

The Potential of Wellness Tourism in Sri Lanka: A Path to Holistic Health and Sustainable Growth

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study explores the potential of wellness tourism in Sri Lanka, a niche within the broader tourism industry focusing on enhancing health and well-being. It examines Sri Lanka's unique wellness resources, market demand, challenges, and strategies for sustainable growth, aiming to position the country as a premier wellness tourism destination.

Design/methodology/approach: The research adopts a qualitative approach, employing a case study method. Primary data was collected through interviews with key stakeholders, including wellness tourists and practitioners. Secondary data sources include government reports and industry publications. A SWOT analysis framework was utilized to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Sri Lanka's wellness tourism sector.

Findings: Sri Lanka has significant potential to grow as a wellness tourism destination, thanks to its traditional practices like Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani, alongside its diverse natural landscapes. However, the industry faces challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure and limited international marketing. A targeted strategy focused on quality assurance, eco-friendly practices, and improved infrastructure is essential to compete with leading destinations like Thailand and Bali.

Practical implications: To realize its potential, Sri Lanka needs infrastructure improvements, global marketing efforts, and standardized quality measures in wellness services. Emphasizing sustainable tourism practices and creating a strong brand identity centered on unique wellness offerings can attract a diverse international audience, fostering economic growth and sustainable development.

Originality value: This research highlights Sri Lanka's distinct advantages in the wellness tourism sector, underpinned by a unique blend of cultural heritage, traditional healing practices, and scenic beauty. It provides actionable insights for stakeholders to leverage these strengths for sustainable and inclusive growth within the wellness tourism sector.

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, Ayurveda, Sustainable Tourism, Holistic Health, Tourism Infrastructure, Cultural Heritage, Eco-Friendly Tourism*