

Mental Health Care as a Specific Tourism Product

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Abstract: The concept of wellness is traditionally understood within a holistic, multidisciplinary framework (Hettler, Dunn), where the psychological and mental components are key to achieving maximum potential. Despite this theoretical consensus, in practice, wellness on the Czech market, and especially in the accommodation sector, is predominantly reduced to the physical dimension (swimming pools, saunas, massages). This article aims to explore the discrepancy between the theoretical holistic concept of wellness and the practical services offered in the Czech Republic and to identify gaps in the mental health care segment. The methodology combines systematic literature research with an analysis of the content of the websites of 50 selected luxury accommodation facilities (N=50) in the Czech Republic and an exploratory qualitative survey of demand (structured interviews with clients).

The results show that the vast majority (92%) of the facilities surveyed offer only one-dimensional, physically focused services, while comprehensive mental health care packages (including retreats, meditation, and yoga with an instructor) are offered by only 8% (4 facilities). The results also show that although client demand is primarily directed towards traditional services (swimming pool, sauna), respondents actively express interest in expanding the offer to include relaxation and meditation exercises as a counterbalance to a stressful lifestyle.

Based on data triangulation, the article confirms a significant gap in the offer of holistic wellness stays (retreats) on the Czech market. It formulates recommendations for tourism entities that want to take advantage of the growing trend of mental health care.

Keywords: Wellness, Mental Health Care, Retreat, Holistic health, Tourism, Wellness dimension

JEL Classification: L83, L84. I12

1 Introduction

The concept of wellness is traditionally understood as a harmony between the body and the soul, and its psychological component, which is key in professional terms, is often emphasised. The term "wellness" represents a distinct field of science with multidisciplinary overlap. Research in the field of wellness encompasses social sciences and natural sciences, particularly biology, physiology, psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, ethics, sociology, anthropology, and kinanthropology (Krejčí, 2013). Goeldner & Ritchie (2014) emphasize the increase in leisure time and broader access to recreational opportunities for people in the Western world, which has led to an increase in demand not only within the entire tourism segment, but also in interest in health and spa stays.

This article aims to familiarize readers with the perception of the concept of wellness from both a theoretical and practical point of view, to familiarize readers with the differences in the theoretical concept of wellness, and to identify differences in the perception of this widely used term. The article also aims to identify gaps in the provision of wellness services on the Czech market and explore the possibilities of offering retreat stays.

2 Methods

The methodology of this article is based on a combination of theoretical research and empirical research with the aim of comprehensively examining the concept of wellness and identifying gaps in its practical application in the Czech accommodation sector, with a specific focus on Mental Health Care.

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2.1 Review of literature

The aim of this section of the article is to identify and synthesize key concepts, trends, theories, and current knowledge in the field of wellness. To create an adequate theoretical framework, a systematic literature review was used, focusing on the comparison and analysis of high-quality publications and key concepts in the field of wellness, with an emphasis on historical, contemporary, and multidisciplinary approaches to the concept (biology, psychology, philosophy, etc.). Based on precise work with information sources, approaches to the researched issue were described and basic concepts of the perception of the terms *wellness* and *well-being* were presented. The results of the research were used to create a coding scheme for the subsequent analysis of documents, especially with regard to the identification of elements of mental health care.

2.2 Website Content Analysis

The empirical part of the research is based on the Content Analysis method (Burgess, 1990). The range of wellness services offered on the websites and booking portals of Czech accommodation facilities was analyzed. Fifty (N=50) selected accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic were analyzed, with the selection primarily focusing on higher-category facilities (e.g., 4* and 5* hotels, resorts, and facilities rated on prestigious portals such as Amazing Places and Tripadvisor).

The analysis focused on the main topic of the work – Mental Health Care for Clients. The occurrence, description, and categorization of products that explicitly mention or primarily care for the mental, emotional, or spiritual dimension of wellness (e.g., retreats, *Mindfulness* programs, yoga, guided meditation, consultations, etc.) were monitored (Chandran et al., 2021). The offer on the official websites of the facilities was compared with the information provided on booking and review portals (e.g., Tripadvisor, Amazing Places) in order to validate the findings and identify examples of good practice in the comprehensive concept of wellness services in the Czech Republic.

2.3 Exploratory qualitative demand survey

To gain insight into clients' perceptions of wellness and demand, an exploratory qualitative survey was conducted in the form of structured interviews (Hendl, 2023). The interviews were conducted with clients of various wellness facilities in different geographical locations (Barcelona, Basel, and Prague). The interviews were conducted according to a pre-prepared script to ensure data comparability. All respondents were asked the same questions, and after the interview, the answers were recorded on prepared answer sheets.

The questions focused on:

1. the issue of in-demand products and procedures;
2. identifying missing products/procedures;
3. willingness to try newly proposed (especially mentally focused) products.

The survey inquired about their preferences for existing facilities and their opinions on how the offer could be further expanded. The data obtained provided direct feedback from the target group and served to support findings about gaps in the offer of retreats and mental health care.

2.4 Data processing

Data from literature reviews and structured interviews were processed using qualitative analytical methods.

Data obtained from website content analysis (n=50) were processed using frequency quantification and categorization. MS Excel software was used to process, sort, and record data, and a frequency analysis of the occurrence of specific products and services was performed. Later, the frequency (number of occurrences) and percentage of facilities offering key physical wellness products (swimming pools, saunas, massages) and those offering products explicitly focused on mental/holistic care were determined.

The identified offerings were categorized based on theoretical wellness models to determine whether the facility provided one-dimensional (predominantly physical) or multidimensional/holistic care. The findings were used to verify the thesis of a gap in the market offering. After conducting a literature review and analysing the interviews, a synthesis method was employed. This consisted of systematically linking and summarizing key theoretical concepts of wellness with practical findings from website analysis and interviews. The synthesis serves to create a comprehensive picture of the issue and to formulate the main findings of the article. The induction method (drawing general conclusions from partial observations) was used to interpret the data from the website analysis, where, based on repeated observation of the offer, it was possible

to categorize the dominant types of wellness services offered, identify existing trends, and formulate general conclusions about the state of the comprehensive concept of wellness on the Czech market.

The validity of the data is determined by data triangulation, i.e., mutual verification of findings obtained from three independent sources, which was used to strengthen the validity of the conclusions. If theoretical knowledge is confirmed by practical findings, the credibility of the results will be increased.

3 Research results

3.1 Review of literature

The notion of wellness was conceptually used in English literature as early as the 17th century (Zimmer, 2010). It roughly meant "good health." In a series of articles and lectures in the late 1950s, Halbert L. Dunn⁴ defined his concept of "high-level wellness" as "an integrated method of functioning that is aimed at maximizing the potential that an individual is capable of" (Schellong, 2012). Wellness is a way of life oriented towards achieving an elevated state of physical and mental well-being and described as a disciplined commitment to the pursuit of personal excellence (Dunn, 1959). It is a continuum (not a static state) between death and optimal condition, encompassing physical, mental, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions (Dunn, 1961). This model emphasizes that mental wellness is an individual's responsibility, and the key to progressing to higher levels is self-knowledge and inner integrity.

A comprehensive perception of wellness can be found in Hettler (1976), who developed "The Six Dimensions of Wellness Model," which recognizes six dimensions: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Social, Spiritual, and Occupational. Roscoe (2009) expands on this model and emphasizes wellness as a balanced state consisting of seven dimensions of wellness: social, emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, and environmental. However, some authors focus mainly on the physical aspect, e.g., Müllerová (2008); Blahušová (2008), or Cathala (2014). Corbin (1979) defined health and well-being primarily in terms of achievable physical fitness, similar to Kaufman (2018), for example. Corbin's model is often used in school and sports environments, representing a reduction of wellness to its physical and cognitive components within the framework of exercise. These approaches measure and define well-being based on objective physiological data, thereby suppressing subjective, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. This approach focuses on factors affecting physical health and well-being at different stages of life, and its primary goal is to optimise physical health depending on age and environmental pressures (Kelly, Panchal, & Palmer, 2010), or the Global Wellness Summit (2023). However, the Czech Wellness Institute (2019) provides the definition: "Wellness is not just spas and hot tubs, but a holistic model of healthy human functioning." Contemporary wellness is defined as "active activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health" (Global Wellness Institute, 2023).

Myers (2000) systematically divides wellness into interrelated tasks and dimensions. The basis of this theory is a holistic model based on individual psychology that perceives the spiritual dimension, self-direction, work and leisure, friendship, and love. For our article on tourism, the area of Self-Direction is significant. It is purely psychological and encompasses a sense of worth, realistic beliefs, stress management, emotional awareness and management, problem-solving and creativity, a sense of humour, and self-care. Myers' 2000 model is referred to as the "Wheel of Wellness," but the same author later refined it and refers to it as "The Indivisible Self." At the same time, he introduced the measurement tool *The Five-Factor Wellness Inventory*, shifting the model to an empirically based framework (Myers, 2004). In some cases, the model works with six factors (e.g., National Wellness Institute, 2024). The advantages of a holistic approach are discussed in Oxford University Press (2023).

Representatives of the Deutscher Wellness Verband state that the widely used definition of wellness today, which considers wellness to be a made-up word composed of "well-being" and "fitness," is misleading (Deutscher Wellness Verband, 2023). For example, Travis & Ryan (2004) describe how Dunn, mentioned earlier in this article, used the old, forgotten term wellness and redefined it to describe an active process toward maximum potential, thereby distinguishing it from the state of well-being. Although the word "well-being" exists, the word "wellness" did not originate primarily in connection with this concept. Academic and etymological sources point out that the word wellness is significantly older and has different roots than the modern "well-being" (Ardell, 1977). AlNujaidi et al. (2025), who define wellness as active engagement and personal responsibility in the pursuit of a balanced life, whereas well-being focuses on the subjective experience of happiness and life satisfaction (i.e., a state). Barnes-Waychus, Uribe, & Collins (2023) add that while

⁴ Then-director of the National Office of Vital Statistics

consumers are changing their perceptions of health and physical fitness, these changes are motivated by a broader concept of wellness that goes beyond mere well-being.

In the 21st century, the global wellness movement and market reached a dramatic turning point when concepts and offerings related to fitness, diet, healthy lifestyles, and well-being proliferated wildly. It is also interesting to note that in 2024, more than half of the world's employers used health promotion strategies and a third invested in full-fledged wellness programs. Thanks in part to these activities, medical professionals who promote wellness (such as Dr. Mehmet Oz, Deepak Chopra, and Andrew Weil) have become well known. Wellness has thus entered the collective global psyche and is firmly rooted in the vocabulary (Global Wellness Institute, 2024).

3.2 Results of website content analysis (Content Analysis)

To confirm the theses from literary sources, an analysis of accommodation facility websites was conducted. The results of the analysis show that only 4 of the 50 facilities surveyed mention a product that includes multi-component wellness care in their offer. These products can be found in ***** accommodation facilities, mostly in the Special Offers (packages) section.

In some facilities, products labelled "holistic" or "body and soul care," etc., are offered, but they only address the physical aspect. The Tripadvisor website identified facilities that can be considered examples of good practice in the Czech Republic, including:

- Mosaic House Design Hotel in Prague, winner of the TripAdvisor portal in the category Best Wellness Hotels in the Czech Republic (Tripadvisor, 2025), which offers a Finnish sauna, whirlpool, cooling shower, private spa, and fitness centre (Mosaic House, 2025)
- Diamant Wellness Hotel & Spa, Hluboká nad Vltavou, featuring a swimming pool, whirlpool, sauna, Kneipp baths, salt cave, fitness centre, solarium, massages, relaxation rituals, peels and wraps, water treatments, and spa treatments (CO2 wrap and bath) (Hotel Diamant, 2024).

According to the Amazing Places website, the best-rated accommodation facilities are

- Wellness & Wine Hotel Volarik (Mikulov)
- Chateau Herálec (Vysočina)
- Hotel Sladovna (Černá Hora u Brna)
- Endemit Boutique Hotel & Spa (Horní Bečva, Beskydy)
- Hotel Lanterna (Velké Karlovice, Beskydy)
- Hotel U Zlaté Studně Spa & Wellness (Prague)
- Ondrášův Dvůr (Beskydy)
- Maximus Resort (Brno) (Amazing Places, 2025)

These facilities are among the highest-rated by customers, who praise luxurious services, clean wellness facilities, and top-notch staff. However, when analyzing their offerings on the web, most of the facilities surveyed do not mention the possibility of wellness stays with retreats.

The survey also identified facilities that meet the definition of comprehensive services and can thus be considered examples of good practice in the field of mental health care.

- The Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Prague is the winner of the Best Hotel Spa in the Czech Republic category according to the World Spa & Wellness Awards⁵ (World Spa Awards, 2025) and offers a wellness package called On the Silk Road, which is a three-day program with a private consultation with a master of traditional Chinese medicine, including dietary recommendations and the creation of a personal menu to balance qi, massages, fitness, relaxation rituals, peels and wraps, skin care, a nutrition program, and yoga (Mandarin Oriental Hotel Club, 2025).
- In Počátky, at the St. Catherine Resort, there are several combinations of Ayurveda packages available. Ayurvedic doctors, therapists, and chefs from Kerala, India, offer authentic natural medicine. This program includes the use of wellness facilities (St. Catherine Resort, 2025).

⁵ An award for excellence in spa and wellness tourism through a 30-year-old annual awards program organized by the UK-based Professional Beauty Group. Its goal is to inspire exceptional standards and connect spa consumers with the best in spa and wellness tourism.

- The Seeberg Hotel in Františkovy Lázně offers a four- or eight-day stay called Harmonization of Body and Soul, which includes meditation, yoga, self-discovery, as well as access to the pool, sauna, massages, and baths (Seeberg, 2025).
- Orea Spa Hotel Cristal in Mariánské Lázně sells an Activity Program package that includes yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, Nordic walking, and the use of the hotel's wellness facilities (Orea Spa Hotel Cristal, 2025).
- The Augustinian House in Luhačovice offers a Mindfulness program in a meditation yurt. The program includes meditation, teaching how to cope with stressful situations and reduce stress in everyday life, developing the ability to concentrate better and consciously control one's own psyche (Augustinian House, 2025).

3.3 Results of exploratory qualitative demand survey

The respondents' answers indicated that the guests surveyed at wellness facilities are interested in a healthy lifestyle, which is understandable, as wellness and a healthy lifestyle are often intertwined. The same people declare that they use wellness services during their stay at the facility. The most popular activity is swimming in the pool, followed by a visit to the sauna and a massage. Another frequently used facility is the whirlpool. These services are perhaps the most used because they are the most common facilities in these establishments; in other words, often nothing else is offered.

The most common response to the question about expanding existing services was the introduction of meditation, which respondents specified as relaxation exercises, relaxation with visualization, meditation exercises, and even meditation. They often added that this should be the last step immediately after a massage, with the idea being that the client would remain lying on the massage table and would only be given headphones with instructions or relaxing music. Less common were requests for more privacy in wellness facilities, music therapy, aromatherapy, the addition of floating, or the introduction of digital-free zones.

This part of the survey also showed that wellness businesses offer care for the physical aspect of a person (swimming pool, hot tub, massage), which people use the most, but they don't really have the opportunity to use anything else. Their wishes included more relaxation and meditation as a counterbalance to their busy lives.

4 Conclusions

Most current concepts of wellness are based on early holistic frameworks, dominated by the Six Dimensions of Wellness model introduced by Hettler (1976) and popularised by the National Wellness Institute. This model bases well-being on the balance of six interconnected and equal dimensions (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and occupational), none of which has a superior position over the others. In contrast to this view are models based on psychological theories and factor analysis (such as the aforementioned Wheel of Wellness model). While Hettler's model is often used for broad education and as a theoretical framework, models such as the Indivisible Self with an emphasis on the Essential Self are used primarily in counselling and clinical psychology, where an individual's well-being is inextricably linked to their self-awareness and sense of purpose in life.

An analysis of the concept of wellness shows that, in professional terms, caring for mental well-being and mental health is just as important as physical activity and regeneration (e.g., Dunn's definition of wellness as a way of life oriented toward an elevated state of physical and mental well-being). However, there are also professional sources that do not address this issue and focus on the "physical side of wellness." In practice and in the perception of the general public, the term wellness is still strongly associated primarily with services such as swimming pools, massages, saunas, and water parks. Although these procedures have been proven to reduce stress, they are perceived more as physical regeneration and a luxurious reward. Active mental health care often remains a neglected component, suggesting that despite the growing popularity of wellness, there is still a need for education about all its dimensions. Businesses offering wellness services in the South Bohemian Region on their websites often explain how to perceive Mental Health Care, but they often downplay this issue and work only with the idea that relaxation (e.g., in water) helps the psyche.

The German Wellness Association (Deutscher Wellness Verband, 2023), which certifies facilities in Germany, introduces the concept of wellness as follows: *"For most people in German-speaking countries, wellness is a term for relaxed well-being. You think of relaxing massages, a visit to the sauna, a day at a thermal spa, or a long weekend at a wellness hotel where you go to the sauna, relax in the pool, book a Lomi massage, and maybe even get your skin treated. Admittedly, a good massage has never hurt anyone. Nor has a relaxing weekend in a nice hotel or thermal spa. However, the fact that such experiences are considered the epitome of wellness shows a fundamental misunderstanding and wasted opportunities."*

The client reviews of the facilities surveyed show that stays focused primarily on the mental health of guests were not in demand. The question is, what is the reason for the lack of demand? It could be due to a lack of knowledge about the

products, a general unfamiliarity with the products, or a lack of demand. Follow-up research could focus on finding this and other answers

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