in an appropriate amount. Millets, which was widely consumed in rural India but lost their value over a period of time, are one of the prominent lost foods having many health benefits which need wider investigation. Lot of research is already underway to promote use and production of millets. In India, the year 2023 has been designated as the year of millets. Ready to eat /fast foods are diminishing the healthy lifestyle of an individual. Good lifestyle has the potential to harmonize the emotional life of any individual. In ashrams yoga teaches patience, restraint & how to live life harmoniously. The ashram lifestyle places more emphasis on expansion of awareness and consciousness. This research looks at the various aspects of healthy food which is lost over the decades & lifestyles and comes out with recommendations based on the findings to help individuals select the right food and lifestyle to lead a healthy life.

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### Introduction

Travel has numerous benefits which includes mental and physical health, better communication skills, awareness of other cultures and practices, broader outlook and horizon, valued memories, relaxation and freedom from troubles as well as developing new contacts and friends across the destinations travelled (Staff, 2023). Seasonality of tourist inflow can be significantly minimized by resorting to Wellness Tourism. Ski destinations, for instance, may be of interest to wellness travelers who are interested in hiking or other outdoor activities during the summer, whereas sea beaches are a source of inspiration for those seeking a more serene and

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tranquil location to relax during the winter months.

The value of the Global Wellness Tourism Market stood at USD 814.6 billion in 2022 and as per studies it is expected to expand with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.42% between the years 2023 to 2030. Wellness tourism consists of a number of tourism related activities which are performed with an idea of improving and increasing the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of individuals. The individuals involve themselves in various physical, mental, and spiritual activities by performing yoga, meditation, and Pilates and also invigorating themselves in spas. Tourists also visit hot spring resorts. Interacting with and engaging in activities with residents of a destination who have travelled to and spent time with various cultures is also beneficial to one's well-being (Yeung & Jonston, 2022) .

For every living being the most crucial need to survive is food. The strong combination Wellness and Tourism – two of the largest and growing multi-trillion-dollar industries: Consumer Decision making is currently getting increasingly motivated by Holistic health and prevention of disorders, and people these days look to sustain their healthy lifestyles and related wellness routines even whilst away from home. Wellness tourism can hence definitely help overcome the negative impact of over – tourism, because wellness tourists normally do not have tight budgets and tend to spend well as compared to regular tourists and also look to get unique experiences; there is reduced level of pressure on destinations to engage in a “race to the bottom” type of strategy which can compromise on quality and standards.

It is a fact that people who adopt a higher objective in life usually tend to have healthier lifestyle practices, which has a negative impact on development of chronic diseases like cardiovascular diseases or cancer. (Hirooka, 2021). Wellness tourism can be equated with voluntary travel to destinations across the globe with the sole aim of promoting health & wellbeing through various activities that are physical, mental or spiritual. (Dimon, 2013). There are numerous case studies that emphasize significance of wellness tourism and the various activities that include spas, visits to medical wellness, festivals and yoga retreats, attending life-coaching, meditation and pilgrimage. The researchers have also evaluated various strategies pertaining to marketing and promotion and have attempted to assess various operational and management challenges with regard to health and wellness tourism. (Puczko, 2008). Wellness tourism is one of the fast-growing niches in the present tourism industry. This book looks at the entire gamut of purposefulness that is driving the readers ahead in their purpose of gaining a healthy state of mind and body. More often than not, the target achievement is successful only if one is clear about the huge potential that is stuck in certain customs and cults available in specific countries and particular locations only (Jagyasi, 2015).

*“It is health that is real wealth & not pieces of gold & silver”*. - Mahatma Gandhi (lawyer, freedom fighter & anti-colonial nationalist: Father of the Nation - India).

For protection against malnutrition, it is necessary for one to adopt a healthy diet. This stands true in the case of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which include diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Health as to: “Health is the state of complete physical, emotional, and social well-being, not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity.” This definition has remained unchanged since 1948.

Diet is regarded as one of the major constituents for preventing illness. Controlling the intake of calories to maintain a healthy weight, regular exercise, and not indulging in unhealthy practices like smoking are the other three strategies that have significance in sustaining health. As per the data obtained from the Nurses’ Health Study it is evident that women who kept up with the above-mentioned strategies and a healthy lifestyle were 80% less likely to develop any cardiovascular disease over a 14-year period in comparison to other women in the study not following the same. (Stampfer, 2000). As more and more people are consuming industrially produced goods there is

increasing concern on the health and side effects of such food. Eating healthy food helps in providing energy to keep ourselves active throughout the day & at the same time a person will have healthy weight also. There are many benefits to maintain a healthy diet which includes the building of strong bones, protection of the heart, prevention of diseases and also serves as a mood booster (Brey Meyer, 2016).

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to analyze various published research/data on wellness, health, lifestyle and food to present the readers with a clearer view of the following:

- To list out various benefits of Tourism and its association with “Wellness”
- To identify various major problems faced by the world presently and its causes.
- To examine the food that is abundantly available in terms of its health/nutrition.
- To give an insight of the use of Millets/Other grains for healthier lifestyle and present reasons why these have not prospered commercially.
- To suggest lifestyle changes and eating habits that would help to increase wellness and health amongst all. (Especially pertaining to Yoga and Ashrams)

### **Method**

The method adopted for this research was based on secondary data. Extensive study was done to gather documented work from prior publications and websites, books and magazines as well as reports and articles. The researchers also used a participant observation method to visit various health centers and wellness centers as well as yoga ashrams to meet and interact with the residents as well as the trainers and practitioners. The entire data collected was then subjected to analysis to sort the relevant and significant ones which were listed under various headings and inferences were listed based on the common factors that were identified from the studies.

In this study all rules were followed stated in the directive of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions. Ethics committee permission of this study is taken with the decision of the Ethics Committee of Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, CGU dated 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2022 and numbered 2022 – 012- 002. Both the corresponding author and co-author participated voluntarily in this research after obtaining necessary approvals from their department and consent of their ethics and research committee.

### **Defining “Wellness” and Its Association with Travel**

Wellness is defined as the process of inculcating and practicing healthy habits as a daily routine to achieve and maintain better health both physically and mentally, so as to ensure that you’re thriving in a blissful mental and healthy physical state (Pfizer, 2023). To actually understand the importance and significance of “Wellness” it is necessary to comprehend how it is related to health. Health is not defined or is limited to the absence of infirmities or a disease, but being in state of well-being that reflects both physically, mentally and socially (WHO, 2023).

The wellness economy across the globe was valued at \$4.9 trillion in 2019, which came down to \$4.4 trillion in 2020, as a direct impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. However, it is predicted to achieve firm and robust growth and the wellness economy is expected to return to its earlier stature growing at about 9.9% average annual growth resulting in the economy reaching approximately \$7.0 trillion in 2025. 5.1% of global economic output in 2020 was represented by the wellness economy according to GWI (GWI, 2021).

There are eleven sectors that are included in the wellness economy which are represented by Beauty & Personal Care (\$955 billion), Nutrition, Weight Loss & Healthy Eating (\$946 billion),

Physical Workout/Activities (\$738 billion), Wellness Tourism (\$436 billion), Complementary, Traditional and Alternative Medicine (\$413 billion), Public Health, Disease Prevention, & Personalized Medicine (\$375 billion), Real Estate pertaining to Wellness (\$275 billion), Mental Wellness (\$131 billion), Spas (\$68 billion), Wellness at Workplace (\$49 billion) and Thermal/Mineral Springs (\$39 billion). (GWI, 2021)

Some statistics of wellness tourism are presented below that are indicative of the huge potential of wellness Tourism and stand witness to the strong association of wellness and travel (GWI, 2021). Wellness tourism consisted of a \$720 billion market in 2019 which came down to \$436 billion in 2020, as a result of the widespread disruptions in travel caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. It is projected by GWI that wellness tourism shall grow at a rapid pace in coming years as the world recovers from the pandemic (+20.9% annual growth) and the market is expected to reach \$1.1 trillion by 2025. Travelers across the globe completed over 600 million domestic and international trips with focus on wellness 2020, which showed a decline from 936 million trips in 2019. The average expenditure incurred by international wellness tourists was about \$1,601 per trip in 2020, 35% higher than the typical standard of international tourists. Domestic wellness tourists incurred expenses of about \$619 per trip, 177% higher compared to the average domestic tourist.

### **Major Health Challenges Across the Globe in Today's Time**

Some of the major factors associated with stress are the effect it has on psychological, body & brain functioning. Chronic aggravation includes daily work pressure, frustration due to traffic jams, difficulties due to financial challenges, marital disputes and altercations as well as family related problems. Of course, it is to be noted that there could be numerous other issues that may result in stress, but these are the common stress faced by the society. Sometimes our inner stress causes many chemical changes in our body resulting in different types of diseases & also leads to anxiety, anger & depression (Frank, Christian, & Mathew, 2012)

Chronic stress influences every system in our body as per past research. Due to unreleased of chronic stress body immune system gets affected and results in various types of illness. It is a serious point to ponder on what would happen to the human body if it continued to be in the fight-or-flight mode. The Human body reacts to such stress by releasing hormones and once the actual or imaginary threat is removed, the fight-or-flight response goes down and the body gets relaxed by returning to normal situation. In this period of time the heart rate, pressure of the blood, breathing, tension in the muscles, digestion, metabolism and the immune system all return to their normalcy level of functioning. If stress continues for a sustained length of time it can lead to different types of physical and emotional symptoms. Basically, two types of stress exist, which is commonly found – Acute stress, it is short term stress and goes away quickly & the other type of stress is chronic stress which stays for a continued length of time. (Frank, Christian, & Mathew, 2012). Cohen, Kessler & Gordon (1995) claimed that stress to be a process wherein environmental demands lay a lot of strain on the ability of individuals to adapt which brings about psychological demands and the biological changes that form the outcome may lead to putting the individual at risk of illness.

### **Stress and The Immune System**

A complex relationship occurs between stress and illness. The reasons behind the stress are usually genetic vulnerability, the style of coping with stress, personality of the individual and the kind of social support. The effect of stress can be both beneficial as well as detrimental. At times, short term stress may help in building the immune system as per studies, but chronic stress definitely contributes detrimentally to the immune system that manifests into an illness in the end (Lazarus, 1966).

According to, 'Health and Safety Executive' analysis it is found that of the self-reported illnesses rate disclosed that stress, depression or anxiety had an effect on 1.3% of the workforce. It is calculated that 80% to 90% of all the industrial or workplace accidents are the outcome of personal issues and the inability of employees to handle stress, and over 50% absenteeism at work is a result of stress according to European Agency for Safety and Health (Jansen, 1986). It was reported by the European Agency for Safety and Health at work that about 50% absenteeism at jobs is caused by stress (Simmons & Simmons, 1997).

Asthma is a disease that involves both external & internal factors; the internal factor is more severely affected by acute effects of so-called psychological stressors. In house therapy treatment is commonly used to manage asthmatic children. Reducing the interaction with parents, the situation improves that reduces regular stressful conditions. Further, asthma patients are always at a risk of heart disease & stroke. There are mainly four types of disease which are infectious, deficiency, physiological and hereditary diseases. A study by Gauci, King, Saxarra, Tulloch, Husband, & Minnesota, 1993 presented strong positive correlations amongst some of Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory (MMPI) distressed-related scales with reactivity of skin in response to allergens. Together, this data stands as proof of association between stress, immune dysfunction and clinical activity of atopic and asthmatic disease. For further reference, Liu, Coe, Swenson, Kelly, Kita, & Busse, 2002 have provided quality evidence that stress can increase allergic inflammatory response.

There is proof to justify the fact that recent life events contribute to the commencement of psychiatric illness. The relation between stressful life events and psychiatric illness is much firmer than the relation with physical or medical illness. (Vincent & Roscentock, 1979) Found that before hospitalization, patient's psychiatric disorders had suffered more stressful event than those with physical disorders. In the meantime, (Andrew & Tenant, 1978) could not find any meaningful association between physical illness and stress.

### **Food and Health – The Less Known Dimension**

Since the beginning of civilization, Adulteration in food has been a major concern, due to inferior quality of food products health condition of people is severely affected at the later stage. New techniques have come up for detection of adulterants in food (Sangita, Apoorva, Manisha, Anupam, & Sanjiv, 2017). There are lots of disadvantages on consuming antioxidants supplements. The excessive antioxidants consumption results in breakdown of natural enzymatic antioxidants protection power (Blazovics, 2022). Mc Donald's French fries have dangerous pesticides according to Times Food. Michael Pollan, a well-known author and social activist, reports - the fries are prepared from a particular variety of potato known as 'Russet Burbank', which is abundantly grown in America. These potatoes are preferred as they serve to provide the fries their traditional long and thin shape (Pollan, 2018). Aerated beverages have become a highly demand beverages in today's world where most of the young generation are consuming beverages which are not good for health. Many schools in Britain have banned consumption of soft beverages in schools. The intake of soft drinks has been associated with reduced intakes of calcium, and other essential nutrients which has an increased risk of numerous medical complications (e.g., diabetes) (Vartanian, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2007). Obesity epidemic is one the major problem world is facing today. Youngsters are often the targets of sneaky advertising tactics by junk food companies (Si, Sara, Rebecca, & Stephanie, 2022). The quality of food is deliberately altered in today's generation by addition of different ingredients to change different properties of the food items to increase profits. This impacts the health severely health as well as leads to financial loss. Some adulterants show carcinogenic, genotoxic & clastogenic properties (Momtaz, Bubli, & Khan, 2023).

Millets have constituted a significant part of our daily food intake for many hundreds of years. Further to having a number of health benefits, millets have low water and input requirements and hence are essentially favorable for the environment as well. For this purpose, to promote awareness and supplement the production of millets, United Nations, on request from the Government of India, declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. To commemorate this, Govt. of India is hosting a number of activities at different levels involving multiple stakeholders on millets and its health benefits. Major and Minor millets have been termed as Nutri-cereals due to their high nutritional value. Millets have lot of health advantages as it a source of gluten free protein, high in fiber & are rich in bioactive chemicals (Poshadri, Deshpande, & Kshirsagar, 2023). Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India rebranded some of the Nutri-cereals like major millets, small millets, Sorghum (coarse cereals ) (Kane - Potaka & Kumar, 2019). In Asia & Africa, the staple food for tribal people are mostly millets. Millets are valued for their exceptional farming practices as they are rich in nutrients & good for health (Suni, Bimlesh, & Deepak, 2023). Small millets consist of a wealth of health benefits and contain high levels of insoluble dietary fiber, phytates, Phyto chemicals catechins, flavonoids etc. The small millets are a rich source for copper and iron.

The body and mind may be addressed by Yoga and Meditation, which can contribute towards many molecular processes that include metabolism, epigenetic, oxidative processes, and subjective well-being (Mrithunjay, Meghnath, Jessy, Rima, & Manoj, 2023). Mankind has always strived to achieve excellence and progress since civilization began. There have been numerous factors that have contributed towards increased comforts and enhanced outputs, productivity and efficiency. These include Industrialization, automation and technological disruptions. Consequently, in the recent times, health and wellness have started receiving increased attention all over the globe. There has been an increase in Stress and stress-related diseases and workplace-related ailments in the last few decades and have gained focus of the society and industrial organizations. Recently, in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic, there has been focus on wellness in many countries, communities and institutions worldwide. Yoga has comprised as a crucial part of the Indian ethos for over many centuries (Rabindra, Gopal, & Kadambin, 2021). Tourism, based on Yoga is vital in the choice of promotions adopted by destinations offering yoga retreats as tourism destination (Ewelina & Jordan, 2019).

### **Analysis and Findings**

From the studies reviewed and also based on various observations carried out in person by the researchers at some of the ashrams and yoga centers the following points came to light. Travel was considered by many as a stress buster, which promoted better mental and physical health, helped increase knowledge and awareness of various facts and issues. It was presented by many researchers that in modern times the biggest problems being faced all over included cancer, obesity, mental health and stress. Covid was also listed amongst the major issues but was not studied in much depth as it was taken to be a temporary challenge. For most of the major problems it was found that the underlying cause was majorly related to lifestyle practices and food habits that included consumption of alcohol and smoking (active/passive). Pollution and poor air quality also contributed to the numerous diseases and disorders. To combat such issues many traditional practitioners had started numerous wellness centers all over the Globe, catering to an increasingly troubled population suffering from hypertension, diabetes, cardiac issues, cancer and many more.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is very much evident that most of the disorders and diseases are due to lack of activity and

a sedentary lifestyle. This is complemented by availability of sweetened carbonated high calorie beverages, fried junk food and so on. Many people have resorted to various diets and practices to sustain their weight and health. However, all such efforts that are not according to the nature are not sustainable and lead to other problems and complications. Eating non-refined foods like millets and fruits and vegetables in their natural form is one of the major recommendations of this study. This research also advocates the need for adopting an active lifestyle with less luxuries and comforts. Practicing Yoga and meditation is a good way to relieve stress. Ashram lifestyle is hence increasing in popularity, and many are turning back to basics to revive their mind and body. We look to younger generation to practice physical sports and a healthy eating lifestyle which includes replacing all the refined products with healthier crude and unrefined products. As a final word, it is to be understood that lifestyle is to match nature (i.e., Rise with the Sun and rest likewise), eat variety but do not indulge in taste, adopt as per the surroundings and blend with nature so you can get mentally and physically blissful.

### Limitations of the Study

Despite sincere efforts made by the scholars to cover a sizeable volume of the literature available, it is impossible to go through the entire gamut of content that is available at large. Hence, it is definitely possible that some very relevant and significant contributions may have been missed, keeping in mind the consideration of volume and time. Also, there are thousands of wellness centers, and it is not possible to have visited each in person, hence the data used here is limited to few centers that were accessed by the researchers.

### Scope of the Study and Options for Further Studies

This study has considered broadly various factors like wellness and its association to travel, also health and lifestyle alongside food and healthy practices that are followed at traditional and ethnic centers like ashrams, yoga centers and so on. However, it is worthy to note that each of the chosen areas is by themselves broad enough to warrant a detailed study on their own. Hence, it is logical to present this study as an overall summary of the various heads put together to bring forth an easily comprehensible coalition of various aspects to present some logical and reasonable suggestions and guidelines to readers.

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