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Quality of Life and Wellness in Hospitality and Tourism

This chapter discusses how wellness in hospitality and tourism affects individual travelers and the destinations they visit. First, it introduces the concept of quality of life and wellness and how it applies to hospitality and tourism. Then, it introduces mindfulness as an underlying concept of wellness travel and its benefits to the individual traveler and the destination. Finally, some trends in wellness hospitality and tourism are presented.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

1. Define and discuss the term 'quality of life'.
 2. Define and discuss the domains of the Gross National Happiness Index (GNHI) and the World Happiness Report.
 3. Discuss why some countries have higher World Happiness Report rankings than others.
 4. Define and discuss the concept of quality of life and wellness in hospitality and tourism.
 5. Define mindfulness within a hospitality and tourism context.
 6. Discuss the benefits of mindfulness to travelers.
 7. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of mindfulness to the destination.
 8. Discuss how the concept of quality of life and wellness can be improved through hospitality and tourism.
 9. Define bleisure and discuss how hospitality and travel businesses can offer better bleisure packages.
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Case study: Six Senses Bhutan

In 2018, the first of the Six Senses Bhutan lodges opened in the first carbon-negative country (one of only three as of May 2022, the others being Suriname and Panama). With a total of five lodges open in Bhutan as of May 2022, the brand offers an entirely new type of trip to travelers seeking a unique wellness experience. Described as a multi-lodge wellness circuit, guests can stay at one lodge or have the option to journey through all five properties (with 82 rooms total) in Thimphu (located next to pine forests and apple orchards), Punakha (a more austere lodge), Paro (the “Stone Ruins”), the Gangtey (in the Phobjikha Valley), and Bumthang (in the mountain district) (Six Senses, 2020).

These five lodges are spread around dramatically diverse topographies, climate zones, and cultural areas of the country and represent the five key pillars of Bhutan’s unique “Gross National Happiness Index (GNHI)” declared in 1972 by then-King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to be more important than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The domains of the GNHI include psychological well-being, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards. Based on their responses to the index questions, people in a specific country are rated as unhappy, narrowly happy, extensively happy, or deeply happy.

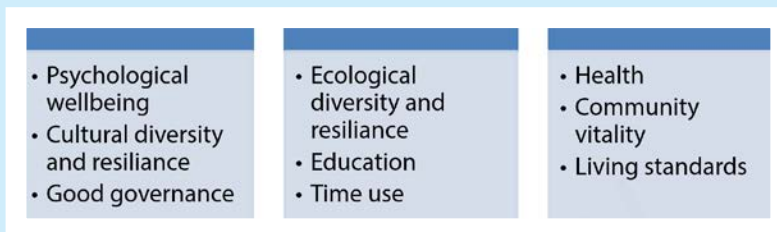


Figure 2.1: Gross National Happiness Index domains. Developed from Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (2020).

The Six Senses Bhutan lodges were built on these GNHI domains (Figure 2.1), with each location being wholly focused on wellness, sustainability, culture, and spirituality, from the hotel design to their food and beverage offerings, to the spa experiences. The Six Senses guiding principles include their pioneering spa and wellness offerings, wholesome and sustainable cuisine, sleep health, and self-discovery (Six Senses, 2019a). The Six Senses Bhutan lodges offer their guests anywhere from four- to 10-night stays in the various lodges and even offer guests “tailored stays” where the lodge will accommodate guests’ individual wants and needs (Six Senses, 2020).

Guests receive a bracelet at the beginning of their trip to mark their physical, mental, and spiritual journey. When they arrive at each of the five properties, they receive a card and guidance to set their intentions for the specific aspect of happiness promoted at that lodge (Yeung and Johnston, 2018). Six Senses also promotes wellness

for its employees through programs to help everyone achieve optimal well-being (Six Senses, 2019b). Lastly, their sustainability principles incorporate green energy, employing and sourcing locally, keeping funds in the local community, and more (Six Senses, 2019c).

Discussion questions

1. What are the domains of the Gross National Happiness Index (GNHI)?
2. How does the Six Senses Bhutan brand promote wellness to the local people and community?
3. How does the Six Senses Bhutan brand promote wellness to its guests?
4. Find similar lodging businesses in your city/region or country that operate in the same domain and discuss what they offer.

Quality of life and wellness

The WHO defines **quality of life** as, “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (WHO, 2012). It can refer to the well-being of both societies and individuals and includes many factors like physical health, education, employment, wealth, safety and security, freedom, family, religious beliefs, and the environment. The **GNHI** offers a way to measure the general well-being of a population (on a scale from zero to one) across nine domains (Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative, 2020).

1. **Living Standards** – material comforts measured by income, financial security, housing, asset ownership.
2. **Health** – both physical and mental health.
3. **Education** – types of knowledge, values, and skills.
4. **Good governance** – how people perceive government functions.
5. **Ecological diversity and resilience** – people’s perception of their environment.
6. **Time use** – how much time is spent on work, non-work, sleep; work-life balance.
7. **Psychological well-being** – quality of life, life satisfaction, and spirituality.
8. **Cultural diversity and resilience** – strength of cultural traditions and festivals.
9. **Community vitality** – relationships and interactions with community, social cohesion, and volunteerism.

Adapted from the 2015 GNH Survey Report (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2020). Currently, the GNHI method is only used in Bhutan. The country of Bhutan views the GNHI as more important to its country than the GNP, and its purpose is to ensure