Definition of health

• To define health tourism one needs to know how health is defined today.
• The World Health Organisation (www.who.int) adopted a definition in 1948 which describes health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
Definition of tourism

- UNWTO definition of tourism:
  - Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.
- UNWTO defines tourists as people
  - travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.

Why to follow the UNWTO definitions?

- Tourism experts suggest that the UNWTO definition should be followed when giving a definition of different types of tourism, incl. health tourism.
  - This is mostly because most countries are members of UNWTO and a common understanding of tourism would facilitate development of tourism legislation, information as well as tourism products and services.
Development of the concept of health tourism

- The concept of health tourism was probably first used by the International Union of Tourist Organisations (IUTO), forerunner to UNWTO in 1973.
- IUTO defined health tourism as “the provision of health facilities utilising the natural resources of the country, in particular mineral water and climate”.
- Various approaches and definitions of health tourism have followed.

Examples of approaches to health tourism

- Many authors apply the concept of health tourism as an umbrella term which encompasses both medical and wellness tourism, in which the latter targets healthy people and the first those people who need some therapy.

H. Dunn coined a new and currently extremely popular term ‘wellness’, by combining well-being and fitness. Dunn was the first doctor to refer to wellness as a state in which person’s body, mind and spirit are balanced, and to a holistic approach to health. Dunn maintained that each person’s quality of life depends on his lifestyle and personal approach to his health. Dunn is considered the promoter of the concept of wellness tourism.
Examples of approaches to health tourism

• **Michael Hall** (2011, 2003, professor of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand), looks at health tourism from an economic point of view, which is essential when dealing with tourism, incl. health tourism as an economic sector.
  - The aim of tourism, similar to other economic sectors, is earning profit, therefore profitable products and services should be developed, offered and sold.
  - Hall suggests following the UNWTO definition of tourism for defining health tourism.

Summary of health tourism approaches

• A majority of approaches to health tourism use it as an umbrella term covering medical tourism, spa tourism, wellness tourism and their various sub-types and combinations.
  - Tourism, incl. health tourism is not charity, it should earn income.

• **Health tourism is business** where health tourism products and services are promoted and sold.
Reason for travel determines the type of tourism

- Primary differences in types of tourism arise from those reasons for travel.
- In health tourism, a tourists’ main purpose for travel is related to maintaining or improving health.
  - They may have several other aims and desires (e.g. being outdoors, visits to attractions or events, culture, entertainment, various activities, etc.).
  - Providers of health tourism products can consider these additional aims and include the above in their products.

Definitions: Health tourism and health tourist

- **Health tourism** is travelling for the purposes of improvement and/or maintenance of health.
- **A health tourist** is a tourist whose primary aim of travel is for the purposes of improvement and/or maintenance of health.

The suggested definitions are suited to defining health tourism (both domestic and foreign tourism), and health tourists (again, both domestic and foreign tourists).
The suggested definitions could serve as a basis for defining all other types of tourism and tourists

For example: nature tourism

• **Nature tourism** is travelling for the purpose of learning about or enjoying nature.
• **A nature tourist** is a person travelling for the purpose of learning about or enjoying nature.

NB! Nature tourism can be very healthy, but it is not health tourism!

Basis for defining all types of tourism

• A similar principle can be used to define: culture tourism and culture tourist, adventure tourism and tourist, conference tourism and tourist, sports tourism and tourist, bird watching tourism and tourist, etc.
  – Primary differences in types of tourism relate to the purpose of travelling and **do not exclude having other, additional purposes for travelling**.
  – Common understanding facilitates the development and diversification of tourism products within all types of tourism.
• Such a definition also creates a picture of which products or services are sought by tourists in a given sub-type of tourism.
Types of health tourism

- Types of health tourism, e.g. medical, spa and wellness tourism, have common features as well as differences.
  - A major common feature is that people travel to a place to maintain or improve their health.
  - Differences lie in more specific aims of medical, spa and wellness tourists, also in health tourism products and services provided.
  - Health tourism is the most general concept encompassing all other health-related trips, whereas
    - medical tourism focuses on health disorders,
    - spa tourism on relaxation and
    - wellness tourism on maintaining or preserving personal harmony.

Personal wellness and wellness business

- It is essential to perceive a difference between approaches to personal wellness and wellness business.
  - Growth in people’s personal health awareness (responsibility for health, desire to feel well, prevent disease and ageing, etc.) has been accompanied by a rapidly increasing demand for products and services of health tourism, incl. medical, spa and wellness tourism products and services, in other words health tourism and associated wellness tourism have become big business.
    - However, each person can take care of their personal well-being without using health and wellness tourism products and services (healthy lifestyle, exercise),
  - Wellness tourism products, services and facilities feature high quality in all aspects (facilities, rooms, equipment, etc.), high professional performance standards of staff, personal service-provision and consultancy, etc. Wellness tourists also have very high expectations.
    - The word wellness is highly overused!
    - The terms wellness tourism and health tourism are not the synonyms!
Minimum requirements for establishments providing health tourism products and services

- Determination of a health tourism establishment’s status would be facilitated by an understanding that a tourism company should be able to provide services required by health tourists.
  - While a tourist is a visitor who stays overnight, he primarily needs accommodation and catering services.
  - When it comes to health tourism, we are still talking of tourists (health tourists) who also require accommodation and catering, and additionally need specific products and services characteristic to health tourism.
  - Requirements for health tourism establishments should be considered from several aspects, incl. marketing targeted at and information given to health tourists, and quality management.

Requirements for establishments providing health tourism products and services

- Another issue, linked to quality management is which requirements are enforced in the country to establishments which serve people, and more importantly, which requirements are set to the establishments providing health services.
  - Current legislation should be considered when determining and classifying health tourism establishments (e.g. a medical spa should hold a licence to provide outpatient medical care, medical staff must have relevant qualifications, etc.); environmentally-friendly management, ground maintenance, healthy food requirements, requirements to buildings, rooms, structures and equipment, and staff who provide health services (doctors, physiotherapists, masseurs, beauticians, coaches, etc.), requirements to service, consultancy, information, education provided to visitors etc, special requirements in provision of services to children etc.
Tourism product is an organised product (a package)

• A tourism product is an organised product which includes various services: transport, accommodation, meals, events, attractions and activities, and also infrastructure, hospitality, atmosphere and other intangible components.

• Tourism products always have a name, provider (company) and price.
  – Often people call tourism products single locally known objects or events, e.g. beach, castle, manor, hotel, tourist farm, sacrificial stone, hill fort, cave, river, bog, song festival, walking trail, fishing competition, etc.
  • They are not actually tourism products as such but they can be incorporated as product components when designing a tourism product.

What is a health tourism product?

• As for a health tourism product it should be targeted at health tourists.
  – A health tourism product is a combination of services essential for tourists (accommodation, meals), services for the maintenance and improvement of health, therapies, treatments, activities, experiences.
  – A health tourism product is an integrated and holistic visitor experience which contains a number of services aimed at the maintenance and improvement of health that the visitor, whose main purpose is taking care of their health, consumes during their trip.
Opportunities for enriching health tourism products

- Health tourism establishments may offer various additional products, e.g. day packages for local people, beauty packages which include several treatments, packages for children and youngsters, for men or women and so on.
- Health tourism establishments can combine conference and seminar services, training programmes, etc. in their products.
- They can also create tailor-made products or packages for individual visitors arising from their special requests.
- All services within health tourism products can be available for purchasing separately as well.

Specific health tourism services

- Specific health tourism services are often divided into two large groups: therapeutic procedures and treatments.
  - Therapy refers to a particular condition for which therapeutic procedures are applied to cure or alleviate it.
  - Treatments are usually services which are relaxing and make one feel well.
- The line between therapies and treatments is often vague.
  - For example a massage may, dependent on the reason, be therapeutic but also merely involve a feel-good factor.
- Variety and choice between services is constantly increasing, therefore making it impossible to compile a comprehensive list, agreements can be made on principles and framework of health tourism services.
Introduce Estonia’s sub-strategy of tourism
Instructions for Focus Topic of Wellness Tourism

- The presentation of the marketing strategy of tourism argues why health (wellness?) is selected as one of the four main tourism topics:
  - If there was a competition for selecting the spa kingdom of the world, Estonia could easily snatch that title. Tens of thousands of tourists flock to Estonia each year in order to spend their holiday in a local spa. Indeed, there is one for every taste and need ranging from those providing simple relaxation to highly specialised medical establishments.
  - In addition to spas also sports and hiking tracks, different sports events, golf courses and simply relaxing by the seaside provide a healthy and invigorating change from the everyday routine.

Interpretation of the Instructions

- The first point of the above argument refers to spas and also to specific therapeutic establishments (not necessarily spas).
  - This approach would be a more complex approach to health tourism, which as suggested previously, is an umbrella term covering medical, spa and wellness tourism.

- The second sentence refers to multiple additional facilities and services, that spas and other providers of health tourism products may consider and apply in the development and marketing of their products (health tourism/health holiday packages) and services (combined in a health tourism product or provided separately).
Interpretation of the Instructions

• It should be remembered that there is always linkage between a (health, etc.) tourism product or a service and a provider, name and price, that is they need to be “sellable”, value is added by a destination featuring outstanding natural beauty, being clean and hospitable and having other activities on offer.
  – Health holiday perhaps is a combination of the use (purchase) of health tourism products (packages) and services offered by health tourism establishments and of engaging in other healthy activities on the beach, in the forest or on trails.

Wish you an interesting and useful discussion related to development of health tourism!

Thank you!

Heli Tooman
heli.tooman@ut.ee