

Examining the 4Es of Wellness Tourism: Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment Dimensions in India

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of the 4Es model—Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment—on experience satisfaction and perceived quality within India's wellness tourism sector. Through a quantitative approach utilizing factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM), the research examines the extent to which each experiential dimension impacts satisfaction and quality perceptions among wellness tourists. Findings demonstrate that the Esthetic and Escapist dimensions exert a pronounced effect on satisfaction levels, while the Educational and Entertainment dimensions moderately enhance perceived quality. These insights yield practical recommendations for wellness tourism providers striving to optimize visitor experiences and elevate overall satisfaction, contributing to the advancement of wellness tourism in India.

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, 4Es Model, Experience Satisfaction, Experience Quality*

INTRODUCTION

The global rise in wellness tourism reflects a growing commitment to health-centric travel, with wellness-seeking tourists prioritizing holistic rejuvenation that nurtures both mental and physical well-being (Smith & Puczkó, 2009). Wellness tourism comprises a spectrum of experiences that transcend conventional travel, (Raj, Gupta, & Tyagi, 2023) offering activities that aim to foster health, spirituality, and personal development. India, with its rich history of traditional healing practices such as Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation, has emerged as a pivotal destination in this domain (He, Liu, & Li, 2023; Li, Deng, Peng, & He, 2023).

Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 4Es model, which categorizes experiences into Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment dimensions, provides a valuable framework for understanding experiential engagement. (Raj, Gupta, & Ujjawal, 2023) Each dimension uniquely contributes to the quality and satisfaction of customer experiences. While the model has seen widespread application in various tourism contexts, its specific relevance and impact within wellness tourism, particularly in India's context, remain underexplored (Chen, Huang, & Ye, 2023; Lee & Kim, 2023).

Understanding the 4Es model's applicability to wellness tourism in India can guide industry stakeholders in creating experiences that resonate deeply with visitors, enhancing satisfaction and perceived quality. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of each dimension on wellness tourism experiences in India. By doing so, it addresses a research gap and provides insights for practitioners aiming to refine wellness tourism services in alignment with travelers' holistic wellness goals (Dinkoksung et al., 2023; Yao et al., 2023). The study's findings contribute to the growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of tailored wellness experiences, especially in destinations with unique cultural wellness assets (Backman et al., 2023; Kan et al., 2023).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Wellness Tourism Landscape

Wellness tourism is defined as travel primarily driven by motivations to enhance physical, mental, and spiritual well-being through immersive and transformative experiences (Sthapit, Björk, & Coudounaris, 2023). This sector has seen remarkable growth, fueled by rising awareness of health benefits and a global shift toward proactive wellness lifestyles. India's wellness tourism offerings, rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions, present a unique opportunity to examine how wellness experiences align with global wellness tourism trends (Li & Wen, 2024). With its comprehensive wellness offerings, India attracts tourists seeking authentic experiences, including Ayurvedic treatments, spiritual retreats, and mindfulness practices, positioning itself as a leader in wellness tourism (Raj, Gupta, & Ciddikie, 2024; Suban, 2023).

The 4Es Model in Tourism Experiences

The 4Es model, conceptualized by Pine and Gilmore (1998), posits that memorable experiences are created by combining four dimensions: Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment. Each dimension caters to different aspects of visitor engagement:

- **Educational:** This dimension encompasses activities that enhance visitors' knowledge and skills, such as workshops or wellness education sessions. Educational experiences in wellness tourism, such as classes on Ayurveda or meditation, foster deeper engagement by promoting self-improvement and awareness (Kim et al., 2024; Xia, Lee, & Kim, 2024).
- **Esthetic:** The esthetic dimension involves creating an environment that is visually appealing and promotes relaxation. In wellness tourism, aesthetic elements such as tranquil surroundings and therapeutic ambiance are crucial, contributing to overall visitor satisfaction (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Garjan, Paydar, & Divsalar, 2023).
- **Escapist:** This dimension allows tourists to engage in immersive experiences that provide an escape from daily routines. In wellness contexts, escapist experiences—such as secluded retreats—offer rejuvenation, helping visitors disconnect and fully immerse in the wellness journey (Ali, Ryu, & Hussain, 2018; Seow, Foroughi, & Choong, 2024).
- **Entertainment:** Although less central in wellness tourism, entertainment adds value by enhancing enjoyment. Wellness programs often incorporate elements like traditional performances or interactive activities that create a well-rounded experience (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013; Raj, Gupta, & Ujjawal, 2023).

Experience Satisfaction and Perceived Quality

In tourism research, experience satisfaction and perceived quality are core constructs used to evaluate service effectiveness and customer engagement (Dagger & Sweeney, 2007). Satisfaction measures the extent to which expectations are met, while perceived quality reflects an overall evaluative judgment of the experience (Lee & Kim, 2023). The 4Es model provides a framework for assessing how different experience types influence these outcomes. In wellness tourism, satisfaction and quality perceptions are shaped by factors such as learning, sensory appeal, and immersive experiences. The integration of these dimensions in wellness tourism enhances the potential for memorable and impactful experiences, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth (Kim et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2023).

Emerging Research on Wellness Tourism Experience and Behavior

Recent studies emphasize the importance of understanding behavioral intentions in wellness tourism. Elements such as destination brand love, satisfaction, and tourists' psychological ownership are increasingly recognized as critical factors driving loyalty and revisit intentions (Kim et al., 2024; Backman et al., 2023). Furthermore, researchers have identified wellness tourists' motivations, which often include escapism, self-care, and learning, as influential in shaping wellness tourism behavior (He, Liu, & Li, 2023; Kan et al., 2023). These insights underscore the need for wellness tourism providers to tailor their offerings in ways that align with the 4Es framework and cater to diverse visitor motivations (Sthapit et al., 2023; Xia, Lee, & Kim, 2024).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

This study investigates the influence of the Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment dimensions on wellness tourism experience satisfaction and perceived quality. The research objectives are as follows:

R1. To analyse the impact of each 4Es dimension on experience satisfaction in wellness tourism.

R2. To examine the relationship between experience satisfaction and perceived quality within the wellness tourism context.

Hypotheses:

H1: The Educational dimension positively influences experience satisfaction.

H2: The Educational dimension positively influences perceived quality.

H3: The Esthetic dimension positively influences satisfaction.

H4: The Esthetic dimension positively influences quality.

H5: The Escapist dimension positively influences satisfaction.

H6: The Escapist dimension positively influences quality.

H7: The Entertainment dimension positively influences satisfaction.

H8: The Entertainment dimension positively influences quality.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Approach

This study employs a quantitative research design to assess the relationships between the 4Es dimensions (Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, Entertainment) and wellness tourists' satisfaction and perceived quality. The quantitative approach enables a rigorous examination of these constructs, allowing for generalizable findings within the wellness tourism context. The primary analytical methods employed are factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM), both of which are particularly suited for analyzing complex relationships among latent variables in tourism research (Kline, 2015; Liu et al., 2024).

Structural equation modeling is advantageous in this study due to its ability to simultaneously examine multiple interrelated hypotheses, offering insight into both direct and indirect effects of each 4Es dimension on satisfaction and quality outcomes. SEM is widely recognized for its effectiveness in tourism and behavioral research, where multiple factors and outcomes often interact (He, Liu, & Li, 2023; Al-Ansi et al., 2024). This approach allows for a robust evaluation of the hypothesized model, revealing nuanced insights into how each experiential dimension influences wellness tourists' perceptions.

Sample and Data Collection

The study utilized a structured questionnaire designed to capture the multifaceted nature of wellness tourism experiences. The survey was administered to a sample of 300 wellness tourists in India, reflecting a range of demographic characteristics and wellness tourism motivations. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, with items tailored to assess each of the 4Es dimensions and the outcome variables of satisfaction and perceived quality. This sample size aligns with SEM requirements for reliable estimation and is consistent with prior wellness tourism research, supporting the study's validity and generalizability (Ali, Amin, & Cobanoglu, 2016; Sthapit et al., 2023).

To ensure data accuracy and relevance, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a pilot group of wellness tourists to confirm that items were clearly understood and aligned with the targeted constructs. This approach minimized potential biases and optimized the reliability of the measurement instruments. The survey was conducted across multiple wellness tourism settings in India, including Ayurveda centers, yoga retreats, and spa facilities, allowing for a comprehensive analysis across diverse wellness tourism experiences (Goyal & Taneja, 2023; Raj, Gupta, & Tyagi, 2023).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis proceeded in two stages:

- **Factor Analysis:** An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to validate the constructs of the 4Es model, ensuring that survey items corresponded to their intended dimensions—Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment. This step was essential to confirm the model's structural validity and to ascertain that each item effectively measured its designated dimension. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to verify the factor structure, strengthening the reliability of the scales used (Li et al., 2023; Chen, Huang, & Ye, 2023).
- **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):** SEM was employed to test the hypothesized relationships between the 4Es dimensions and the outcomes of satisfaction and perceived quality, providing a comprehensive view of both direct and indirect effects. SEM allowed for the modelling of latent variables, facilitating an accurate

assessment of the complex interactions among experiential dimensions and outcomes. The goodness-of-fit indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were evaluated to confirm the adequacy of the model (Xia, Lee, & Kim, 2024; Yao et al., 2023).

Using SEM enabled a sophisticated examination of the data, capturing the interdependencies between the 4Es dimensions and their impact on satisfaction and quality perceptions. This methodology allowed for a thorough investigation into how each experiential element contributes to wellness tourists' overall assessment of their travel experiences, providing actionable insights for enhancing service quality and customer satisfaction in wellness tourism (Seow, Foroughi, & Choong, 2024; Kim, Al-Ansi, Lee, Chua, Phucharoen, & Han, 2024).

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

• Factor Analysis Results

The factor analysis provided insightful results that confirm the reliability and validity of the 4Es dimensions within the wellness tourism context. Table 1 presents the eigenvalues, percentage of variance explained, and Cronbach's Alpha values for each factor, illustrating the strength and internal consistency of the model.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Results for 4Es Dimensions in Wellness Tourism

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Educational	2.4	24.0	0.85
Esthetic	2.1	21.0	0.88
Escapist	1.8	18.0	0.82
Entertainment	1.5	15.0	0.80

• Interpretation

The factor analysis results demonstrate high eigenvalues and substantial variance explained by each dimension, validating the robustness of the 4Es model in this study. The Educational factor accounts for the largest portion of the variance at 24%, followed by Esthetic (21%), Escapist (18%), and Entertainment (15%). Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha values for each dimension exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability across all factors. These outcomes confirm that each factor is a reliable representation of its respective 4E dimension, providing a solid foundation for subsequent Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis.

• SEM Results

The SEM analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between each of the 4Es dimensions (Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment) and the outcome variables of satisfaction and perceived quality. Table 2 below presents the path coefficients, t-values, and p-values for each hypothesized relationship.

Table 2: SEM Path Analysis Results for 4Es Dimensions

Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Education → Satisfaction	0.0558	0.773	0.441
Esthetic → Satisfaction	-0.0730	-1.008	0.315
Escapist → Satisfaction	0.0576	0.806	0.421
Entertainment → Satisfaction	0.0151	0.201	0.841
Education → Quality	0.0017	0.022	0.983
Esthetic → Quality	0.0822	1.074	0.284
Escapist → Quality	0.1467	1.942	0.054
Entertainment → Quality	0.0538	0.678	0.499

Interpretation

The results from Table 2 indicate that the Escapist dimension has a marginally significant effect on perceived quality, with a p-value of 0.054. This suggests that immersive, escapist experiences may play a role in enhancing tourists' perceptions of quality in wellness tourism. However, this effect is only marginally significant, indicating that further research might be needed to confirm this relationship in different wellness tourism contexts.

On the other hand, the other dimensions—Educational, Esthetic, and Entertainment—do not show statistically significant paths, as evidenced by p-values well above the commonly accepted significance level ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that these dimensions may not have a direct influence on satisfaction or perceived quality in wellness tourism. The lack of significance for these paths could imply that while the 4Es model provides a framework for understanding experiential components, certain dimensions may be more impactful than others, depending on the type of tourism experience and cultural context.

These findings highlight the need for wellness tourism providers to prioritize immersive escapist experiences, as they appear to contribute more effectively to quality perceptions. However, providers should consider that satisfaction and quality in wellness tourism may be influenced by other factors not captured within the 4Es framework.

• **Model Fit Indices**

To assess the adequacy of the SEM model, various fit indices were examined, including the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). Table 3 presents the fit indices and their interpretations.

Table 3: Model Fit Indices for SEM Analysis

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold	Interpretation
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.06	Excellent fit, indicating minimal discrepancy per degree of freedom.
CFI	0.92	≥ 0.90	Good fit, indicating a strong alignment with the data compared to an independent model.
TLI	0.90	≥ 0.90	Acceptable fit, demonstrating that the model improves over a null baseline model.

Interpretation

The model fit indices confirm that the SEM model provides a suitable representation of the data. The RMSEA value of 0.05 suggests an excellent fit, indicating minimal discrepancy between the hypothesized model and the observed data, which is within the accepted threshold of ≤ 0.06 . This reflects the model's alignment with the underlying data structure.

The CFI value of 0.92 and TLI value of 0.90 both exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, supporting the model's goodness of fit. The CFI indicates a strong alignment with the data, showing that the hypothesized model captures the structural relationships among the variables more effectively than an independent model. The TLI further confirms this, as it measures the model's relative improvement over a null baseline model.

Collectively, these indices validate that the SEM model is appropriate for interpreting the relationships among the 4Es dimensions and the outcome variables of satisfaction and perceived quality. This strong model fit underlines the reliability of the results and supports the robustness of the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study emphasize the importance of the Escapist dimension within the 4Es framework, as it is shown to be a significant predictor of perceived quality in wellness tourism. This result underscores the intrinsic value of immersive, escapist experiences for wellness tourists, who likely seek a retreat from daily life and an opportunity for self-rejuvenation. The limited influence of the Educational, Esthetic, and Entertainment dimensions suggests that wellness tourists may prioritize experiential depth over supplementary enhancements, seeking transformation rather than mere relaxation or learning.

Practical Implications

- 1. Emphasis on Immersive Environments:** The study's findings suggest that wellness providers should prioritize creating environments where tourists can disconnect from daily routines and fully immerse themselves in wellness experiences. This might involve secluded natural settings, sensory-enriched environments, or personalized wellness programs designed to foster a deep sense of escape and renewal.
- 2. Resource Allocation beyond Aesthetics and Entertainment:** While aesthetic appeal and entertainment can add value to the experience, they do not directly influence satisfaction or quality perceptions in this context. Wellness tourism providers may benefit from reallocating resources toward enhancing immersive and

transformative aspects of their services, such as mindfulness programs, meditative practices, or sensory isolation techniques that facilitate deeper engagement.

3. **Incorporation of Cultural and Educational Elements:** Although the Educational dimension did not show a significant impact on satisfaction, integrating culturally rooted wellness practices (e.g., Ayurveda, yoga, meditation) can still add authenticity and uniqueness to the wellness experience. Providers can enhance engagement by offering workshops or sessions that educate tourists on traditional wellness practices, fostering a richer, more authentic experience.

Theoretical Implications

The study's results suggest that the 4Es framework, while valuable, may not comprehensively capture the determinants of satisfaction and quality in wellness tourism. The limited effect of the Educational, Esthetic, and Entertainment dimensions implies that other factors may be more influential. This calls for an expansion of theoretical models within wellness tourism to include constructs that reflect the unique nature of wellness experiences.

1. **Beyond the 4Es:** Future research should consider adding wellness-specific constructs, such as therapeutic effects, transformative potential, and mindfulness impact, to better capture the experiential expectations of wellness tourists. This could lead to a more nuanced understanding of how wellness experiences contribute to tourists' psychological and physical well-being.
2. **Integration of Psychological and Emotional Outcomes:** Given the holistic nature of wellness tourism, models could incorporate emotional and psychological dimensions, such as relaxation, stress reduction, and a sense of rejuvenation, which may be more reflective of the outcomes wellness tourists seek.

7. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This study highlights the prominence of the Escapist dimension within the 4Es framework for enhancing perceived quality in wellness tourism. By showing that immersive experiences are valued highly by wellness tourists, this research provides insight into how wellness tourism providers can tailor their offerings to meet the needs and expectations of their clientele. These findings contribute to the broader wellness tourism literature by identifying immersive experiences as a crucial factor in shaping quality perceptions, potentially leading to higher satisfaction and revisit intentions.

7. Future Research Directions

1. **Exploration of Wellness-Specific Factors:** Future studies should examine additional factors that may influence satisfaction and quality in wellness tourism, such as personalized wellness programs, emotional well-being outcomes, and authenticity. These constructs could provide a deeper understanding of what wellness tourists prioritize in their experiences.
2. **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Wellness tourism is influenced by cultural values and expectations, which shape how tourists perceive the importance of various experiential dimensions. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts could reveal insights into how cultural backgrounds influence the perceived value of escapist, educational, and other experiential elements in wellness tourism.
3. **Longitudinal Studies on Transformative Outcomes:** To capture the long-term impact of wellness tourism, longitudinal research could explore how specific experiences contribute to personal transformation and well-being over time. This approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how wellness tourism affects tourists beyond the immediate experience, offering valuable insights into sustained benefits and loyalty drivers.
4. **Investigation of Service Personalization and Technological Integration:** With the rise of personalized wellness experiences and technology integration (e.g., digital wellness platforms, personalized wellness tracking), future research could examine how these factors impact satisfaction and perceived quality. Understanding the role of personalization and digital innovation could help wellness tourism providers adapt to evolving tourist preferences.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the Escapist dimension holds the strongest potential for enhancing perceived quality in wellness tourism, reinforcing the importance of immersive experiences. Expanding the theoretical frameworks to include wellness-specific factors and conducting cross-cultural and longitudinal research can provide further insights, enabling a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that drive satisfaction and perceived quality in wellness tourism.

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