A STUDY TO EVOLVE AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING PLAN TO ENHANCE WELLNESS TOURISM IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

In this globalized era, tourism has always been considered on top priority in India with the Governments at the centre as well as the states making highly focused efforts to exploit the tourism resources offered at the national and local level. Wellness, in general, is used to mean a healthy balance of the mind-body and spirit that results in an overall feeling of well-being. It is a multidimensional state of being, describing the existence of positive health in an individual as exemplified by quality of life. Health/Wellness tourism refers to trips that are taken by tourists with the principle purpose being to improve their health and/or wellbeing. India is the most touted healthcare destination for countries like South-East Asia, Middle East, Africa, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Yemen with 12 percent patient inflow from developing countries. Predictions reveal that Asia will have one of the fastest growing tourist populations in the world. What attracts medical tourists the most to India is its low cost treatment, compared to western standards, along with the diverse tourism opportunities. Here, tourists can enjoy the vivacious culture, amazing contradictions, diverse geography, the most unique attribute – unity in diversity and are able to receive an orientation that will help them improve their life in terms of health and general wellness. Government and private sector studies in India estimate that medical tourism could bring between $1 billion and $2 billion US into the country by 2012. The reports estimate that medical tourism in India is growing by 30 per cent a year. Today, Kerala Tourism is a global super brand and is regarded as one of the destinations with the highest brand recall. The tag line Kerala- God’s Own Country was adopted in its tourism promotions and has become synonymous with the state. The present article studies the future of emerging health tourism in India. This paper examines the various factors that contribute to Kerala’s strength as a preferred destination for Ayurveda based Wellness tourism. An attempt
is made to study the Ayurvedic health care scenario by focusing on the perceptions and profiles of the International tourists visiting Kerala as wellness seekers. The article also gives some insights that can be used in forming an advanced Marketing plan to promote India as an attractive health tourism destination on the international platform.

**KEYWORDS**: Ayurveda, Tourism, Wellness.