

Wellness Positioning: Rationale for Promoting Brand India

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Abstract

Wellness is a relatively new concept. It is a mind set with a predisposition to adopt a series of key principles in varied life areas which lead to high levels of well-being and life satisfaction. As travelers seek different experiences from different destinations, it is essential for destinations to create unique travel experiences on an emotional, physical and intellectual plane and even a spiritual plane. This paper provides a rationale for promoting Brand India through wellness positioning. This paper also discusses destination positioning strategies adopted by various countries, travelers' expectations, and current wellness services provided in India.

Key words / phrases: *Wellness, Destination Positioning, and Branding India, Strategic Thinking.*

1. Wellness: Conceptual Framework

(Dona dell Living Well Center)¹ "Wellness is first and foremost a choice to assume responsibility for the quality of your life. It begins with a conscious decision to shape a healthy lifestyle. Wellness is a mind set, a predisposition to adopt a series of key principles in varied life areas that lead to high levels of well-being and life satisfaction".

Bouchard et al (1990)² "Wellness is a multi dimensional state of being describing the existence of positive health in an individual as exemplified as quality of life and sense of well being".

Schafer (1996)³ defined wellness as the "process of living at one's highest possible level as a whole person and promoting the same for others a continuing challenge, rather than something attained and then forgotten."

Dunn (1977)⁴ defined wellness as "an integrated method of functioning which is oriented toward maximizing the potential of which the individual is capable. It requires that the individual maintain a continuum of balance and purposeful direction with the environment in which he is functioning".

Dr. Bill Hettler, Cofounder and President of the Board of Di-

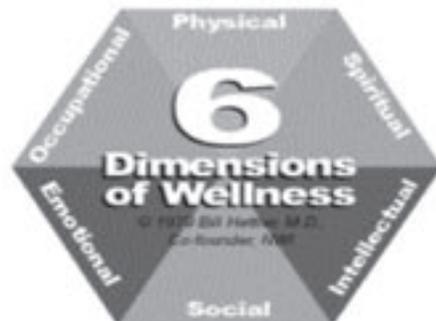


Figure 1 Six Dimensional Wellness Model©

rectors of the National Wellness Institute, propounded this interdependent model, commonly referred to as the 6 Dimensions of Wellness, given in figure 1.

Wellness is a new concept, which is emerging as the positive component of health; The concept is holistic and aims at bettering the quality of lives.

2. Positioning: Conceptual framework

"Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect"⁵. The concept evolved by the seventies and today it is one of the links between manufacturing, brand building and advertising

strategies. Positioning as a concept has been accepted and practiced widely because it acts as an effective tool to focus the communication; it gives ample leads for the provider to zero in on particular aspect or variable in the service provision, which can give the needed differentiation touch. "Positioning plays a pivotal role in marketing strategy because it links market analysis and competitive analysis to internal corporate analysis. From these three, a position statement can be developed that enables the service organization to answer the questions- what is our service concept, what do we want it to become, and what actions must we take to get it there"⁶.

Positioning addresses certain aspects pertaining to how the targets perceive services and what attributes in the service need to be highlighted. The media clutter is so high that the target audience may not have a clear brand association and brand identity if the services are not positioned. "Three main reasons for positioning: human perceptual process, intensified competition and sheer volume of advertising to which people are exposed every day"⁷. "The most successful service firms separate themselves from the pack to achieve a distinctive position in relation to their competition. They differentiate themselves by altering typical characteristics of their respective industries to their competitive advantage"⁸.

The next important conceptual understanding on positioning is that it is constantly evolving and it is different to different target segments. "Positioning is rarely static: They need to evolve over time in response to changing market structure,

technologies, competitive activities, and the evolution of the firm itself"⁹. "A brand may establish different positions for different market segments"¹⁰. The change of position is termed repositioning. "Repositioning may require rethinking the benefits offered to consumers through the marketing mix"¹¹. The consumers tastes and preferences are so varied and wide, the market environment and the competitive activities are so vibrant, that positioning needs to be re-examined from time to time. Hence to sum it all, positioning consists of the following major principles.

1. "A company must establish a position in the minds of its targeted customers.
2. The position should be singular, providing one simple & consistent message.
3. The position must set a company apart from its competitors.
4. A company cannot be all things to all people- it must focus its efforts"¹².

Positioning is the basic theme with which brands are built. The theme is the platform around which services are designed, communications are planned and brand identity is built.

3. Literature review on Branding Nations

Live case studies have been compiled and given in Table 1. This table gives an idea as to how destinations have positioned themselves and how it has affected tourist inflow into destinations.

Sl. No.	Destination	Positioning	Implementation
1.	Positioning Virginia -USA http://www.vatc.org/advertising/positionresearch/positionresearch_files/frame.htm	Visiting Virginia is a genuine and enriching experience by demonstrating that people will experience a genuine good time—Virginia is welcoming, fun, interesting, wholesome, relaxing.	Virginia tourism corporation. To increase revenue from \$13 billion to \$26 billion by 2007. Qualitative research through consumer focus group, brain storming, focus groups.
2.	Branding Wales._ Article by Peter van Ham, Foreign Affairs, October 2000. http://aei.detya.gov.au/activities/branding/branding.htm www.visitwales	Unique Destination Proposition (UDP) The tagline would be along the lines of 'natural revival' or 'naturally reviving'. Wales would be 'unspoiled, down to earth, with traditional values, genuine, green and beautiful, providing physical and spiritual revival'. In the communications brief developed for potential advertising agencies to bring this positioning to life, the shorthand for this idea was 'Wales puts back into your life what life takes out - the antidote to every day life'. The strapline was: 'Wales two hours and a million miles away'.	To date, the campaign has won fifteen national and international awards including ones from the Chartered Institute of Marketing and Travel Industry Groups and Multi Media Campaign of the Year Award in 1998, beating recognized brands such as Virgin Atlantic, British Airways and Thomson Holidays Wales' share of trips and spend increased. Brochure enquiries rose from 140,000 in 1998 to 240,000 in 1999. Monitoring research revealed increases in awareness and ranking.

3.	Positioning Thailand as Quality Tourism Destination. Ministerial conference on partnership in tourism development 2003 Bahrain. Tourism authority of Thailand.	Positioning Thai to the middle east population.	Thai has 10% Muslim population. Of various target groups the middle east is the one, which is most attractive. The campaign was specially designed to attract the Middle East Muslim tourists highlighting the books, culture etc.
4.	Western Australian Brand positioning. www.world-tourism.org/regional/europe/PDF/SPEECHES/2004/moscow/23_march_04.htm - 6k	Unique selling points were evolved. Fresh, carefree natural & alive were the identified attributes. Five core iconic experiences were identified. The Real thing Campaign was evolved. Marine, Outback adventure, Wine, Forest & family People & lifestyle were the five core experience areas.	"Win a real thing" campaign.
5.	Tourism New Zealand www.nzherald.co.nz/index.cfm?c_id=14&ObjectID=10328378 - 32k -	Campaign cultivated an image of quality and freshness with the "100% Pure New Zealand" positioning.	Tourist numbers rose by 11.2 per cent last year. Time magazine has said the campaign is a prime example of good national branding and a United Nations agency said the campaign had boosted exports and tourism.
6.	Destination marketing techniques the case of Germany WTO seminar on destination marketing for the 21century – Moskow 2004	Mega trend Health Mega trend Culture	Wellness Scenic Cycling Natural falls Families Mice City tour shopping UNESCO Young people.
7.	"Malaysia Sales Mission 2005," for the Korean market. http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/culture/200505/kt2005052015554152970.htm	"Malaysia is economically and politically stable, and is a multi-racial, multi-cultural society with travel programs that give sightseers a value for their money. Visa waivers and direct flight connections by Asian Airlines and Korean Air will also attract Korean tourists," Malaysia truly Asia.	In 2003, Malaysia received 46,200 Korean tourists while in 2004, the number increased by 97.4 percent to 91,200. For the first quarter of 2005, 35,000 Korean visited the country.
8.	Turkey tourism board http://goturkey.kultur.gov.tr/turizm_en.asp?belgeno=9274	DIVERSIFYING TOURISM Congress and Incentive Tourism Alternative Tourism Types (Golf, Wellness, Spa & Thermal, Sports and Yacht Tourism) Eco-Tourism Satellite Tourism Zone Projects	From 1980 to 2002 the tourist arrivals increased from 1.2 million to 13.3 million which is an increase of 11%.

9.	Destination Marketing technique: the case study of France. WTO seminar on destination marketing for the 21st century – Moscow 2004	Two major marketing themes Market based approach Focus on 10 priority markets & pioneering spirit on emerging markets. 1. Product based approach 2. Theme based marketing through clubs & task forces	Theme products organized into 4 Departments Business Department. Business Conventions & Industrial Tourism. Nature Department. Nature, sea Lakes & mountains, Seaside resorts, French overseas territories. Cultural Department: Monuments, castles, museums, city breaks, pilgrimage, wine. Specific leisure activity department: Youth Tourism, golf, spa wellness, naturism, holiday villages. Strengthen the position of France in priority market and: Position France as high quality destination in terms of products and services.
10.	Branding Rio http://www.imc.org.za/documents/brazil_mexico.ppt	Rio's positioning as Gate to foreign tourism to Brazil. Care free, fun loving and easy going environment, capitalizing on natural beauty and plenty of opportunities. Vibrant coastal city where business people walk side by side with the ones in shorts, sandals, T shirts and sandals. Diversified culture and artistic manifestation.	Getting over the image of drugs and vandalism.
11.	Dubai the golden city. http://www.imc.org.za/main/resources.stm	Dubai Shopping festival is of international fame.	Positioned as city of gold.

Table 1 Case on Branding Nations

3. Wellness and India - An overview

A major trend in the tourism industry is that travelers are demanding new, engaging, highly unique experiences from travel. The National Tour Association's educational seminar (March 2003) identified experiences as the "next generation" of tourism products to grow tourism businesses.

"Travel consumers want to be "emotionally moved," educated, challenged, involved, entertained, and even surprised. They are selecting travel destinations based on the delivery of "experiences" rather than the physical attributes of a resort, a city, a province, a country. At the heart of this demand are people who are willing to pay to participate in travel that offers something different, engaging experiences that go beyond traditional goods and services representing opportunities for new travel programs, alliances, and packages"¹³.

No longer can you compete in the global travel industry with a bigger hotel, a new chairlift, and improved roads. Destinations have to create and cultivate truly unique travel experiences, on an emotional, physical, intellectual, and even spiritual level.

James Gilmore, author of "The Experience Economy, Work

is a Theatre and Every Business a Stage", at the 2004 Travel Alberta Industry Conference Fairmont Banff Springs identified seven experience areas which includes

- Cuisine
- Ski
- Winter outdoor adventure
- Summer outdoor adventure
- Luxury/Spa
- Culture/Heritage
- Family Reconnecting/Togethering.

Experiencing gives the tourists an involvement and a true purpose, that is unique and sacred. Any amount of physical excellence will only make the place more monotonous and luxurious but the experiential component will have to be built in by meshing the local culture, tourist's perceptions and their expected levels of comfort, which is rather complicated.

In tourism, while factors such as cost of travel, convenience, and quality of facilities are important, the strongest motivator is "image". Image puts a destination on the consumer's "shopping list". It creates an emotional appeal, which en-

hances that destination's chances of being chosen over others. This image is created in the minds of the audience by positioning the services.

"7500 respondents from 134 countries took part in the Lonely Planet's online survey. The top nominated countries were Thailand, Italy, Australia, India, and New Zealand. The participants were predominately European, North American & Australian"¹⁴.

India to the westerners is a land of old civilization, holistic knowledge, spirituality, enlightenment, mysticism and poverty. This is the core and the crux even today. The basic ethos of the culture of the land can be well established in the concept of wellness.

A traveler seeks different things from his travel. The place he travels to should cater to his needs. If this happens then the destination has filled a lacuna in his life. "Tourism means different things to different people".

Recreational: One of the commonest forms; objectives of travel here is to relieve the tensions and strain of work.

Diversiary: When the visit is a true escape from the boredom and routine of home life.

Experiential: Where the tourist here is a modern pilgrim looking for authenticity in the life of other societies because he has seemingly lost it in his own.

Experimental: where the tourist wants to experiment with lifestyles other than his own.

Existential: the tourist who actually acquires a new spiritual center as a result of the travel experience"¹⁵.

The traveler to India will seek either an experiential, experimental, or existential meaning to his travel. India in the mind of the westerners exuberates spiritual experiences. "The references to spirituality were meant to strike a chord with the target segment, as their perception of India is largely from the '60s. India has a built-in fundamental spiritual basis at heart. Travelers are still looking for spirituality, but they don't want to rough it out now. Instead, they want that experience alongside the comforts of a good hotel. It's spirituality without the struggle,"¹⁶. Such perceptions of India as a place of discovery (self discovery) and spirituality, continue to inform contemporary travel discourse and patterns of consumptions"¹⁷.

As an extension to these existing perceptions positioning India as a Wellness destination will be an ideal choice. This will give a distinct advantage and Image compared to the other Asian countries. "The "health and wellness segment" and the "incentive travel segment", though two market seg-

ments with lower volume at present, had been recommended to extend support by taking advantage for positive exposure. The WTO has pointed out that the first segment has been identified as the main theme for the Pacific Asia Travel Agents (PATA) meet and this fits well with the Ayurvedic medicine and treatment component of Kerala's tourism product"¹⁸. This positioning reiterates the already existing perception. The concept of Wellness is holistic and like total quality management concept, there is no point beyond which progression cannot be made. Hence any human residing in any corner of the world adopting any life style has a scope to improve and cherish from the Indian Wellness concept.

Distinct positioning has emerged for the various Asian destinations. For example, in a survey in 1998 commissioned by the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board, Singapore was seen – by a broad selection of travelers and tourist agents from the US, Japan, India, Germany, Australia, UK and Sweden – as "clean, modern and safe". China's dominant image and attraction was "culture". Malaysia was seen as "multicultural with many beaches". Thailand had a brand image of "exotic, fun, and friendly people". On the same lines positioning India for wellness will be apt, as it would positively reinforce the existing perceptions of the target segment. Kerala is one of the destinations with Ayurvedic treatment centers as its tradition. Like Kerala, other regions in India have their own bounty of treasures, that is rich, and exotic. "Health Breaks for body and soul- Ayurveda in Kerala. Yoga in the foothills of Kumaon, Alternative therapies in Auroville, Luxury spa in Goa, - "Indian Wellness Holiday"¹⁹ was the cover page report from Outlook traveler. This showcasing is apt as it brings out the entire range of wellness that India can offer.

In fact the various ashrams like the Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's "Art of Living"²⁰ and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's "Transcendental Meditation"²¹ offer holistic wellness in all walks of life. "The TM movement has referenced many medical and sociological studies to strengthen the scientific acceptability of its claims. A number of these studies have been published in leading journals such as Hypertension (the journal of the American Heart Association) and The Journal of Conflict Resolution (published at Yale University), The Hans Selye examined the changes measured in TM-practitioners, and found that the therapeutic effect was clearest in conditions caused by wrong ways of adapting and reacting to stress"²². So the positioning of wellness can have not only an aspirational platform of creative rendering in the advertising campaigns but also a scientific authentication or rationale for Indian Wellness Platform.

