

# An Increased Business Opportunity of Wellness Tourism as Premium Tourist Destination in Asian Countries

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## โอกาสทางธุรกิจที่เพิ่มขึ้นของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพเป็นจุดหมายการท่องเที่ยวคุณภาพ ในประเทศไทย

Kittiya Keadplang

Panyapiwat Institute of Management

### Abstract

Wellness tourism is an attractive tourism for people who are seeking for an escape because of a pressure of work and everyday life. Especially, beauty and anti-aging, spas, fitness, mind-body, healthy eating, health-orientated treatment business and etc. are included in the global wellness tourism industry that has gained high revenues in many countries. The trend of wellness tourism is more valuable significantly and people will travel in many Asian Countries. Therefore, the preparation of wellness tourism business plays an important role to serve the people demands. These reasons mean people have to spend a day off, holiday, vacation to restore their well-being and health by escaping away from their repeated environment and land.

**Keywords :** business opportunity, wellness tourism, premium tourist destination

### บทคัดย่อ

การท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพถือเป็นการท่องเที่ยวที่น่าสนใจสำหรับผู้ที่กำลังมองหาสถานที่พักผ่อนหนีอันเนื่องมาจากความกดดันในการทำงานและในชีวิตประจำวัน โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งธุรกิจความงามและการต่อต้านริ้วรอย สปา การออกกำลังกาย จิตใจและร่างกาย การรับประทานอาหารเพื่อสุขภาพ ได้ถูกรวบรวมไว้ในอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพระดับโลกนั้นทำรายได้สูงในหลายๆ ประเทศ ซึ่งแนวโน้มของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพมีคุณค่ามากขึ้นและผู้คนจะเดินทางท่องเที่ยวในหลายๆ ในกลุ่มประเทศอาเซียน ดังนั้น การจัดทำธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อสุขภาพจึงมีบทบาทสำคัญในการตอบสนองความต้องการของประชาชน จากเหตุผลเหล่านี้หมายความว่าผู้คนที่ต้องใช้เวลาพักผ่อนเพื่อฟื้นฟูสุขภาพและความเป็นอยู่ โดยการหนีออกไปจากสภาพแวดล้อมเดิมๆ หรือดินแดนของพวกเขา

**คำสำคัญ :** โอกาสทางธุรกิจ การท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพ จุดหมายปลายทางการท่องเที่ยวคุณภาพ

## **Introduction**

Wellness tourism plays a significant role in developing tourism industry including local and global business that create the tourism activities especially economy which relates to hotel business, transportation, health services and etc. Emphasizing on the global wellness tourism industry has presented the increasing revenues and growth rate average 7.7 percent a year or about \$563 by the Global Wellness Institute since 2014 (McGroarty, n.d.). The growth of wellness tourism is higher than that of many important industries such as financial services, retail Business, and others products production. The majority reason is that the Middle Class people have increased and have highly demand in travelling. Wellness tourism is expected to grow more than 9% annually through 2017 which is a rapid growth of the tourism sector by 50% including the value is \$1.3 trillion, or 1.8% of world GDP and the expenditure of wellness tourism by 14% (\$438.6 billion) both domestic and international tourism. According to the wellness tourism growth and development, Thailand gains a lot of revenues from the tourism industry in each year. Tourism in Thailand is the most one key economic driver to become premium tourist destination as health and wellness or regional wellness hub through Thainess. The foreign tourist's arrival and travel to Thailand about 30 million per year that generate income by 1.4 trillion baht, or about 6% of GDP while full-fledged wellness resort is not adequate to serve the tourists demand (Ministry of Tourism & Sports, n.d.). However, having a proper business model and strategy for a business opportunity, businesses are essential elements of wellness modalities must continually develop and require cutting-edge technology, training and development of personnel wellness services, having the potential management in personnel and administration, such as finance, technology and marketing, and having government support wellness tourism as a potential business are necessary to become business opportunity in wellness tourism industry.

## **Business opportunity of Wellness Tourism in Asian Countries**

### **Thailand**

Thailand is the effective land to do the businesses for foreign investment because of delicate cultures, customs, traditions, resources, and hospitality base on Thainess. There are the majority factors to become the quality of wellness tourism as following;

1. Having an appropriate landscape for the development and establishment of wellness resort.
2. Having a quality of human resources and potential development both an operational and executive level.

3. Purchasing and supplying the raw materials or equipment and products are used in wellness business.

4. Having the supporting facilities for example transportation, tourist information centres, international airports (both domestic and international).

5. Demanding of travellers are increasing because of the expansion of the middle class, with a higher level of income, which places more emphasis on tourism spending.

6. People around the world are becoming more aware and concern of their health. It is stimulated by chronic non-communicable disease. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and work stress.

7. The widespread travel trend, exotic experiences in tourist destinations is more interesting than traditional tourism.

The previous mention factors are affecting on tourism trends that are turning to be more wellness tourism and growing alongside the wellness tourism market or the medical tourism market with reflecting economic trend (Kickbusch & Payne, 2003) in Thailand is expected to grow about 16% in 2017–2020 (Marketeer, 2017). Nowadays, consumers have a need for unusual experiences, Therefore, wellness tourism needs to develop a business model to make a differentiation from the competitors.

Thailand should develop wellness industry to engage in international visitors, it need to inspire the wellness owners to develop the business as destinations. The wellness business in Thailand is more popular and gains more income to complete health experience to the visiting of tourists for example health programs, very luxurious treatments, and food and beverages with the remaining quality resources that are the majority points. However, Thailand has a high competitive competition among Asian countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

## **Malaysia**

According to high spending and expanding of wellness tourism in Malaysia, the government plan to develop spas industry to motivate the further visitors through the luxurious experiences. The country aims to create thousands jobs with the national revenues in 2020, the plan is a one part of the significant tourism key under the developing in an economic area. It can be predicted that a lively spa business become a way to enhance and boost profitability from high end tourists. Many luxurious resorts and hotels include spa services, these can be seen in their website, brochure, advertisements and etc. to promote their resorts and hotels. However, to be a successful wellness tourism as destination, Malaysia faces inflexible competition from its rivalries for example Thailand

and Indonesia, they attempt to increase and expand in the market share (Hydrant, 2016). Challenging of the industry awareness, there are several risks such as unlicensed spa, culture (religious body touching) (Musa & Thirumoorthi, 2016). Therefore, wellness businesses need the licences which are approved and the resorts and hotels need to present or attach those licences in the noticeable area or hall. This stage will create the confidence of visitors because of their safety. Developing of wellness industry in Malaysia that is a Muslim country, there is a watchable country to be a destination country because of wellness industry; Indonesia.

## **Indonesia**

In the recent years, there are some evidences present the increasing of wellness services especially, spas businesses and owners in Indonesia rapidly. The new trend on wellness tourism in Indonesia, it presents the happened perception in a cultural heritage (Saptandari, 2014). For example, spa services can be improved and enhance the community in terms of cultural, educational, or health tourism. Indonesia has the efforts as same as the others Asian countries base on its natural resources, traditional cultures, and the diversities of philosophy as its background which has powerful local cultures to face international competition. According to the new trend and higher demand of visitors (Lee & Kim, 2015) (Tolkach, Chon, & Xiao, 2016), they concern and seek the new travel experiences to relax, do body treatment, or life styles. The wellness tourism is an alternative choice for the medical health for those group of tourists and it can be or create the niche market to plan the differentiation of business strategy from its rivalries. Therefore, Indonesia has more opportunities to be a leader in wellness tourism by developing the green services or products and implement the appropriate strategy to have more income during the competitive world. However, there may be the difficulty of the culture and the competencies of host to serve the tourists need, the country should plan or provide alternative choices under the several types of wellness tourism.

## **Wellness Tourism**

Wellness tourism can be defined as a travel for the specific purposes of encouraging wellbeing and health conclude spiritual, psychological, physical activities. The wellness tourism is commonly associated with a medical tourism because of traveller's interests, and the wellness tourists are practical by seeking to restore, maintain, and improve their quality of life and health. Tourism Authority of Thailand (2008, p.31) defines wellness tourism as a travel tourism to visit beautiful sights by natural and cultural attractions as same as learn how to live and relax. A part of the travel time, travellers spend

their traveling for health supporting and rehabilitation activities. Gee et al (1989, cited in Douglas, 2001, p.262) provides the definition of wellness tourism as traveling to a destination in a country or in a natural area. Sheldon & Bushell, (2009) has explained that wellness tourism means traveling or journey to a nature the travellers learn how to use natural resources to heal, strengthen their health, refresh their mind with the travelling. These group of wellness tourists mainly emphasize on health prevention whereas a group of medical tourists normally travel to obtain treatment for a diagnosed condition or disease. Most of wellness tourists follow the differentiate services. Wellness tourism encourages recommend that day off, holiday, or vacations improve physical wellness or well-being, efficiency, satisfaction, happiness, based on health trips offer the fresh perceptions with the positive and creative well tourism activities to the travellers. In summary, the definition of health tourism (wellness tourism) refers to tourism that is motivated or intended to promote health, rehabilitation therapy or a combination tourism, treatment and rehabilitation of both physical and mental health that is conscious to the conservation of tourism resources and environment in natural and cultural attractions.

### **Categories of Wellness Tourism**

The global wellness industry, Global Wellness Institute (2015) defined as following (Smith & Puczkó, 2008);

1. Health promotion services for example fitness, health food, spa and beauty treatment services.
2. Mental health promotion services for example Tai Chi, Yoga
3. Spiritual health promotion services for example meditation
4. Social health promotion services for example social fitness networks.
5. Emotional health promotion services for example stress relieving
6. Environmental health promotion services for example forest therapy.

The previous types of wellness tourism can be an effective choice for Asian countries where require to be the leading of the wellness tourism or industry as the high destination to serve the high end tourists. An Excellent selecting a type of wellness tourism appropriately, the business entrepreneurs need to emphasize on the tourists need such as services to increase the wellness tourism market segment that many countries are facing an aging people. Moreover, The luxurious service also is an important factor to assist an involve people to obtain more income under the selected typed of wellness (Chen, Liu, & Chang, 2013; DeMicco, 2016; Lim, Kim, & Lee, 2016). For these mentioned, the types of wellness tourism must be developed in the appropriate approach to be a premium tourist destination.

## **Premium Tourist Destination**

Being Premium Tourist Destination sustainably needs to understand tourist destination meaning, management includes destination attraction or image, policies, tourist satisfaction and etc. which affects to becoming the premium tourist destination. Understanding tourist destination, it can be referred to travel destination, place where attracts the numbers of visitors, or tourists. Tourists may have their travelling purposes to visit the destination for example building, historical sites, cities, natural platform and etc the tourist destinations may have the tourism activities include games, riding, diving, drawing, taking a picture, walk really, and etc. at the same time those destination activities can include souvenirs to obtain the income from the visitors. Tourist destination development should have an intelligence and enhancing over economic, socio-cultural, and environmental areas to building the growth of GDP (Gross domestic product). In this part, the business owners or the involve people need to assist together to develop the tourist destination with an initial step toward wellness tourism service experiences. The countries where want to be the premium tourist destination of wellness tourism need to consider and promote the luxury services by using the premium resources, having a skilled staff include service mind, having a facility places (accommodation, public or private facilities) or equipment, making the uniqueness of services, joining or creating in the successful events, creating and building brands, having an entertainment support providing and offering wellness tourism requirements and the unique of experiences which base on the capacities and potentialities. Moreover, being premium tourist destination cannot process in short term within one hand, it needs the inside and outside supporters to manage and design as the premium tourist destination to respond the demand side that grows rapidly in our world because of traveller's escaping from their land.

## **Conclusion**

Wellness tourism represents the increasing business opportunity that affects to a various types of business such as small and medium enterprises. Therefore, the strategies and development of health care (wellness) services can enhance or benefit the premium tourist destination or hub. Asian countries must be prepared for becoming an international wellness center among the high competitive rivalries, utilizing the strength of country's health service system or quality resources with skilled employees can attract the tourists and can generate high income not only economic benefit but also social development to be balance into the sustainable countries.

The characteristics of a quality of tourist destination of wellness tourism may differ from each category which is defined variously by scholars. The value of wellness tourism pays attention to tourists who are seeking relaxation, beauty treatment, or diagnosis. Wellness tourism is used as a driven tool for reflecting the economic of a country, thus the visitors or tourists in this and next generation want to be a longevity and they will search for the high quality destination to fulfil their happiness through their mind and health. To sum up, wellness tourism can enhance the business opportunity which identifies the cultural, social and economic perspectives such as generate income to the community, present the traditional culture and uniqueness, therefore development of wellness tourism should be based on the country's capacity, resource and potential because of the business growth in Asian countries.

### **Recommendation**

Wellness Tourism is an opportunity for all entrepreneurs to develop new business plans. The entrepreneurs may create a new service concept with scientifically validated results or adjust the existing service, such as the use of products that are locally available herbs. For example, natural voice therapy, volatile aroma therapy (aromatherapy), thalassotherapy, mud therapy, or sauna services where guests can touch the services to create an impressive tourist experience. Especially, hotel business can directly access the visitors and increase value added services by presenting wellness activities or maybe develop a new style of service that is new, such as spa service with sand, hiring the local people or wisdom, scrub from the sea and etc. to increase the opportunity and profitability from its differentiation strategy.

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