

THE ARTICLE

BY CELINE VADAM

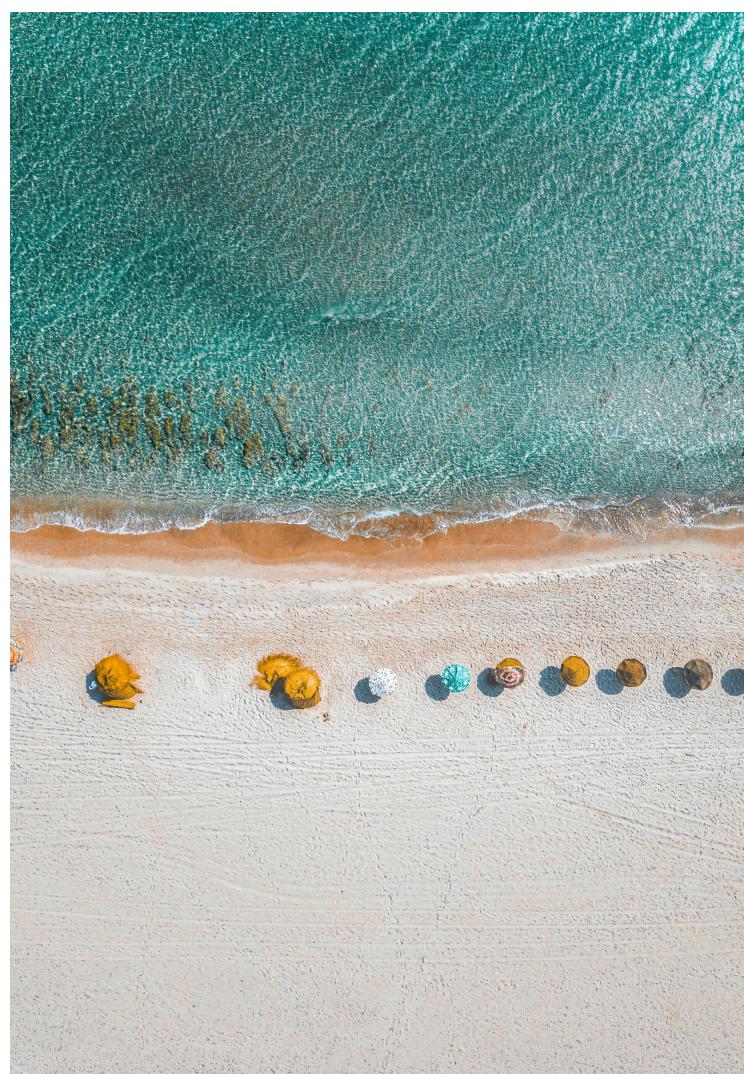
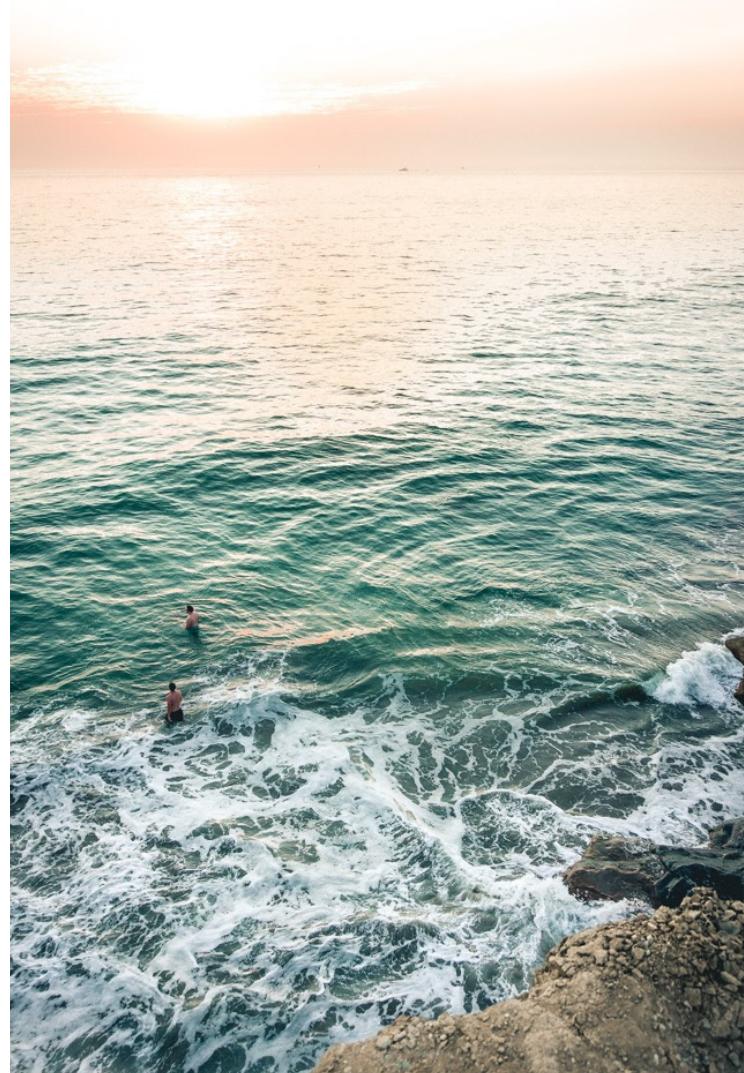
OPINION AND RESEARCH

Health is the new wealth. After decades of societal and cultural evolutions, boosted by technological innovation, human beings are realizing that their well-being is on the edge. If wellbeing is the destination, wellness is the tool to getting there. The word 'wellness' is being used everywhere, amplified by the Covid crisis, as a solution to restore elements of traditional wisdom with a modern twist in order to reach a healthier and happier life.

Beyond fads and gimmicky interpretations, wellness is here to stay in an authentic and holistic way and will be a differentiator for hotels, resorts and retreats and the redefinition of their relationship with guests.

According to the Global Wellness Institute, the global wellness economy represents more than 5.3% of global economic output and was worth US\$4.5 trillion in 2018, growing by 6.4% annually from 2015–2017, nearly twice as fast as global economic growth.

Wellness tourism was a US\$639 billion market in 2017, projected to reach US\$919 billion by 2022. It grew by 6.5% annually from 2015–2017, more than twice as fast as tourism overall. World travellers made 830 million international and domestic wellness trips in 2017, representing 17% of all tourism expenditures, spending an average of resp-





ectively US\$1,528 and US\$609 per trip (53% and 178% more than the average international and domestic tourist respectively). Source: Global Wellness Institute "Defining the mental wellness economy"

These impressive figures, already forecasted to continue their ascension pre-Covid, are now expected to be boosted by the Covid crisis, bringing wellness to the centre-stage of society.

What do these numbers incorporate? Wellness is a multi-dimensional sector and encompasses activities related to physical activity, beauty, healthy eating, mental health and traditional and holistic medicine.

Therefore, the broadness of the wellness sector leads us to a key question:

WHAT IS WELLNESS?

The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness as 'the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health'. Interpretations can vary, but most of them revolve around the following key areas: movement, aesthetics, nutrition, mindfulness, sleep, socialization and sense of purpose.

The advantage: wellness is viewed and considered holistically and we recognize its multi-dimensions, which impact our overall health.

The issue: as a multi-dimensional sector that is not regulated, the wellness word is now used for anything and everything, diluting its impact and real sense of its meaning.

Industry leaders, such as ESPA's Founder, Sue Harmsworth, who featured in our latest podcast, now prefer the word well-being. The difference? If well-being is the destination and the state of mind, wellness is the path to getting there, and the actions taken which lead to well-being through healthy lifestyle habits. Therefore, we expect that the intention of an activity or product is what determines if it can be classified as wellness or not, and that intention needs to lean towards improving guests' well-being throughout their stay.

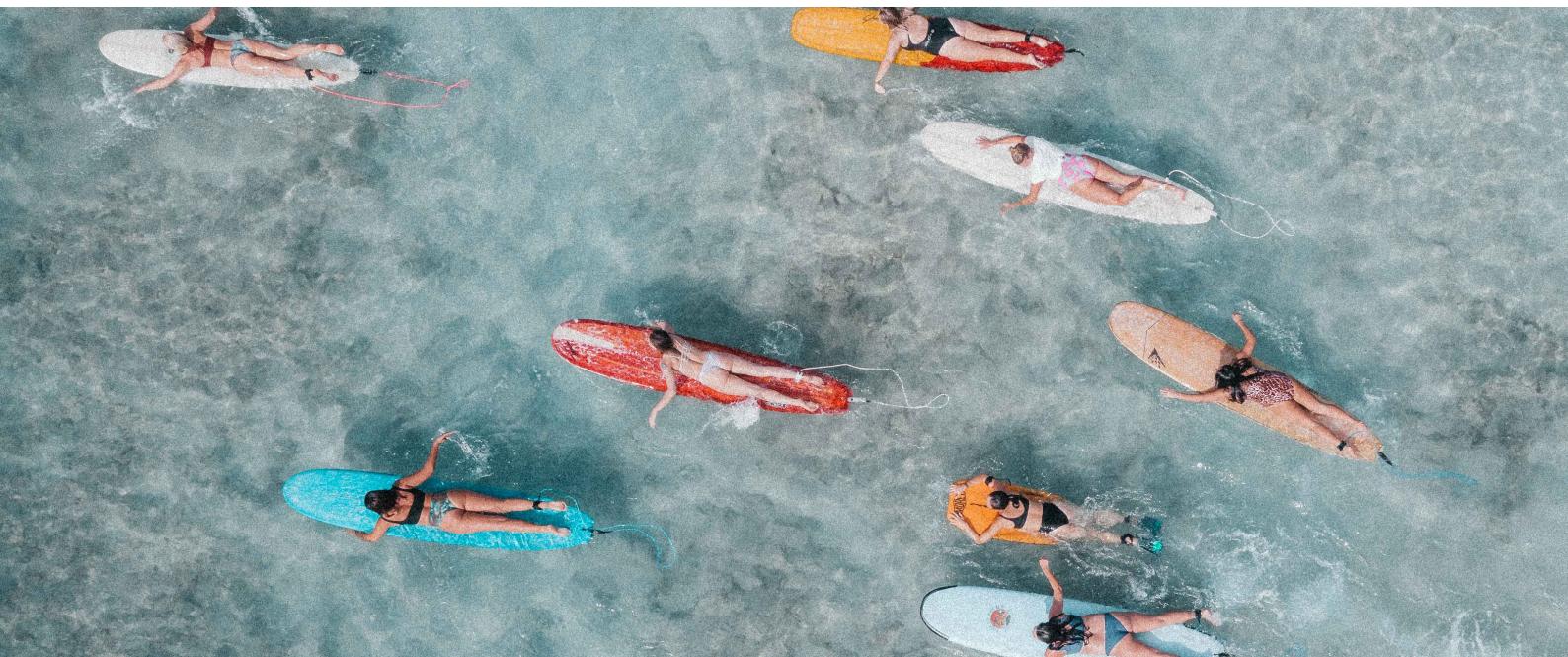
HOW DOES IT TRANSLATE INTO WELLNESS FACILITIES, HOTELS & RETREATS?

The best way to transform an intention into a purposeful product is by having a strong and authentic concept. What you deliver is as important as how you deliver it, and this is even more critical when it comes to showing your added value, professionalism and legitimacy in the wellness field.

Guests are becoming more and more informed and educated in what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, with tailored wellness routines at home. This is where a property's role can facilitate and even enhance a guest's approach, ensuring that the healthy choice is the easier and more appealing option while being mindful of their expectations.

Following our interactive quiz, customers confirmed that if you label yourself a wellness hotel, guests can expect more than just a spa with traditional treatments. Mindfulness activities, healthy food and restorative initiatives are increasingly expected to be part of the offering. However, if you are categorized as a Hotel & Spa, the expectations are lower, even though having healthy food options are in higher demand and a great way to build attractive packages. This is even more important when we talk about retreats, where everything is expected to be driven by wellness, from rooms to design, F&B and activities.

Nonetheless, make sure to not fall into design or marketing traps by creating gimmicky wellness activities. Guests won't be fooled and just because the 'w' word is trendy doesn't mean that you must use it.





This also does not mean that you need to overcomplicate it, especially in a world where opportunities are endless; think well-tech, outdoor activities, and partnerships...which leads to another common trap: the overwhelming factor, which is often seen in gyms that have great-looking machinery, but no-one knows how to use it, or they have cheaper and simplified versions that would have been more relevant. The value of a wellness venue depends on how you strategically spend on experiences that add value, not necessarily on the shiny, great looking equipment. This once again emphasizes the importance of having a strong and meaningful concept, knowing what the purpose of a space is and how you would like guests to benefit from it.

In this sense, your concept is determined, identifying what you would like to offer guests and organizing your equipment and accessories around it, and not necessarily based on the latest trendy machine.

WHERE IS WELLNESS TOURISM GOING?

With travel restrictions, short stays and wellness staycations are expected to be more popular, especially as one wellness retreat a year is not sufficient anymore. Urban retreats are on the rise, ensuring a sense of continuity in guests' wellness journeys. As travelers return to going abroad, guests will enjoy longer stays and focus on unique experiences in countries much further away.

As discussed during our interview with Sue Harmsworth, wellness services are leaning toward soft wellness, focused on mindfulness and regenerative activities, as well as integrative wellness, flirting with

the medical world with a non-invasive, 'needles-not-knives' approach. This is also reinforced with clinics and medical establishments, which are now looking to develop preventive, retreat style urban or resort venues where selfcare meets healthcare. The realization from a growing audience that prevention can be more effective than pills, is expanding the wellness tourism enthusiasm to younger crowds.

Covid-19 saw well-tech gaining attractiveness to monitor guests' health, but also provide touchless treatments and online activities, allowing an easier follow-up after a guest's stay. Meanwhile the need for human touch and getting back to nature have been noticed too.

HOW CAN WE(I) THINK HELP?

WE(i) Think provides a holistic approach to wellness, initiating synergies between all departments of your property from top to bottom and involving all stakeholders - ownership, employees, guests and local communities.

We create bespoke indoor and outdoor

wellness concepts, facilities, programs and packages, including sleep, healthy F&B outlets, non-invasive to medical destination spas, vibrant fitness areas, mindfulness activities and entertaining educational practices for internal and external guests of all ages, ethnicity and gender.

With highly educated guests, overwhelmed by contradictory information, employees' education and engagement will be a key to the success of the wellness strategy and an important mission for WE(i) Think.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Wellness encompasses the actions and habits that **lead to a healthy lifestyle**.
2. Wellness is **multi-disciplinary** and needs to be approached **holistically**.
3. There are various **degrees of wellness**, from soft wellness through to integrative wellness.
4. The wellness **market growth** is expected to last and continue its expansion.
5. Having a **strong concept** is key to creating an authentic wellness experience.