



Wellness Tourism in Himachal Pradesh: A SWOT Analysis

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Abstract: - Himachal Pradesh is a hill state in the northern India and it is a well admired destination of the country which has everything to attract wellness tourists throughout the globe. Wellness sector is one of the growing and lucrative sectors of Himachal Pradesh. Natural and cultural resources are blessings of nature to the state wellness tourism sector. The potential of wellness tourism in the state is awesome because people all around the globe looking for new ways for promoting health and wellbeing. The qualitative research method has been used for undertaken the study. A data was collected through personal interview. The questions were formulated focusing on the elements of Wellness Tourism in Himachal Pradesh. There are various interviewees including academicians, tourists, District administration, Doctors, Practitioners, Trainer, stakeholders related to wellness tourism. The results of the present study driven through SWOT analysis. In addition, study reveals that wellness tourism becomes main motivator to local economy in near future of mountainous state.

Key words: Wellness Tourism, Lucrative sector, SWOT Analysis, Potential, local economy, Himachal Pradesh

I. Introduction of Tourism:-

Tourism industry is the combination of natural resources, cultural resources, environment and manmade resources. Tourism refers to trip to outside their habitual setting for a maximum of one consecutive year for the purpose of healthcare, business, leisure etc. It is also the amalgamation of services, activities and industries like transport, entertainment, accommodation, Food & Beverages that provide complete experience to tourists. It is a trillion dollar industry. According to UNWTO "Tourism refers to the activity of a person who travels to a particular destination other than the

usual place of their residence and staying for a maximum of a one consecutive year for a purpose of leisure, pleasure and recreational". It offer various niche products ranging from adventure tourism to leisure tourism, medical tourism to wellness tourism, eco - tourism to wildlife tourism, aero sports tourism to water sports tourism. In 2021, there was 677.63 million domestic tourists' trip in India and percentage increase of 11.05% from 610.22 million in 2020. It also plays a significant role as a foreigner exchange earner for the country. In 2021, foreign exchange earnings from tourism were US\$ 8.797 billion as compared to US\$ 6.958 billion in 2020 with 26.4% positive growth.

Wellness Tourism:-

Wellness tourism is an ancient form of tourism. Their root has been found around 5000 years ago with Indian traditional medicinal system. In present time, wellness tourism is considered one of the growing sectors in India. The development of Wellness Tourism has been influenced by various reasons which comprises high stress level among people and increasing hectic pace of life, high intake of fat & carbohydrates rich food in daily meal plan, people engaged in long hours office work motivates people to take a trip for receiving alternative medicinal treatment/therapy. After 1980s wellness become a trendy segment, which comprises the maintain and prevention of health. Wellness tourism refers to travelling to other destination for receiving treatment through ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha, thermal water etc. In addition, Wellness tourism defined as tourism an activity that comprises soft treatment to maintain and promote wellbeing of the traveler. According to Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India Wellness Tourism refers to good balance of the body, spirit, and mind that promotes overall peace and relaxation. It is a subset of Health



Tourism which main focus on improving daily health and wellbeing of individual. The concept of Wellness Tourism is incomplete without the involvement of yoga, ayurveda, meditation, siddha, unani, spa and homeopathy. Many people prefer long haul travel for the purpose of improvement and sustain personal wellbeing. India, Singapore, USA, Thailand, Hong Kong, Israel, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Switzerland, Russia, Australia, Philippines and UAE along with 70 other countries are engaging in wellness activities. In current time, many people suffer from ailments due to their selection of lifestyle (Mohanty, 2022); bottomless thinking of any hypothetical situation likewise fear of loss of earnings leads to psychosomatic disorder which affects physical and mental health in many ways. Trip for wellness purpose undertaken by those people who are healthy. Trip for wellness purpose offer a peaceful space which disintegrate the mind from the external globe, thus providing relaxation and peace. It has huge potential; the market value of global wellness tourism US\$ 436 billion in 2020. From 2017 to 2019, wellness tourism market grew 8% annually and reaching \$720 billion. In 2020, due to Covid -19 wellness tourism market shrunk -39.5% to \$436 billion and wellness tourism related trips reduced from 936 million to 601 million. India is ranked twelfth as a wellness destination in the year 2020. Out of the total tourism expenditure, wellness trips accounted for 17% of total tourism expenditure. In December 2017, former President of India Sh. *Ram Nath Kovind* mentioned in speech that out of 1.3 billion population, about 10 percent of population suffered from several mental health problems like stress and anxiety. Alternative medicinal therapy/Treatment is the indigenous treatment of India. India being a hub of Indian system of medicine offers a variety of destination namely Goa, Uttarakhand, Pondicherry, Kerala, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh etc. In 2015, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India has constituted a National Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board to promote wellness and medical tourism across India.

Wellness Tourism in Himachal Pradesh:-

Himachal Pradesh is situated in the North India and it is seen as the best place for domestic and international tourist's arrivals. The state is ranked in domestic tourist's arrivals and 14th in international tourists arrivals.

Himachal Pradesh is still famous all around the world for pleasant and tranquil environment. The potential of wellness tourism in Himachal is amazing. It is also the emerging

concept in the area of academics. Wellness tourism is a growing segment with potential to increase in near future. Himachal is associated with range of wellness activities like Yoga, Ayurveda, Meditation, Panch karma Treatment etc.

The popular and major wellness tourist's attractions and destinations of a state are as follows:-

Dharamshala: - It is headquarter of kangra district situated on dhauladhar ranges. Dharamshala was founded by Britishers in 1855. It is famous for meditation hub, natural herbs, Indian traditional medicinal system, monasteries and peaceful environment.

Palampur: -Palampur is a hill station situated in the kangra district. It is surrounded by fine forest and dhauladhar ranges. There are several fresh streams flowing from the mountains. Palampur is also known as tea gardens. An ayurvedic hospitals and ayurvedic college are in paprola about 10 km away. Palampur is a home to various medicinal plants and various Indian system of medicine.

Manali: - It is the most beautiful and famous tourist's destinations of India. The combination of greenery, snow-clad mountains and forest area gives Manali a distinctive look. Manali is also known for its natural beauty across the world which attracts thousands of domestic and foreign tourists. It is a blend of peace and tranquility which makes it a heaven for nature lover. Fresh air, clean water, cool climate and pleasant environment make it as a well liked destination in the world.

Shimla: - Shimla is also known as "The Queen of Hills" and became the capital of Himachal Pradesh in 1966. Shimla was built on top of 7 hills Inverarm Hill, Observatory Hill, Bontany Hill, Jakhu Hill, Prospect Hill, Summer Hill and Elysium Hill. The climatic condition and dense forests of Shimla (Pine, Deodar, Oak and Rhododendron) attracts tourists from all over the world. Shimla is home to various buildings that are styled into the Tudorbethan and neo-gothic architecture like Indian Institute of Advance Study (IIS), The Ridge, The Town Hall and Ripon Hospital etc.

These all destinations are witnessing the tourist's arrival from foreign and various states of India and have huge potential to attract wellness tourists throughout the world. They have unique environmental attributes namely fresh air, cool climate and dense forest area, peaceful and tranquil environment.



II. Literature Review:-

The primary purpose of literature review is to find out and examine, what has been done by other researchers in their research related to wellness tourism. The literature review also helps the researcher to limit unnecessary and duplication of other research.

Earlier tourism was primarily focused on enjoyment, pleasure, fun and totally ignoring health aspect of tourists. But nowadays everyone knows that good health should be only eligibility to success. The main aim of wellness tourism is to take good care of wellbeing of person. Rawat, (2017) said that India is a home to rich culture, variety of herbal food, ayurveda and yoga. Those all entire factors will make India as a favorable destination for wellness tourism if citizens of the country understand its strength and use those resources properly. Naipinit & Tran, (2015) studied on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of wellness tourism in Roi-Kaen-San-Sin Cluster, Thailand. The results revealed that the potential for Wellness Tourism in Roi-Kaen-San-Sin Cluster, Thailand is included four aspects which are attractions, activities related to tourism, positive attitude of locality and safety and security. The weaknesses are lack of human resources, inadequate transportation facilities and inadequate advertising activities to promote Wellness Tourism. On the other side, Wellness Tourism in Roi-Kaen-San-Sin has varied opportunities likewise pleasant & tranquil location, Government support to improve wellness tourism activities to develop wellness tourism. Gunawan et.al, (2016) found through research that the Belitung has opportunity in wellness tourism to attract tourists from throughout the world. After SWOT analysis investigators finds out the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats. It reveals that government, health professionals, travel agents needs to work together. Begum,(2012) states that marketing India as a hub of medical and health tourism it is essential to know about macro and micro problems facing by sector. This study suggests that government and state tourism board to coordinate and collaborate on a set of international standard. In addition, this study recommended that immediate attention on loopholes in administration system and development infrastructure of the country for the development of tourism in the country. The local authority should execute the effective marketing strategies to increase medical and wellness tourism in the country. A destination brand and effective marketing can do more than just influence tourist's

behavior. Ravichandran & Suresh, (2010) suggest through their research; with adequate and effective marketing strategies and by dealing with existing tourist concerns about country, the destination has the potential to dramatically increase tourist inflow. Wellness tourism sector can support investment to the region, employment generation, improve sense of place of a destination and health of the locality (Sheldon & Park, 2008). Environmental assets comprises fresh air, clean water and natural landscape of the destination were considered to be the vital attributes for the development of wellness tourism (Heung & Kucukusta, 2013).

Due to rapid spread of Covid-19, tourism was one of the most affected sectors. It has caused massive destruction to the economy and society throughout the world (Naumov et al., 2020). Pandemic has also affected sub-sectors that are directly interlinked with tourism industry like transport, accommodation and entertainment. COVID-19 has also changed people's outlook on life. COVID-19 put extra pressure on people mental and physical health. Budding wellness tourism in a country can encourage entrepreneurship; increase the sense of place of a destination, health of the locality, offer monetary benefit & form environmental preservation and quality of products (Sheldon & Park, 2008b). Activities related to wellness tourism are interconnecting to the destination's culture, natural resources, environmental conditions and local food (Wayne & Russell, 2020). Its key components are self-responsibility, physical fitness, healthy diet, beauty treatments, meditation, relaxation, intellectual activity/learning, placing an emphasis on social relations and environmental sensitivity. Due to social transformations and the favorable economic performance of the Wellness tourism industry is likely to become the fastest developing touristic and economic sectors (Ardell, 1985), (Pilzer, 2007).

Wellness tourism is complex phenomena due to various perception and expectation of visitors. Majeed & Kim, (2023) explored that tourists expect a blend of health treatments/therapy, such as traditional medical treatments, alternative fitness treatments and attractions as part of wellness tourism to enhance and sustain their health and well-being. Wellness tourism is increasing niche market throughout globally and also recommends business opportunities to natives through wellness products that promote or sustain health (Kelly, 2010). In multipolitan cities, leisure has become essential to physical, emotional and mental well-being. Current days, people are



seeking experience based tourism products on holidays with surrounded by pleasurable and calm environment. Convenient transport, rich forest, unique position, vast prairie and tourism related sites are the primary resources for developing wellness tourism (Pan et al., 2019). Accessibility and digital technologies have increasing extraordinary opportunities for using health services outside the country; Kemppainen et al., (2021) reviews the literature on health and wellness tourism travel in the duration of 2010–2018. Bedi & Chamoli, (2020) new services and products were introduced by hotels to make their customers feel that during their stay would be healthy and wellness oriented. Researcher found through his study that the hotels situated in North India are still focusing on mental wellness, physical fitness and strengthen themselves as a wellness services provider. The destination in which wellness tourism services occurred, many tourists influences to visit the destinations due to availability of services, qualitative services and quality of experience.

Objective:-

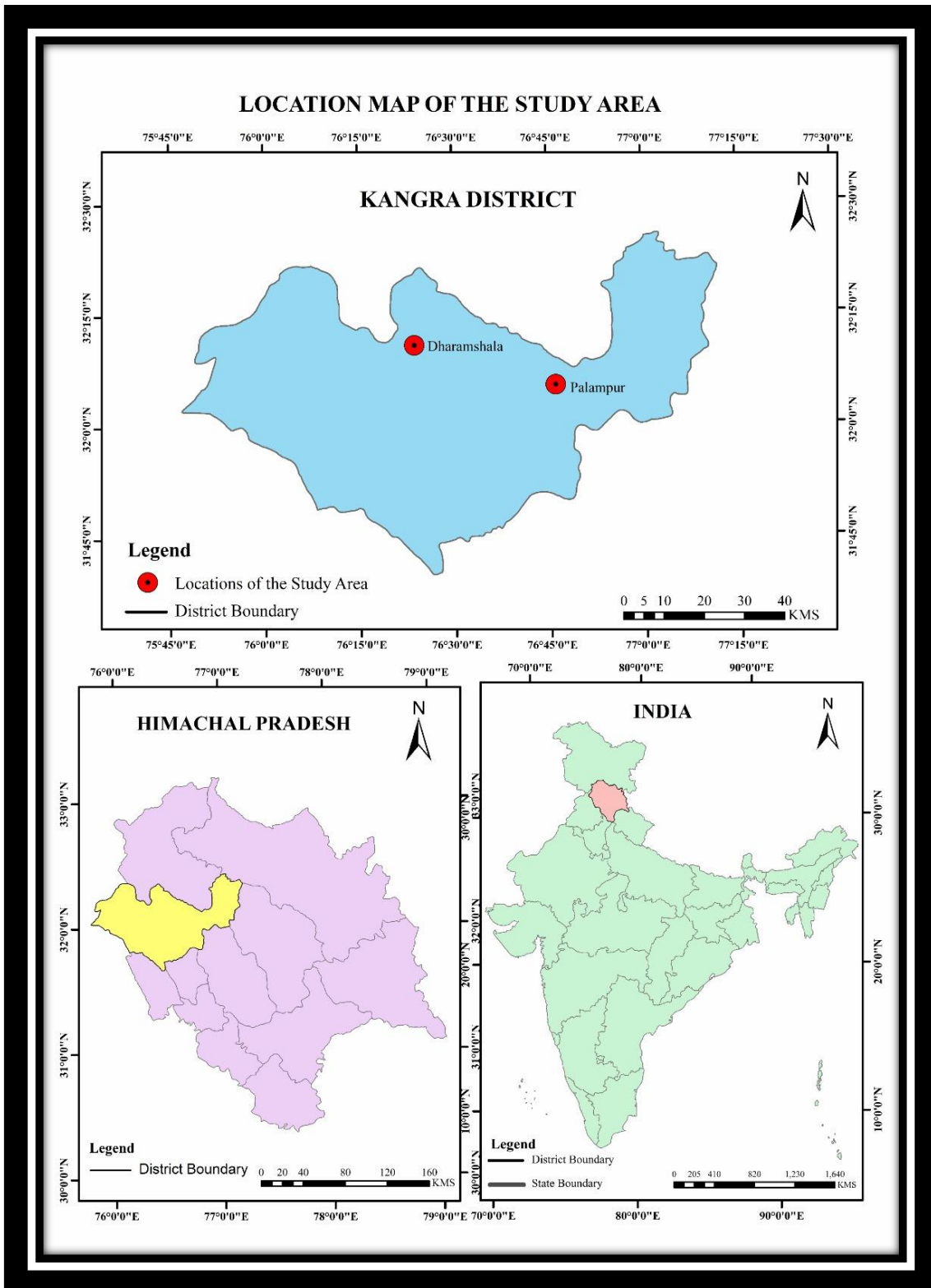
To study the SWOT analysis for Wellness Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

III. Research Methodology:-

In the present study conducted through qualitative research method. A data was collected through personal interview. The questions were formulated focusing on the elements of Wellness Tourism in Himachal Pradesh. There are various interviewees including academicians, tourists, district administration, doctors, practitioners, trainer, stakeholders related to wellness tourism.

Research Area:-

This research study mainly focus on the two major wellness tourism destinations Dharamshala and Palampur of District kangra in Himachal Pradesh. Kangra is located in the western part of Himachal Pradesh. It is located at the 30° 22' 40" to 33° 12' 40" North Latitude and 75° 45' 55" to 79° 04' 20" East Longitude. Palampur and Dharamshala are well known for wellness tourism product among domestic and foreign tourists.





Strength: - The following are the strengths of wellness tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh.

- ❖ The clean, fresh and pleasant environment.
- ❖ Huge availability of medicinal plants, herbs and organic food products.
- ❖ The environment of Himachal Pradesh is suited for practicing wellness activities.
- ❖ The famous destination for wellness tourism namely Shimla Rural, Dharamshala, Palampur, Siraj valley, Chamba, Dalhousie, Solang Nala, Palampur etc.
- ❖ Government established separate department for AYUSH for development and promote Indian system of medicine in the state.
- ❖ Rich diversity in terms of flora, fauna and various landscapes, which also includes the great Himalayas.
- ❖ Wellness is considered a niche tourism product category.
- ❖ Wellness is an integral part of Himachal way of life.
- ❖ All weather destination
- ❖ Reasonable cost for treatments/therapy as compared to other destinations.
- ❖ Reputation as an exotic holiday destination.

Weaknesses: - The weaknesses of wellness Tourism sector are mentioned below.

- ❖ Lack of adequate infrastructure facilities and information as well.
- ❖ Shortage of trained, skilled and qualified workforce.
- ❖ Inadequate marketing and promotional strategies of wellness tourism.
- ❖ Lack of awareness about alternative medicinal system among locals and tourists.
- ❖ Wellness tourism sector in Himachal is in nascent stage.
- ❖ No data available on wellness tourists.
- ❖ No separate policy for wellness tourism.
- ❖ No provision of loan for stakeholders to start wellness tourism activities in the state.
- ❖ Adequate support is not provided by Government.
- ❖ Pandemic has created a negative destination image.
- ❖ Treatments are not available in the state like, siddha, unani, naturopathy etc.
- ❖ Absence of direct or regular flight connectivity for international and domestic tourists.
- ❖ Only a few wellness tourism stakeholders promote wellness tourism activities.
- ❖ Establishments in Himachal have not come up to foreign and domestic tourist's

expectation in terms of human resources, infrastructure, facilities and services provided by them.

Opportunities:-

- ❖ Increasing demand for wellness tourism activities.
- ❖ Affordable cost of Indian traditional medicinal system.
- ❖ FDI in wellness sector in India.
- ❖ Organizing day to day programme for the needs of the consumer.
- ❖ Organizing regional events for the promotion of wellness tourism.
- ❖ Establishment can primarily focus on organizing virtual sessions on self-care, meditations, yoga practices, healthy lifestyle.
- ❖ People are shifting towards Indian system of medicine from Medical Tourism.
- ❖ Indian system of medicine acts as a motivating factor for International tourists to come Himachal for receiving treatment.
- ❖ Health checkups with tourism inclusive package.
- ❖ Develop as a wellness hub.
- ❖ Combine leisure tourism with wellness tourism.

Threats: - Threats for the wellness tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh.

- ❖ Safety and security of tourists.
- ❖ The states such as Kerala, Utrakhand, Goa, Karnataka and Tamilnadu are providing stiff competition to Himachal Pradesh.
- ❖ Environmental condition such as global warming, climate change imposing threats to wellness tourism.
- ❖ Rising crime rate in Himachal against tourists.
- ❖ Disruption in environment due to forest fire and deforestation.
- ❖ Local people cost of treatment may increase.
- ❖ Emergence of unlicensed, unskilled and incompetent professional.
- ❖ Conflict between indigenous medicinal system and modern medicinal system.

From the SWOT analysis, the investigator identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Wellness Tourism destinations in Himachal Pradesh as shown above in the table.

IV. Conclusion:-



This paper main intend to study the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Wellness Tourism in Himachal Pradesh. After working on SWOT analysis, Himachal are said to be the epicenters of wellness tourism because the state has amazing potential and various environmental assets likewise clean water, fresh air, huge availability of medicinal herbs & organic food, tranquil environment, greenery etc. Through the various offerings such as ayurveda, meditation, yoga, sowa rigpa and other various Indian systems of medicine, Himachal could become the hub of wellness tourism. The Wellness tourism helps in the socio-economic and economic growth of the state. Government and service providers should work together dedicatedly to improve weaknesses which facing wellness tourism industry of Himachal Pradesh such as inadequate infrastructure, shortage of skilled workforce, no government support, unavailability of indigenous treatments (Siddha, Unani) etc. The SWOT analysis suggests that Himachal Pradesh needs further value creations in wellness treatment in order to attract high spending tourists. State requires strong campaigns to improve its positive destination image.

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