Wellness Tourism
Through the lens of millennials’ attitude

An exploratory qualitative study

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Abstract

Background:
In recent years a rising concern towards health enhancement activities has been prominent across populations, leading to the emergence of a multi-dollar industry, namely the wellness industry, which spans across a wide spectrum of sectors, ranging from organic food to tourism. In fact, wellness tourism has been growing at an exponential rate, generating high revenues, forecast to rise. Given that millennials have been gradually replacing former generations, in volume size, it becomes evident why this age cohort has garnered massive media attention worldwide.

Purpose:
Nevertheless, although wellness tourism industry has sparked the attention of academic scholars and industry professionals, scant academic research has been conducted on the wellness travel attitude of this age cohort. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the attitude of millennials’ towards wellness travelling.

Method:
For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research comprised of 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews was conducted within a sample of individual’s aged 23-35.

Conclusion:
The results of this research indicated that this generational segment displayed a particular travel attitude towards wellness tourism, which can be understood from a cognitive, affective, and conative angle. Overall, the main cognitive associations and thoughts with wellness tourism entailed the notion of relaxation, and health-enhancement, whilst the core emotions experienced ranged from inner fulfillment, and happiness to nostalgia and serenity. The main benefits sought involved, escape from daily life and stress relief, which are consistent with prior studies.
It was clear from this study that millennials are price-sensitive, and they cherish the variety of activities along with the novelty of experiences when travelling for wellness. This research also sheds light on the most frequently employed travel platforms and channels of communication, which can provide tourism marketing specialists and industry professionals with constructive recommendations in terms of advertising and communication of wellness travel offerings.
However, due to time constraints, this study was subject to certain limitations, which hinder the generalizability of results across broader populations and diverse wellness travelers. Future research is thus much anticipated and needed to dig deeper into this lucrative market.
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Yours truly,
Anamela Agrodimou

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1. Introduction

This chapter includes information pertinent to the research. As such, it encompasses an overview of the wellness tourism industry, a definition of the market segment, and a brief description of the industry’s target market. Further, it intends to delineate this research’s purpose, to address the research’s questions, and the problem that it purports to unravel. In order to provide the reader with a clear and comprehensive snapshot of the purpose of this thesis, a brief explanation of the key terms, background information, and previous research, along with the methodology employed, and the limitations and contributions of this study are provided.

1.1. Background

In 1959, Halbert Dun, an American doctor, introduced the concept of wellness, illustrating that it is a state of health, which entails, the body, mind, and spirit (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). However, the notion of wellness originates in ancient Greece when Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician, and father of Western medicine, accentuated on the importance of nutrition, physical activity and social, environmental harmony as essential components of an individual’s health (Kleisiaris, Sfakianakis, & Papathanasiou, 2014). Interestingly, wellness tourism is one of the most ancient practices, dating back from the ancient Greece and Rome, to the medieval pilgrims and spa tourism of the 18th and 19th European elite (Smith & Kelly, 2006).

Few would argue that in recent decades the frantic rhythm and heightened stress levels of daily life, have reached epic proportions. Alarmingly, the hassles of modern society, including long stressful working hours, and unhealthy lifestyles, have spawned disturbing obesity rates, decreasing birth rates, and a record-high number of elder populations (Smith & Puczkó, 2013). In fact, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH) (2016), the aging population is forecast to reach 1.6 billion people by 2050.
More notably, the preeminent desire to run a healthier life has given rise to consumers’ rising health consciousness, and as result fueled an increased demand for health and wellness offerings (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Voigt, 2008; Voigt, Brown, & Howat, 2011; Jolliffe & Cave, 2012; Koncul, 2012; Csirmaz, & Pető, 2015; Lim, Kim, & Lee, 2016; Pyke, Hartwell, Blake & Hemingway, 2016; Veiga, Santos, M., Águas, & Santos, J., 2017).

In fact, the wellness industry is a dynamic, lucrative market estimated at $4 trillion, encompassing numerous sectors ranging from wellness tourism to workplace wellness and wellness real estate according to the Global Wellness Economy Monitor report, issued by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) (2018). More specifically, the wellness real estate is a rapidly expanding industry calculated at $134 billion, spurred by a growing health awareness and trend towards residences that embrace the concept of wellness. In reference to the wellness workplace, this market is worth $48 billion, and has been fueled in part by the employers’ desire to reduce health care costs, and boost employees’ productivity (GWI/Global Wellness Economy Monitor, 2018). Wellness tourism is linked with travelling with the intention of improving the physical, mental, and spiritual health (Chen, Prebensen & Huan, 2008; Chen, Chang, & Wu, 2013). More importantly, wellness tourism industry is a flourishing market, estimated at $639 billion and projected to reach $919 billion by 2022 (GWI/Global Wellness Economy, 2018). In fact, it contributes $1.3 trillion to the global economy (Lim, Kim, & Lee, 2016).

In their book, Smith and Puczkó (2013) outline the different categories of health and wellness tourism, which encompasses a broad spectrum of subgroups ranging from wellness, holistic, and spa, to recreational/leisure, and medical tourism. In particular, the authors indicate that Holistic tourism involves a range of body-mind-spirit activities, such as yoga and meditation, whereas recreational/leisure tourism involves pampering beauty treatments, and sports and fitness activities i.e. hiking, cycling respectively (Smith & Puczkó, 2013).

All too often the terms health, wellness, and medical tourism are used interchangeably, although a clear distinction exists among these (Voigt, Brown, and Howat, 2011; Jolliffe and Cave, 2012). More specifically, Health tourism is a generic,
broad umbrella term, beneath which the aforementioned categories fall (Smith & Puczkó, 2013). In fact, medical tourism refers to the act of travelling for medical reasons, whereas wellness tourism is associated with travelling for health enhancing activities purposes (Voigt, Brown, & Howat, 2011). In addition, Spa tourism is different from medical wellness in that the former entails water-based, relaxing body treatments, while the latter includes therapeutic recreational packages in the form of lifestyle coaching (Smith & Puczkó, 2013).

What is more, Smith and Kelly (2006) argue that baby boomers (aged late 30s to mid-50s) are the main target market in wellness tourism industry, yet in a recent paper, Smith and Puczkó (2015) stress that that wellness tourism demand has expanded across diverse consumer segments. It is worth noting that the millennium generation comprises roughly 80 million people and outpaces previous generations in size (Weber, 2017). More importantly, millennials’ travel expenditures are forecast to reach $400 million by 2020 (Gardy, 2018). Hence, given the dynamic expansion of wellness tourism industry, and the lucrative market potential of this age cohort, it adds relevance and significance to investigate further.

1.2. Problem definition and purpose
The purpose of this paper is to explore the attitude of millennial wellness travellers, and gain a deeper understanding the needs, tastes, and preferences of this age cohort.

An exhaustive review of the academic literature revealed that a paucity of research exists as regards the millennial tourists’ attitude towards wellness travel. In fact, previous research mainly focused on older generations’ travel motivations and behavior patterns (Chen, Prebensen, & Huan, 2008; Voigt, Brown & Howat, 2011; Kelly, 2012; Hritz, Sidman & D’Abundo, 2014; Lim, Kim & Lee, 2016; Kim, Chiang, & Tang, 2017; Hudson, Thal, Cárdenas & Meng, 2017; Horvath & Printz-Marko, 2017). Given that millennials comprise a large population of roughly 80 million people, exceeding in number previous generations, they are viewed as a prospering, lucrative market, garnering the attention of numerous industries Mangold & Smith, 2011; Weber, 2017; Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva, 2018). More specifically,
this generational cohort considers travelling an important element in life, as such travels on a frequent basis, and thus represents a flourishing target market for the tourism industry (Pate & Adams, 2013; Schiopu, Pădurean, Tălă & Nica, 2016; Pentescu, 2016; Sofronov, 2018; Bernardi, 2018).

As earlier noted, the wellness tourism industry is a lucrative market, generating approximately $639.4 billion, according to the Global Wellness Economy Monitor report issued by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) (2018).

To conclude, taking into account the promising tourism market potential this generation implies, along with the fast growing wellness tourism industry, it adds relevance and significance for the topic of this thesis. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore the attitude of millennial wellness travellers, and as such provide valuable insights to key industry stakeholders, and further fill the gap in the academic literature.

1.3. Research questions
This paper purports to answer 1 specific research question:

RQ 1. What are the main thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of the millennial wellness traveler?

In particular, this research question seeks to explore the cognitive, affective, as well as conative elements of this age cohort, in relation to wellness tourism. More precisely, the cognitive component refers to the main beliefs, opinions, and overall thoughts, whilst the affective component relates to the feelings, and emotions experienced during travelling. Finally, the conative constituent is linked with the behavioral patters throughout travelling.

1.4. Methodology
To address this research’s objectives, and answer the purpose of this study, a qualitative research is proposed, comprising in-depth semi-constructed interviews, within a sample of individuals, aged 23-35, utilizing purposive sampling as strategy. Due to the nature of qualitative research, important issues ranging from ethical considerations, to research validity and reliability are also taken into account.
1.5. Limitations and delimitations
As with any research, several limitations were present in this study. First, due to time limitations, the research was confined to a narrowly defined sample, namely the millennials. Second, given the wide spectrum of wellness tourism, the study examined the activities pursued based on the research participants’ prior travel experiences. Hence, the results of this study cannot be construed neither as representative of a broader population nor of generalizable for all types of wellness travellers.
Finally, this study was purposefully delimited to wellness tourism, and as such didn’t examine medical tourism, which falls under the umbrella term of health tourism, which wellness tourism also attaches to.

1.6. Contributions
Numerous academic papers exist within the scope of wellness tourism industry, nevertheless what clearly is missing from the literature are studies specializing on a generational cohort, whose whopping size, purchasing power, and travel expenditures justifies the need to fill this gap in the academic literature.
It is hoped that this thesis will provide key wellness industry stakeholders and marketing specialists with worthwhile and invaluable insights in relation to the attitudes millennials hold towards wellness travel. As such, by better understanding this age cohort’s cognitive associations, emotional experiences, and behavioral patterns in a wellness travel context, key players in wellness tourism, i.e. tour operators, tourism national boards, hotel managers, could target this market more efficiently. More precisely, by gaining comprehensive knowledge, wellness travel experts, and marketing professionals could not only design personalized wellness offerings, but also opt for communication channels and advertising strategies that match millennials’ unique preferences and needs.
What is more, this research is anticipated to fill a gap in the academic literature as regards the attitude of millennial wellness tourists, and contribute to future studies in the field.
1.7. Key words

**Millennials or Generation Y** is the generational cohort aged between 1980 and 2000 (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Moreno, F., Lafuente, & Moreno, S., 2017; Godelnik 2017; Pentescu, 2016).

**Wellness Tourism** refers to the act of travelling with the purpose of enhancing the physical, mental, and spiritual health (Chen, Prebensen & Huan, 2008).

**Medical Tourism** entails the concept of travelling for medical purposes, such as receive a medical treatment or undergo a surgery (Smith & Puczkó, 2013).

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides background information on the topic, namely the wellness industry, and the millennials, explicates the purpose of this research, elaborating on the research question, the methodology employed, as well as the study’s limitations, and future scopes of research. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework and academic literature this study relied on and chapter 3 lays out the research methodology utilized in this thesis. Chapter 4 displays the results of this research, while chapter 5 interprets the study’s findings, and chapter 6 draws important conclusions derived from this thesis.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the theoretical framework and academic literature upon which this study is built. More specifically, through an exhaustive review of numerous academic articles, and publications, this section sheds light on the wellness tourism industry, as well as the millennium generation. Importantly, a theoretical model is proposed and further illustrated.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Attitude Formation Theory

Chowdhury and Salam (2015) describe attitude as an amalgamation of beliefs, moods, and standpoints. In particular, the attitude can be better understood as an interconnection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, with cognitive processes
shaping emotional and behavioral responses respectively. In research, the attitude model provides researchers with deep insights into the feelings, thoughts, and patterns of behavior consumers maintain towards an attitude object (Chi, Jeng, Acker & Bowler, 2018). More importantly, attitude is built on continuous learning over the years along with individuals’ unique personality, and hence is subjective (Vishal, 2014). In fact, there is a wide consensus on the core components of attitude, namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Chowdhury & Salam, 2015).

Looking back at earlier studies, Breckler (1985) defined attitude as the response to an attitude object or antecedent stimulus, illustrating that the cognitive component involves a set of beliefs, structural knowledge, thoughts and perceptions, while the affect refers to both positive negative emotional responses, and lastly the behavior to behavioral intentions, and actions respectively. More particularly, Hilgard (1980) indicated that the aforementioned three-component model was introduced as early as 1695 and 1716 from Leibniz and Kant, in Germany. In the seminal two-volume work of Alexander Bain (1855-1859) feelings relate to emotions, passion, affection, sentiments, whilst thoughts refer to the intellect, or cognition entailing also judgment, reason, memory, and imagination, and volition, or will, refers to behavioral activities shaped by individuals’ feelings accordingly (Hilgard, 1980).

Indeed, Jung indicated that attitude is the readiness to act or behave in a particular way consciously or unconsciously, while Ajzen and Fishbein illustrated that attitudes are directed towards a certain object, behavior or person, and Baron and Byrne similarly described attitudes as the sum of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, towards certain objects, which remain constant over time (Vishal, 2014). It is generally believed that among these three components a positive correlation and consistency exists Breckler (1985). In fact, although individuals exhibit a strong tendency to maintain consistency in their attitudinal responses, this is not always the case, given that each component might result from distinct learning conditions and situations (Breckler, 1985). According to Fishbein and Ajzen attitude is related to a predisposed inclination acquired through learning to behave in a specific way, towards an object, both positively and negatively (Chowdhury & Salam, 2015).

1 The Senses and the Intellect (1855), The Emotions and the Will (1859)
Cognitive refers to learned perceptual patterns, whereas the affective constituent relates to a wide spectrum of feelings, covering positive and negative emotional responses shaped also from previous experiences. Numerous disciplines ranging from psychology to information science utilized cognition as a theoretical construct to understand consumer’s cognitive thinking patterns and respective needs, and behaviors (Afzal, 2018). Cognition results from past exposures to various stimuli, including education or interpersonal communication (Breckler, 1985). Ajzen (2001) elaborates that beliefs shape the subjective values associated with an object and eventually the attitude. More particularly, Ajzen (2001) indicates that beliefs that are readily available from memory exert a more significant influence on the attitude. Further, the accessibility of beliefs Ajzen (2001) is also contingent on personal and subjective factors, for instance the personal goals an individual holds at a given moment.

The affect is a state of experiencing feelings, yet without the individuals being aware of the reasons behind these emotions, whilst emotions entail cognitive elements, and hence the individuals recognize the object or reason behind a particular emotion (Afzal, 2018). Lakomski (2010) illustrates that emotions comprise various subcategories, namely background, primary, and social emotions respectively. More precisely, background emotions are not evident in behavior, and involve tacit knowledge, whilst primary or basic emotions comprise emotions ranging from fear, sadness, disgust, and anger to surprise and happiness. Social emotions on the other hand comprise shame, guilt, pride, gratitude, admiration, indignation, envy, jealousy, and contempt (Lakomski, 2010). Moreover, the affective component can range from, automatic, and holistic, to instantaneous, and difficult to vocalize feelings, as well as more volatile emotional states such as moods (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2005).

Ajzen (2001) illustrates that both the affective and the cognitive components shape the attitude and behavior respectively, yet at varying degrees. In particular, the affective response can derive from classical conditioning in past experiences (Breckler, 1985). Fiske and Pavelchak divided the affective component into category based (holistic mode) and dimensional mode respectively, with the former including
schemas stored in memory, through labeling of various categories, and expected values and attributes (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2005).

The behavioral or conative component is linked with individuals’ acts towards an attitude object, which can entail high or low involvement, and level of interest accordingly (Chowdhury & Salam, 2015). Breckler (1985) indicated that the tendency to act in a specific way could be attributed to instrumental learning processes, shaped by past behavior. More precisely, past behavior has been argued to influence future behavior based on the premise that repetitive behavior leads to habit formation, which eventually shapes future behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In fact, Bamberg, Ajzen and Schmidt (2003) illustrated that the frequency of a behavior induces habit strength. Yet, the authors argue that the fact the behavior has become routinized and automatic due to the force of habit, doesn’t necessarily subsume unregulated automatic behavioral responses. In fact, even on the occasion of strong routine behaviors, cognitive responses form part of the behavioral intention even at a lower level. In fact, the frequency of a specific behavior reduces the amount of cognitive efforts, as those can be retrieved directly from memory (Bamberg, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2003).

According to the theory of planned behavior (TPB) three main predictors account for the behavioral intentions, namely attitude, subjective norms, or perceived social pressure, and ultimately the perceived behavioral control, which relates to the perceived ease or difficult in executing a certain act (Ajzen, 1991). According to TPB model, human behavior is shaped based on beliefs about the consequences of the behavior (behavioral beliefs), normative beliefs stemming from the expectations from other people, and lastly control beliefs that relate to the perceived behavioral control, specifically the perceived ease or difficulty of executing an act, as earlier noted (Ajzen, 2002).

In fact, subjective or social norms impact behavioral intentions, though to varying degrees across distinct populations (Ajzen, 2001). Yet, aside from subjective or social norms, the author highlights that it is important to take into consideration factors such as personal norms and moral obligations towards behaving in a certain way, given that moral values an individual holds exerts a considerable influence on
behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Besides, the perceived difficulty, refers to the self-efficacy, namely the degree of difficulty individuals attribute to a certain act, whereas perceived controllability, refers to the control people have in performing a particular behavior. Nevertheless, the perceived difficulty, as opposed to the perceived controllability has been found to exert a more significant influence on behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 2001).

As earlier mentioned, the affect, which subsumes the sum of feelings, and emotions towards an attitude object, along with the cognition, which refers to the set of beliefs an individual maintains towards an object, give rise to the attitude formation. However, these two components need to be distinguished, given that the strength and salience of each can lead to distinct attitude relationship behaviors (Van den Berg, Manstead, van der Pligt, & Wigboldus, 2006).

More recently, research concentrated separately on the affective component innate in attitude model, namely feelings, and emotions, in evaluating and predicting consumer behavior (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2005). In fact, recent studies indicate a stronger correlation between affective and conative components, rather than cognitive and behavioral elements respectively, yet depending on additional factors (Van den Berg, Manstead, van der Pligt, & Wigboldus, 2006).

2.1.2. Tourist Attitude
The theory of planned behavior, as earlier noted is often applied in a tourism context, linking intention, with choice of destination, and future travel behavior (Baloglu, 1998).

Tourist satisfaction, leads to increased demand and travel recommendations and hence significantly impacts behavioral intention. Satisfaction is influenced by several components, namely quality of service, attitude, motivation, and destination image (Lee, 2009).

More specifically, tourist attitude can successfully determine tourist satisfaction, and future behavior. Importantly, tourist attitude constitutes elements such as cognitive, affective, and conative respectively, with the cognition reflected in evaluative judgments concerning a trip, the affect portrayed in the preference a tourist exhibits.
towards visiting a destinations, and lastly, the conation refers to the behavioral intention to conduct a trip (Lee, 2009). In fact, Lee (2009) tourists who hold positive cognitive beliefs over a destination experience increased satisfaction, which leads to future, repeated travel behavior (Lee, 2009). Nevertheless, a tourist attitude towards a destination alters after the completion of the trip, and as such the destination experience predicts future travel behavioral intention (Baloglu, 1998).

**Destination Image**

Destination image is shaped by numerous factors, which can range from natural resources, to cultural aspects and safety respectively (Jamaludin, Johari, Aziz, Kayat, & Yusof, 2012). Specifically, destination image comprises cognitive, affective, as well as conative components, namely the set of beliefs a tourist holds towards a destination, along with emotional responses in relation to the destinations’ attributes, and behavioral intentions towards visiting a destination accordingly (Zhang, Fu, Cai & Lu, 2014). Indeed, destination image can be understood both from cognitive and affective perspectives, with the former relating to beliefs and tourist’s destination information, and the latter to general feelings travellers hold for a particular destination (Jamaludin et al., 2012).

Moreover, tourists are driven by emotional benefits sought after destinations and activities, cultural motives along with destination advertisement strategies (Ambrož & Ovsenik, 2011). Besides, additional benefits tourists seek can range from relaxation, and escapism from daily life, to knowledge, and social travel companionship (Lee, 2009).

What is more, destination’s experience shapes accordingly tourist’s loyalty, and the intention to revisit a place. Zhang, Fu, Cai and Lu (2014) put forward the idea that tourist loyalty can be explained from both behavioral, and attitudinal angles. In particular, behavioral loyalty relates to the intention to repeat a visit, whereas attitudinal is associated with the psychological component, reflected in the tourists’ intention to revisit a place or recommend a particular trip to friends (Zhang, Fu, Cai Lu, 2014).

**Tourist Satisfaction**
Further, tourist satisfaction depends on the tourists’ positive evaluations in relation to the initial travel expectations formed either from destination information or word-of-mouth (Jamaludin et al., 2012). Indeed, positive word-of-mouth impacts consumer loyalty and further repeat travel behavior (Lee, 2009). Tourist satisfaction subsumes positive recreational experiences, feelings and cognitive perceptions, which in turn guide future travel behavior (Lee, 2009). More precisely, tourist satisfaction is based upon a comparison between expectations, and performance (Çoban, 2012). In effect, if the perceived performance exceeds the expectations, the customers are satisfied, whereas if the perceived performance is lower than the expectations accordingly, the consumer ends up dissatisfied and less inclined to repeat a travel behavior (Çoban, 2012). Ultimately, tourist loyalty is shaped by satisfaction and met expectations, in terms of service quality, perceived time, risk, and effort, value and monetary cost, which further impact travel behavior (Ambrož & Ovsenik, 2011).

2.1.3. Integrated theoretical framework

Figure 2.1. Integrated CAC theoretical model: Tourist Attitude

The theoretical framework this study built upon comprises the attitude formation theory, specifically the cognitive, affective, and conative (CAC) attitude model. More specifically, cognitive component comprises the set of beliefs, and mental
perceptions, whilst the affective constitutes the emotions, feelings, and moods. Subjective norms or perceived social pressure as explained earlier have been integrated in this framework, through the examination of word-of-mouth and peers’ recommendations. What is more, in the conative component, which refers to the behavioral intention, elements such as the destination image attractiveness were further incorporated (See Figure 2.1.). In particular, by adding this attribute in this model, factors ranging from the destination’s natural resources, cultural attractions, and accommodation facilities, to local community, safety, accessibility and perceived value serve as basis to predict tourist satisfaction, loyalty and future behavior.

2.2. Wellness Tourism Industry

Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) define wellness tourism as the act of travelling for the purpose of health sustaining or enhancing activities, including physical fitness, healthy nutrition, as well as relaxation and meditation. Nevertheless, in the academic literature one might encounter numerous terms used interchangeably, namely, health tourism, medical tourism, spa tourism, as well as well-being tourism (Voigt, Brown & Howat, 2011). In fact, Pesonen, Laukkanen and Komppula (2011) note that wellbeing tourism, although it resembles wellness tourism, it differs from wellness tourism in that the former relates to connection with nature, relaxation, and beauty treatments, whereas the latter is mostly associated with luxurious resorts, and expensive wellness offerings, targeted at high-income consumers, driven by the need for rest, relaxation, and escapism. Further, medical tourism shouldn’t be confused with wellness tourism, since medical tourism entails travelling for medical condition treatments, while health tourism as a notion, comprises both wellness and medical tourism, and spa tourism is a sub-category of wellness tourism (Voigt, Brown & Howat, 2011). In fact, the spa tourism is considered one of the most rapidly expanding subsector of health tourism, comprising a vast array of sub-categories, ranging from day spa, destination spa, hotel spa, resort spa, club spa to mineral spring spa, medical spa and cruise ship spa (Mak, Wong & Chang, 2009).
Strikingly, wellness tourism dates back as early as the ancient times, spanning across the time when the Romans and Greeks first travelled in pursuit of enhancing their health and well being, to the medical and spa tourism, of the European elite, of the 18th and 19th century (Smith & Kelly, 2006). In fact, during the 70s and 80s, health resorts or else health farms grew in popularity, attracting consumers interested in travelling for healthy nutrition and fitness activities (Stanciulescu, Diaconescu, Diaconescu, 2015).

It is important to note that the 2008 global financial crisis, impacted individuals’ psychological health condition, thus leading to a rising health consciousness among people, manifested in the growing pursuit of stress reduction activities, including, wellness tourism (Koncul, 2012).

More specifically, Csirmaz and Peto (2015) illustrate that an increased responsibility and quest for a healthy lifestyle, along with heightened stress levels and hassles of daily life are projected to fuel the development of wellness tourism in the years to come.

In particular, Vasileiou and Tsartas (2009) indicate that the spa/wellness tourism industry has grown at an exponential pace throughout the last 2 decades, catering to broader, and more diverse target markets, including, the elite upper class tourists, along with the middle and/or low tourists and younger tourists. Outstandingly, the wellness market in US is calculated at $2 trillion yearly, with offerings ranging from alternative medicine, and organic food, to yoga, spiritual and mindfulness practices, while the wellness tourism industry alone is estimated at $438.6 billion (Hudson, Thal, Cárdenas & Meng, 2017). More markedly, the wellness tourism industry constitutes roughly 6 percent of the international trips, which in turn translates to $438.6 billion in tourism expenditures, and contributes $1.3 trillion to the global economy, producing 11.7 million direct job employments (Lim, Kim & Lee, 2016).

In fact, Kickbusch (2003) states that the driving force behind the expansion of the wellness industry are the baby boomers, who reportedly have more disposable income, and time to expend on wellness products and services, followed by
employers who incorporate wellness offerings in the workforce to decrease health care costs and employees’ absenteeism, and health insurance providers.

What is more, wellness consumers, within the US wellness sector, can be divided into 5 distinct segments, specifically, the “well beings”, “food actives”, “magic bullets”, the “fence sitters”, as well as the “eat drink and be merrys”, with the first three segments representing the most lucrative market potential, given that for these consumers health is vital, and as such spend a considerable amount of time and money for wellness products and services (Kickbusch, 2003) (See Figure 2.2.1. & Table 2.2.1.)

![Wellness Consumers Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.2.1. Wellness Consumers**
Source: Adapted from Kickbusch, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Health Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well beings</td>
<td>Health is a priority, low concern for price &amp; brand image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Actives</td>
<td>Highly concerned with balanced nutrition, &amp; exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic Bullets</td>
<td>Opt for fast healthy solutions, such as health supplements, high concern for price &amp; brand image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence Sitters</td>
<td>Neutral towards health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat, drink, and be merrys’</td>
<td>Not concerned with health issues, seek instant gratification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.2.1. Wellness Consumers**
Source: Adapted from Kickbusch, 2003

Voigt, Brown and Howat (2011) classify wellness tourists into 3 categories, specifically, beauty spa tourists, lifestyle resort tourist, and spiritual retreat tourists.
To further illustrate, psychological motives, such as relaxation and escapism, are common across all three wellness tourists, yet each group attributes distinct meanings and values with respect to the wellness experience. For instance, beauty and spa tourists seek self-indulging, pampering activities, whereas spiritual retreat tourists focus on spiritually enriching experiences, and lifestyle retreat tourists on physical fitness activities accordingly (Voigt, Brown & Howat, 2011).

In a recent publication, Hudson, Thal, Cárdenas and Meng (2017) divided wellness travellers into 2 categories, namely, those individuals who travel exclusively for wellness, along with tourists who integrate wellness along with other travel activities. In fact, according to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy report, issued by Global Wellness Institute (GWI) (2018) wellness travellers are not strictly confined to a niche, elite target market, but they are grouped into 2 categories, namely the primary wellness travellers, and the secondary wellness travellers, exhibiting distinct preferences, tastes, and needs respectively, which is consistent with the study Hudson, Thal, Cárdenas & Meng conducted (See Figure 2.2.2.). Nevertheless, in an earlier study, Kelly (2012) noted that wellness tourists comprised mostly women, aged 30 or 40 years old, of middle or high educational and financial status, interested in short-stay spa trips.

**Wellness Travellers**

![Wellness Travellers Diagram]

Primary Wellness Travellers
- Spa resorts
- Wellness cruises
- Hot springs resorts
- Meditation & Yoga retreats

Secondary Wellness Traveller
- Sports & Adventure (eco-spa after hiking or biking)
- Business Tourism (day & weekend spa)
- Cultural/arts (spa, beauty)

Figure 2.2.2. Wellness Travellers
Source: Adapted from GWI/Global Wellness Tourism Economy, 2018
More precisely, the primary wellness tourists are defined by those individuals whose primary travel motivations are the pursuit of wellness activities, whereas the secondary travellers are described as those who partake in wellness activities whilst travelling for motivations other than wellness, such as business or adventure trips (GWI/ Global Wellness Tourism Economy, 2018). Remarkably, the secondary wellness travellers represent a lucrative and thriving market accounting for 89 percent of the wellness trips and 86 percent of the wellness travel expenditures, as of 2017 (GWI/ Global Wellness Tourism Economy, 2018).

Notwithstanding the fact that baby boomers constituted the core market of wellness tourism, the demand for wellness tourism has spanned across more diverse target markets (Smith & Puczkó, 2015). In effect, millennials are viewed as a flourishing, booming target market, taking into account that this age cohort has been gradually replacing the baby boomers in population (Valentine, 2016). Interestingly, in a study Hritz, Sidman and D’Abundo (2014) conducted, the millennial wellness tourists were clustered into 5 distinct categories, namely, the ‘most-well’, the ‘most-unwell’, the ‘amenity seekers’, and the ‘after-hours’ (See Figure 2.2.3. & Table 2.22.).

To further elaborate, the ‘most-well’ cluster is motivated by the elements of adventure, meeting new people, and learning novel things, whereas the ‘most-unwell’ cluster travels in pursuit of physical activities, yet not wellness ones. Further, the “amenity-seekers’ group is motivated by destinations that offer not only clean and comfortable facilities, but also a wide range of activities, ranging from outdoor and fitness, to spas, and shopping outlets. Conversely, the ‘after-hours’ cluster travels primarily for nightlife attractions, while the ‘escapers’ group travels mainly in order to escape from daily life (Hritz, Sidman & D’Abundo, 2014).

**Millennial Wellness Tourists**
Figure 2.2.3. Millennial Wellness Tourists
Source: Adapted from Hritz, Sidman & D’Abundo, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The “most-well”</th>
<th>Adventurous, novelty &amp; sociable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “most-unwell”</td>
<td>Fitness activities enthusiast, not keen on wellness &amp; sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “amenity-seekers”</td>
<td>Clean, comfortable facilities, variety of activities &amp; sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “after-hours”</td>
<td>Nightlife venues &amp; not interested in socializing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “escapers”</td>
<td>Escapism from daily life &amp; not interested in socializing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2.2. Millennial Wellness Tourists
Source: Adapted from Hritz, Sidman & D’Abundo, 2014

Overall, wellness tourists search for novelty, escapism, relaxation, along with personal growth and development (Kim, Chiang, & Tang, 2017). In fact, health/wellness tourists, seek authentic experiences, and expect high quality in the wellness offerings (Chen, Prebensen, & Huan, 2008). Kelly (2012) points out that wellness tourists place higher importance on the retreat’s setting and surrounding atmosphere, than on the destination per se, and are less concerned with luxurious hotel resorts. Indeed, wellness tourists are motivated not only by the attractiveness of the location, but also by the destination’s culture, and are particularly driven by nature-based activities, in rural settings, ranging from outdoor/fitness activities, and small-scale recreational spa facilities for skiers, and hikers, to more relaxing, serene
activities in nature, i.e. forest and lake walking (Lim, Kim & Lee, 2016).

In summary, the $4 trillion flourishing wellness industry encompasses a broad spectrum of sectors ranging from wellness tourism, spa, thermal/mineral springs, workplace wellness, and wellness real estate, to personal care, beauty and anti-aging, fitness, mind and body, along with healthy nutrition, preventive and personalized medicine, as well as traditional and complementary medicine (See Figure 2.1.4.) according to the Global Wellness Economy Monitor, issued by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) (2018).

![Global Wellness Economy](image)

Figure 2.2.4. Global Wellness Economy  
Source: Adapted from GWI/Global Wellness Economy Monitor, 2018

Wellness Tourism, estimated at $639.4 billion in 2017, is a burgeoning dynamic market, generating financial profits across a multitude of business sectors, ranging from the hospitality and airline industry, to food and beverage sector and tour excursion companies (Global Wellness Economy Monitor/GWI, 2018). According to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy report published by GWI (2018) the top wellness tourism destinations include the United States, Germany, China, France, and Japan, comprising 59 percent of the global wellness tourism market, followed
by emerging destinations in Asia-Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean, Middle East, North/Sub-Saharan Africa, along with India, and Malaysia (Global Wellness Tourism Economy/GWI, 2018).

In fact, given the exponential growth of wellness tourism industry, numerous countries are utilizing the wellness component as part of a brand strategic tactic throughout the promotion of their national tourism campaigns (Montevago, 2018). In particular countries across Europe, Asia, Latin America, with a long tradition in wellness offerings, i.e. thermal/mineral springs, along with emerging destinations, such as India, Cambodia, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Nepal, invest heavily in communicating their wellness tourism offerings, alongside their cultural and natural attractions, in an attempt to boost local business (Global Wellness Tourism Economy/GWI, 2018).

Further, the airline industry has begun to embrace the concept of wellness by offering local food experiences on flights, airport food delivery apps and healthy vending machines, full vegan restaurants, airport spa lounges, along with nap rooms, meditation rooms and yoga studios (Alcivar, 2019).

More notably, the cruise industry has incorporated on-board wellness offerings, specifically yoga, spa, beauty treatments as well as alternative therapies, i.e. acupuncture (Waby, 2018). Another trend can be mirrored in the emergence of ‘mindful safaris’, which entail traditional safaris blended with wellness elements such as yoga, meditation, and spa offerings (Anstey, 2016).

2.3.1. Millennials: a distinct generational cohort
Numerous authors have defined millennials as the generational cohort aged between 1980 and 2000 (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Moreno, F., Lafuente, & Moreno, S., 2017; Godelnik 2017; Pentescu, 2016).

In particular, millennials constitute approximately 80 million people, outnumbering previous generations by 4 million, and hence shaping the future generation of consumers and investors (Weber, 2017). More importantly, this age cohort comprises a lucrative market, which has garnered the attention of numerous consumer industries, due to the large volume millennials represent in terms of
population (Mangold & Smith, 2011; Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva, 2018). In fact, millennials’ net worth is projected to rise, in a global context, from $19$ trillion to $24$ trillion from 2015 to 2020, respectively (Sofronov, 2018).

What is more, Fromm and Garton (2013) illustrate in their book that millennials, as a generation is not homogenous, but is further divided into subgroups, which in turn exhibit common habitual and behavioral patterns (See figure 2.3.1. & Table 2.3.1.).

**Millennials**

![Figure 2.3.1. Millennials subgroups](image)

**Source:** Adapted from Fromm and Garton, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hip-ennial</td>
<td>cautious, global, charitable, &amp; information hungry, social media use for entertainment rather than contributing content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old School Millennial</td>
<td>disconnected, cautious, and charitable, least amount of time online spent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadget-Guru</td>
<td>successful, wired, &amp; free-spirited, greatest device ownership &amp; active social media content contributor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean and Green Millennial</td>
<td>impressionable, cause driven, healthy, &amp; green, greatest contributor of content especially cause-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Mom</td>
<td>wealthy, family-oriented, digitally-savvy &amp; sociable, high online presence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.3.1. Millennials subgroups
Source: Adapted from Fromm and Garton, 2013

As a generation, millennials have been portrayed as educated, technological-savvy, apt multi-taskers, and diligent, nevertheless, self-absorbed, and exhibiting low literary skills and short attention spans (Weber, 2017). More specifically, Valentine and Powers (2013) illustrate that this generation group is sensitive towards social causes, tolerant, trustful, as well as independent, and sophisticated. In effect, millennials are tolerant towards diversity, open towards change, and sensitive towards environmental sustainability, social responsibility (Bernardi, 2018). Notably, millennials identify themselves with personal relationships and experiences rather than material possessions, (Godelnik, 2017). Besides, Weber (2017) states that this generation greatly appreciates work-life balance, is responsible, and skeptical. From a consumer behavior perspective, this cohort is highly demanding, and anticipates personalized, customized services, along with instant gratification and a plethora of offerings (Pate & Adams, 2013; Sweeney, 2006).

Fromm and Garton (2013) attribute millennials’ instantaneous satisfaction to the fact that this age segment was raised at a time period of immediate access to knowledge and therefore expects rapidness and efficiency. Evidently, millennials require fast responses in e-commerce due to their constant digital connectivity (Veiga, Santos M, Águas, & Santos J., 2017). More importantly, this generation segment opts for authentic and honest advertising messages (Valentine & Powers, 2013; Aceron, Mundo, Restar & Villanueva, 2018). More precisely, millennials prefer unconventional advertising channels, which emit sophisticated, creative, and storytelling messages (Veiga, Santos M, Águas & Santos J., 2017). In fact, this generation regards electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) as a more credible and trustworthy source of information than traditional advertising (Mangold & Smith, 2011). Hence, it comes as no surprise that prior to purchasing a product and/or service, millennials rely on peers’ recommendations (Mangold & Smith, 2011;
Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva, 2018) Having grown up in an era of unprecedented technological advances, this age segment is proficient in using technology (Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012; Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva, 2018). Apparently, millennials are termed as digital natives who have integrated the use of technology on a daily basis (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). Moreover, this age cohort maintains an active presence on social media communities (Pate & Adams, 2013). More precisely, millennials utilize social media platforms as a primary mode of communication (Pate & Adams, 2013). In effect, Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva (2018) point out that Facebook and Instagram are millennials’ most favorite and popular platforms. Yet, another study revealed that this generation utilizes Instagram to a greater extent than Facebook, due to the photos and video-sharing elements (Schiopu, Păduean, Tălaș, & Nica, 2016).

What is more, members of this age cohort, single out brands that match their personality and align with their core values (Gurău, 2012). In effect, millennials utilize brands as a vehicle for self-expression and manifest less brand loyalty (Weber, 2017).

Gurău (2012) indicates that the constant exposure to price discounts and offers account for this age cohort’s low brand loyalty. More conspicuously, this generational segment aspires to actively participate and co-create throughout the brand design and product development (Fromm & Garton, 2013).

To sum up, millennials constitute an immense population globally, which exhibits similar patterns of thoughts, behaviors, values as well as consumer behaviors, as a consequence of having grown up in an era of significant changes, ranging from climatic to financial crises (Bernardi, 2018). More notably, millennials are trendsetters, who play a significant role in setting social and economic trends in a global context (Godelnik, 2017). In fact, this age group shape the media consumption patterns and exerts considerable influence on the purchasing behavior of not only their peers but also on the purchase decisions of older generations, the latter estimated at the whopping amount of $500 billion on a yearly basis (Fromm & Garton, 2013). In addition, millennials create user-generated content (UGC) by
leaving product reviews and by sharing thoughts and opinions pertinent to brand experiences (Mangold, & Smith, 2011; Fromm & Garton, 2013).

2.3.2. Millennial Travellers
As previously noted, millennials are particularly drawn towards the consumption of experiences, such as travelling, which they consider a vital component in their lives (Sofronov, 2018). In fact, millennial travellers represent roughly 20 percent of the international travel market, forecast to reach the whopping number of 300 million travellers by 2020 (Schiopu, Pădulean, Tală & Nica, 2016; Sofronov, 2018). Indeed, millennial travellers constitute a dynamic and robust market in a tourism industry context (Pate & Adams, 2013; Schiopu, Pădulean, Tală & Nica, 2016). More precisely, millennials’ travel expenditures are estimated at approximately $200-300 billions yearly, further indicating the lucrative potential of this target market (Pentescu, 2016). Gardy (2018) denotes that by year 2020 millennial travel expenditures are projected to reach $400 million.

In fact, this generation segment pursues authenticity, adventure, as well as novelty when travelling (Pentescu, 2016; Fromm, 2017; Sofronov, 2018). Besides the aforementioned components, millennials opt for safe, and easily accessible destinations (Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva, 2018; Sofronov, 2018). Numerous authors note that millennials’ underlying travel motivation lie in experiencing a local culture (Schiopu, Pădulean, Tală & Nica, 2016; Veiga, Santos, M., Águas & Santos, J., 2017). Further, in a cross-cultural study Rita, Brochado, and Dimova (2018) travel motives range from escapism from daily routine, relaxation, and entertainment, to learning new skills, and exploring new destinations.

More remarkably, according to a study Cavagnaro, Staffieri and Postma (2018) conducted, millennial travellers are not a homogeneous segment, but are divided into subcategories according to the distinct meaning and unique values they attribute to travelling. More precisely, authors grouped millennial travellers based on four semantic categories, ranging from values, namely inner, personal development, and development through interpersonal exchange, socializing and entertainment, to escapism and relaxation (See figure 2.3.2.) In particular, the first
cluster associates travelling with an experience of personal growth, and enhancement, in terms of mentally, spiritually, and physically whereas the second group relates travelling to the experience of a novel culture, and immersion with the local residents, along with exploration of cultural attractions. Finally, the third cluster travels for hedonic experiences, namely, socialization and entertainment, whilst the fourth group associates travelling with serenity, relaxation, and escape from daily life’s stress (Cavagnaro, Staffieri, & Postma, 2018).

Figure 2.3.2. Millennial Travellers
Source: Adapted from Cavagnaro, Staffieri, & Postma, 2018

Importantly, given the millennials’ immense size in population, along with their distinctive consumer behavior patterns, this age cohort has been argued to disrupt the traditional paradigm in the tourism industry (Veiga, Santos M, Águas, Santos J., 2017). More specifically, by conducting the vast majority of purchases online, millennials gave rise to the expansion of e-commerce, which in turn disrupted the traditional business model (Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012).

In effect, Godelnik (2017) argues that the 2008 global financial crisis generated a shift in millennials’ attitude, which transitioned from an ownership-oriented mentality to an access-oriented mindset, also explicit in millennials’ espousing the sharing
economy, and in prioritizing experiences over consumption. Accordingly, in a tourism setting, members of this generation opt for accommodations encountered in platforms, such as Airbnb, a distinctive example of the sharing economy paradigm (Veiga, Santos, M. Águas, & Santos, J. 2017). In fact, authors ascribe millennials’ preference towards this accommodation-booking platform to this age cohort’s interest in immersing with the local residents’ culture (Veiga, Santos, M. Águas, & Santos, J., 2017). However, Godelnik (2017) posits that millennials embrace the sharing economy model, due to a host of advantages, ranging from low transaction costs, and ease of use, to enriched user experiences and increased collaboration and community. Further, in a tourism setting, additional benefits entail, greater transparency in transactions, which in turn engenders trust on the users, increased flexibility and personalization, along with the opportunity to communicate with locals, and gain an authentic tourism experience, contact directly the owner, as well as read peer reviews, and gain access, and finally gain access to a plethora of services at an affordable cost (Bernardi, 2018).

Additionally, given that this generational cohort grew up in a media saturated time period, social media marketing is deemed as a highly effective marketing strategy, since millennials rely on peers’ word-of-mouth (WOM) more than traditional forms of advertising prior their travel purchase decisions (Liu, Wu, & Li, 2019). Noticeably, Ana and Istudor (2019) point out in a paper that user-generated content (UGC) exerts a significant influence on millennials travel decision process. Strikingly, UGC sites such as social media, are utilized prior to the organization of a trip, in terms of searching information, and comparing travel offerings, as well as during a trip, for information related to cultural attractions, restaurants and shopping venues, creating brand communities (Ana & Istudor, 2019). In fact, millennials are more influenced from their peers’ eWOM in social media communities than other sources of information, namely travel professionals, when planning their trips (Styvén & Foster, 2018). In fact, Liu, Wu and Li (2019) stress that y, social media WOM is perceived as the most dynamic tactic to target this age cohort in tourism industry, yet the importance of personalizing the communication messages on social media
networking sites (SNMs) according to the unique travel preferences and distinct needs is crucial.

As earlier noted, prior to travelling, this age cohort turns to their peers for recommendations, whose opinions are perceived as highly reliable and credible sources of information (Femenia-Serra, Perles-Ribes, & Ivars-Baidal, 2019). More precisely, email campaigns, are deemed as less trustworthy and reliable, whereas travel blogs, and official travel guides and websites are viewed as more credible sources for travel related information (Ana & Istudor, 2019).

Online reviews are another channel of information millennials rely on throughout the travel purchase decision (Aceron, Mundo, Restar, & Villanueva, 2018; Moreno, F. Lafuente, Carreón, & Moreno, S., 2017; Veiga, Santos, M., Águas, & Santos, J., 2017; Valentine & Powers, 2013). Markedly, Trip Advisor, Booking, and Airbnb, score the highest among the millennial travellers, followed by social media UGC (Styvén & Foster 2018; Ana & Istudor, 2019).

What is more, millennials share their travel experiences through photos, videos, comments, or rating reviews, nonetheless, photo sharing appeared to be the most popular means of communicating their travel experiences (Schiopu, Păduorean, Țala, & Nica, 2016). More strikingly, Instagram is considered the most popular social media platform millennials resort to for travel inspiration, since this generation appears to be more attracted to visual elements, such as photos and videos, as opposed to written content (Ana & Istudor, 2019). Besides, for millennials, the accurate depiction of an image is important as it creates realistic expectations and enhances in turn the brand experience (Schiopu, Păduorean, Țala, & Nica, 2016).

In fact, according to a study Styvén and Foster (2018) conducted when it comes to sharing travel experiences on social media platforms, studies indicate that the main drivers for doing so relate to motives such as Opinion leadership (OL), along with reflective appraisal (RAS), and the need for uniqueness (NFU). More specifically, millennials are highly preoccupied with their identity, and how they viewed from their peers, and, thus not surprisingly, e-WOM is seen as a way of expressing this identity, whilst the more unique the experience is, the more unique and important
they feel, as they perceive themselves as opinion leaders and experts, which in turn increases the propensity to upload more content pertinent to their travel experience (Styvén & Foster, 2018).

To summarize, millennials travel on a frequent basis, in pursuit of authentic, local, novel, and personalized experiences, relying on social media WOM and online reviews, throughout the travel decision process, utilizing in particular SMNs as a means of communicating the travel experiences, and inner values, as well as shaping their personal identity (Bernardi, 2018).

**Key terms**

**User generated content (UGC)** refers to any information provided from a wide array of sources, ranging from social media platforms, namely, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, to forums, blogs, or wiki and yahoo question-answering sites. UGC is content produced by daily consumers, rather than media professionals (Ana & Istudor, 2019).

**Electronic word of mouth (eWOM)** relates to content generated by potential, actual, or former consumers, as regards to a brand, a product and/or a service (Ana & Istudor, 2019).

**Sharing economy paradigm** is described as the business model, which utilizes network technology, thus facilitating the exchange of products and services, through enabling users to access rather than own these products and services (Bernardi, 2018).

### 3. Methodology

In this chapter the methodological framework utilized for the purpose of this research is introduced. More precisely, the research’s philosophy, and approach, along with the data collection and sampling strategy are illustrated. Ethical considerations and validation strategies are also indicated.

In conducting an inquiry researchers assume a set of philosophical beliefs and worldviews, which in turn shape the research design and method accordingly (See
3.1. Philosophical Worldviews

In particular, there are 4 major philosophical paradigms ranging from postpositivism, and constructivism, to transformative, and pragmatism. More specifically, postpositivism, a philosophy based on the objective evaluation of reality is strongly associated with quantitative research, as opposed to constructivism, which subsumes subjective interpretation, and relates more to qualitative research. Transformative refers to studies undertaken within marginalized societal groups, while pragmatism, is linked with mixed research methods, and hence allows for greater flexibility (Creswell, 2013).

Accordingly, different research philosophies entail distinct research approaches. For instance, positivism is strongly associated with quantitative data collection method, and as such a deductive approach. In fact, deduction refers to a rigid, structured approach, which involves quantitative data collection method, and generalizable findings to representative samples of broader populations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Conversely, interpretivism is linked with inductive research approach, which involves qualitative data collection methods, and a flexible
structured approach, without subsuming any generalizability of study results (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

3.2. Research Approach
Qualitative, along with quantitative research, and mixed methods comprise the main research approaches, with each approach subsuming a distinct research design, and method respectively.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that the former is associated with generating novel insights, and subjective interpretations of meanings, based on textual, visual or oral data, whereas the latter relates to objective statistical, and computational assessments based on numerical figures (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). Mixed research method refers to the application of both a quantitative, and qualitative data collection method accordingly, and as such different research designs, and philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2013).

3.2.1. Research Design
In marketing research, there are 3 main research designs each consisting of a distinct research type, namely exploratory, descriptive, and causal research (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). To further illustrate, exploratory research is applied when the purpose of the research is to produce novel ideas, and elucidate vague meanings, whereas descriptive research relates to delineating accurately profiles of people and/or situations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Causal research is utilized when the research’s purpose is associated with drawing conclusions based on cause-and-effect relationships (Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

In qualitative research, the design is emergent, as it can be subject to changes throughout the process, and more importantly researchers’ role is deeply entrenched in unraveling perplex, profound meanings, from a holistic perspective, while at the same time casting aside any personal bias during interpreting the results (Creswell, 2013).

What is more, qualitative research designs can range from ethnography, narrative, to grounded theory, and phenomenology whereas quantitative research designs
mostly comprise experimental designs and non-experimental designs, namely surveys (Creswell, 2013).

To further illustrate, in ethnography the researcher studies shared behavioral patterns within a cultural group, while in phenomenology the researcher investigates the essence of a phenomenon, as experienced by individuals. On the other hand, a case study involves an-depth analysis of a case, or a process, while grounded theory relates to the development of a theory, and narratives to descriptive accounts of an individual’s life respectively (Creswell, 2013).

3.3. Research Method
3.3.1. Primary Data
Primary data refer to information gathered first hand, either from quantitative data collection methods i.e. surveys, or qualitative data collection methods i.e. one-on-one interviews, focus group observations, and observations. In this research, one-on-one, semi structured interviews were utilized as a primary qualitative data collections strategy.

Interview is a common qualitative data collection strategy, which entails various different types, ranging from focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, to observations, and unstructured conversations, among others (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). In qualitative interviews researchers gain deeper insights into personal viewpoints, meanings, and narratives of human experiences (Kvale, 2006).

More specifically, focus group interviews refer to an interview within a small group of participants, usually 6 to 10 people, whereas in-depth interviews consist of one-on-one conversations between a researcher and a respondent.

In particular, semi-structured interviews have the advantage of providing the researcher with flexibility and rich, detailed data (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). Observation is another data collection method, which comprises the detailed description of events while unstructured conversations refer to dialogues, which are unstructured in form (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). In effect, if one considers the group dynamic pressure group interviews subsume, one-one
interviews allow for deeper originality, and authenticity (Milena, Dainora & Alin, 2008).

For the purpose of this research, a pilot interview was conducted prior to the interviews, and ultimately 11 semi-structured one-on-one interviews took place between 25th May and 3rd June 2019.

3.3.2. Pilot Interview
A pilot interview, is a mock interview, utilized as a means of adjusting the interview guide, and of refining the wording of the questions in order to better address the research’s purpose and objectives (Alshenqeeti, 2004; Turner, 2010; Kallio et al., 2016). Pilot interview participants are recruited based on similar criteria with the research participants (Chenail, 2011; Kallio et al., 2016).

In this research a pilot interview was conducted, with a respondent of similar to the research’s participants’ demographic profile, and served as a basis of readjusting the wording of several questions, in terms of accuracy, and intelligibility.

3.3.3. Semi-structured Interview
A semi-structured interview guide encompasses a comprehensive list of questions, ranging from main theme questions to follow up questions or prompts, aimed at addressing the research’s topic and purpose (Kallio et al. 2016). To illustrate, main theme questions address the core objectives, and most significant aspects of the research, whereas follow-up questions comprise secondary, to the main theme questions, addressed for additional clarifications, or further details. Follow-up questions can be spontaneous and flexible according to each respondent’s responses, whereas main-theme questions follow a more rigid structure (Whiting, 2008; Kallio et al., 2016).

In this research, demographic oriented questions were addressed at the beginning of the interviews, followed by main theme and follow up questions respectively, based on the theoretical model utilized for the purpose of this research (See Appendix 1).
More specifically, the first round consisted of cognitive oriented questions, in order to gain insight into the cognitive component of the wellness millennials’ attitude, namely, thoughts, viewpoints, and opinions in reference to the topic. The second round comprised affective oriented questions, to better comprehend the emotional elements of the wellness travel experience, including, memories, benefits sought, and emotions experienced. Lastly, in the ultimate round, participants were asked conative oriented questions, related to the travel decision process, and purchase behavior.

### 3.3.4. Interview participants’ socio-demographics

In this study, the research participants were undergraduate and graduate students, aged between 23 to 35 years old, with a female male gender ratio 9:3, with female respondents outnumbering male respondents respectively, of multiethnic backgrounds (See Table 3.1.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>51’ 22”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Ski &amp; Hiking</td>
<td>34’ 42”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Spa</td>
<td>53’ 10”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Hiking &amp; Surf</td>
<td>36’ 53”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Meditation, Hiking</td>
<td>58’ 15”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Skiing &amp; Hiking</td>
<td>29’ 49”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Meditation &amp; Yoga</td>
<td>60’ 2”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>30’ 36”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Meditation &amp; Yoga</td>
<td>60’ 38”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Skiing &amp; Spa</td>
<td>51’ 16”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Hiking &amp; Yoga</td>
<td>50’</td>
</tr>
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Table 3.1. Participants’ demographics
3.3.5. Sampling

Sampling is defined as the process of delimiting the population in terms of size, characteristics and selection process (Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

In fact, sampling strategy subsumes either a probability sampling or non-probability sampling technique (Etikan, 2016). Whatever the case may be the sampling strategy needs to be aligned with the research’s purpose and questions (Creswell, 2007; (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

To further elaborate, in probability sampling, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, and as such mitigates any bias, whereas in non-probability the selection process is based on researcher’s critical, and subjective assessment (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). In addition, probability sampling strategies including cluster, random, systematic sampling are mostly utilized in quantitative research, which is associated with generating data that are generalizable across broader populations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). More precisely, probability sampling differs from non-probability sampling strategy in that the former refers to a randomly selective sampling process, while the latter to a purposefully selective sampling process according which the research’s objectives are better addressed (Etikan, 2016).

Non-probability sampling strategies range from quota sampling, purposive sampling, to snowball sampling, and convenience sampling, (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

More specifically, purposeful sampling relates to a purposeful participants’ selection based on the research’s purpose needs, whereas convenience sampling, on the other hand, is based on the respondents’ ease and availability in participating in a research (Etikan, 2016). Snowball sampling refers to the process of attaining access to research participants through utilizing each respondent’s contacts (Noy, 2008). Quota sampling is based on random selectivity, yet it suggests that the sample is representative of a population (Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

For the purpose of this research, a non-probability, purposeful sampling strategy was utilized, according which the respondents’ selective process was based on certain criteria, namely age, and previous experience in wellness travelling. It should
be noted, however that the selected sample isn’t construed as representative to a broader population.

3.3.6. Data Saturation
In qualitative research data saturation refers to the point where no new information emerge, which significantly contributes into answering the research questions (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016).

Although some authors argue that data saturation is better attained through adhering to a strict set of rules (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles & Grimshaw, 2010) others note that a one-size-fits-all rule doesn’t exist (Low, 2019). More importantly, it is the quality rather than the quantity of the data that dictates data saturation in qualitative research (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora 2016).

In this research, data saturation was achieved upon the completion of the 11th round of interviews, as up to that time no new information arose that would add to the relevance of the study and to the research’s purpose accordingly.

3.3.7. Secondary data
Secondary data refer to information previously attained for a distinct research purpose, and provide researchers with the advantages of instant access and low-cost (Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

For the purpose of this thesis, an exhaustive review of academic articles (See Table 3.2.) retrieved from the following scientific journals was conducted:


**Academic Literature Review**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Wellness tourism</th>
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<th>Millennials</th>
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<td>Hartman &amp; McCambridge, 2011; Moreno, F., Lafuente, &amp; Moreno, S., 2017; Godelnik 2017; Pentescu, 2016; Weber, 2017; Mangold &amp; Smith, 2011; Aceron, Mundo, Restar, &amp; Villanueva, 2018; Sofronov, 2018; Fromm &amp; Garton, 2013; Valentine &amp; Powers, 2013; Bernardi, 2018; Pate &amp; Adams, 2013; Sweeney, 2006; Williams, Crittenden, Keo, &amp; McCarty, 2012; Schiopu, Pădurean, Talaă, &amp; Nica, 2016; Gurău, 2012; Gardy, 2018; Fromm, 2017; Cavagnaro, Staffieri &amp; Postma, 2018; Rita, Brochado, &amp; Dimova, 2018; Liu, Wu, &amp; Li, 2019; Ana &amp; Istudor, 2019; Styvén &amp; Foster, 2018; Femenia-Serra, Perles-Ribes, &amp; Ivars-Baidal, 2019; Horvath &amp; Printz-Marko, 2017</td>
</tr>
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</table>
3.3.8. Data analysis
As earlier noted, qualitative data refer to non-numerical figures, generated from qualitative research strategies, ranging from individual and/or focus group interviews to observations.

The analytical process comprises a deductive or inductive approach, with the former utilizing a theory prior collecting the data, and the latter developing a theory after gathering the data respectively (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

In this research, the verbatim transcription of the interview data, constituted the first stage of the data analysis, followed by summarized interview texts. More precisely, thematic categories were identified along with classification of meaningful units. In fact, the categorization of themes relied on the interview guide, which provided the basis for the aforementioned assortment. Accordingly, in alignment with the interview guide’s structure, the analysis subsumed a classification of three thematic categories, namely the cognitive, the affective, and the conative respectively, based on a theoretical model utilized in this inquiry, namely the attitude construct.

Accordingly, the respondents’ data were classified into thematic categories reporting interviewees’ quotes verbatim when deemed necessary, and providing summarized descriptive accounts. Broad categories were further divided into subcategories to enhance clarity of concepts and meanings, and lengthy phrases and quotes were condensed into briefer statements, to avoid redundancy and repetitions.

3.3.9. Validation
Validity and reliability in qualitative research involve the process of examining thoroughly the research’s findings in terms of accuracy, and consistency respectively (Creswell, 2013).

Scrutinizing the research in terms of methodological coherence is a commonly applied verification strategy, utilized to strengthen the research’ validity and reliability (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016; Spiers, Morse, Olson, Mayan &
Barrett, 2018). More precisely, methodological coherence refers to the research design’s congruency, in terms of research’s questions, type, strategy and sampling. Other validation strategies include data triangulation, members’ checking, peers’ debriefing, and accurate data transcription (Creswell 2007; Creswell, 2013). Data triangulation refers to the use of multiple data collection methods to address the research’s questions (Golafshani, 2003). Moreover, members’ checking is carried out through subjecting the findings to the scrutiny of the research participants, whereas peers’ debriefing entails the process of validating the results through subjecting the results to third parties, i.e. other researchers for cross-examination (Creswell 2007; Creswell, 2013).

To ensure methodological coherence, the research’s question, was congruent with the research method, and strategy. More importantly, to add to the validity and reliability of the findings, data saturation was attained after the 11th interview. Due to time limitations, data triangulation wasn’t employed as a verification strategy, however, to validate the research’s findings, the thesis was exposed to peers’ debriefing from university’s MBA graduate students for cross-examination.

3.4. Ethical Considerations
Research ethics is defined as the moralistic code of conduct, which guides researchers’ behavior throughout the study, and respects research participants’ rights (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

In fact, it is equally important to maintain ethical integrity at the outset of research, alongside the data collection process, analysis, and reporting of findings (Whiting, 2008; Creswell, 2013).

More specifically, at the initial stage of the inquiry, researchers are morally obliged to disclose the purpose of the study to the research participants (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, the respondents’ consent to participate in the research needs to be granted (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

More importantly, it is crucial that the respondents’ data remained private and confidential (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). Dearnley (2005) stresses the importance of protecting the respondents against any psychological harm or distress throughout
the research. Furthermore, it is substantial to report the results accurately, and objectively, without subsuming personal bias (Babin & Zikmund, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

In this study, the research participants were informed of the purpose of the study, in advance, and assured of the data confidentiality. Due to the nature of the inquiry, which consisted audio recording of interviews, respondents were solicited for permission. To protect the anonymity and privacy of the respondents during the reporting of the results, participants were assigned numerical identifications. Ultimately, the findings were reported accurately, and objectively, free from bias or subjective data selectivity.

To recap, for the purpose of this thesis, an exploratory, qualitative phenomenological research approach, was conducted, guided by the principles of constructivist philosophical worldview.

More precisely, semi-structured interviews were employed as a primary research data collection method, along with a comprehensive academic literature review of scientific academic journals, which constituted the secondary data utilized for this research. Besides, 1 pilot interview was conducted before the actual interview rounds, and hence enabled the interview guide’s refinement and adjustment. Additionally, data saturation was reached upon the 11th interview round, where no significant novel information emerged. Ultimately, a thematic data analysis followed, according which the interview data were classified into thematic categories, generating meaningful units of information.

To finish up, ethical considerations, and validations strategies shaped the entire research procedure, based on which the respondents’ data protection, and anonymity were respected and the quality of the research was insured through the use of reliability, and validity as validation strategies.

4. Results
The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the key findings generated from this study. Building on verbatim quotes retrieved from the interview participants’ transcripts, several thematic categories emerged, which are presented hereafter in an attempt to add a better understanding on the meanings millennials attribute to wellness travelling.

4.1.1. Cognitive-oriented themes

Wellness notion

In the first round of the interviews, participants were asked about the thoughts, opinions, and general reflections in relation to wellness tourism.

Millennials in this study associated the notion of wellness with health enhancing activities, relaxation, as well as physical and mental health. In particular, one participant (R9) indicated, “wellness is staying fit, being health, and loving yourself that’s the first thing that comes to my mind” and another respondent (R5) noted, “wellness is a physical, mental, and holistic approach. Besides, another participant stated (R11) “wellness for me is like going to the sauna, to a pool, Jacuzzi…going to a spa and getting a massage maybe…treating yourself with something good for your mind and your body”.

Respondent (R7) illustrated “wellness is of the body and the mind at the same time...if you look back as Buddha said healthy mind can only live in a healthy body”. Another research participant (R3) remarked “wellness for me is of course something connected to health in the holistic I’d say approach...in the sense it is not only the physical condition but also your mental condition...wellness for me is to be well balanced in all sense with the mind and the body”. Wellness for me is of course something connected to health in the holistic I would say approach in the sense it is not only the physical condition but also your mental condition as well ...ya I would say that wellness is for me to be balanced in all senses...with your mind and your body as well.

Several other respondents associated the term wellness with spa treatments in luxurious hotel resorts, while others indicated that wellness is related to physical
exercise, such as yoga, or sports activities, along with meditation, and spiritual activities. Specifically, one participant (R1) stated “spa day comes to my mind when I think of wellness” and another respondent (R4) noted “basically spas and hotels mostly spa…in Austria hotels they have their own spas and saunas…we use it in that sense…but I know in English means something else…more like fitness…”

Moreover, respondent (R5) specified “for me when I travel for hiking, doing something good for my body that’s wellness for me”. This participant (R5) further associated wellness tourism with medical tourism, which refers to travelling for receiving a medical treatment, or recovering from a physical malady.

Another participant (R3) indicated “I also like to travel for different objectives…within the year…every 2 months I book Thai massage…I need it nowadays”. One respondent (R7) noted “wellness travelling I think is something that you should do…travelling enough is a very good stress buster but wellness travelling maybe you get to explore more exotic locations perhaps is you get to go to the source of where all of it developed…all of the spiritual wellness developed…”.

Reflections on wellness tourism

Millennials in this study perceive wellness travellers as health conscious individuals who travel frequently for wellness activities, and the majority didn’t identify themselves as wellness travellers, on account of the fact that they don’t travel on a very frequent basis for wellness. In fact, participants illustrated that they are interested in experiencing and immersing themselves with local cultures, apart from travelling for wellness.

More precisely, respondent (R9) stated “I truly support it…it should be like this kind of awareness…information about this should be made to reach more people…and it should be an affordable one too…it shouldn’t be like exceeding a big budget of your salary…if you want to do it at a younger age…”Participant (R9) further indicated “normally for me it’s a combination of different purposes…to see different places…but in terms of health or wellness I combine different kind of activities…”
Respondent (3) explained “I really like the spa venues…one of the travels I made more connected to wellness is the to Budapest…the city offers a lot of spas…and you can choose among a lot of spa…as I had a very demanding job…I was very stressed…to take some days of relax”.

Another respondent (R5) remarked “for me my definition for wellness travelling I can say is travelling without having any obligations or any commitments and you are going for the sake of trying something new something you haven’t tried before and exploring…an exploration trip for me…because you will see something you’ve never seen before…you will learn a lot…ya this is all at the end wellness”.

Other participants pointed out “to me the purpose of why I’m going there is important…are you there as a general tourist or are you there to better yourself as a person…if you are going there to be as a general tourist then it won’t be a wellness trip…if you go there to better yourself then ya…”(R7).

If you offer a wellness tour package …within the price range of 200-300 euros …it has to be to a good place…a very good place for some vacation with beach parties…and all those things…the students, the younger generation would always opt for the more fun…so the price matters…for youngsters…”(9).

Furthermore, another respondent (R10) noted ” if you hear wellness trips you would think of expensive…if you want to have a good quality wellness experience it costs money…the real one you want to have you have to pay for it”. Likewise, another participant (R8) stated “I don’t really think I need it…I won’t be willing to spend money for this…at a better price yes”. In particular, another participant (R11) indicated “I’m not a fan of wellness, I’m really active, I get really bored…maybe combine hiking and wellness in the evening…I would never do it only for spa…variety would interest me ya…I would get bored doing one thing…hiking and massage or spa…I would be interested”.

In terms of associating their identity with wellness travelling several participants illustrated “I would describe myself as a wellness traveller…because within the year I also book some week in the whole year to have these kind of travels…and normally every 2 months or 3 months I go to Thai massage…because I need it…”(R3)
...I believe that those kind of people are open minded they are willing to experience something they haven’t never tried before...because travelling is an experience in itself...a lot of people can travel domestically... but to get out of the comfort zone...to different place and go somewhere you don’t know no one for wellness it takes for me someone that is minded and well-educated who is up to experience new things” (R5).

“to be a wellness traveller you have to do at least once a year ...very frequently...“the fact that I’m Indian it makes it much more easier for me there are a lot of spiritual gurus...there are a lot of spiritual places in India for me to able to find the place I want to go...I would not classify myself as a wellness traveller but if the opportunity arises then ya I’m always open...for example Steve Jobs did it he went to Himalaya just before he died ...he did it because he wanted to gain spiritual physical wellbeing because he was suffering a lot internally ...to me he was a wellness traveller” (R7).

4.1.2. Affective-oriented themes

Emotions

In the second round of the interviews, participants were asked of the emotions experienced when travelling for wellness, as well as of the benefits they seek out of a wellness trip.

Millennial travellers in this study, experienced positive emotions, and feelings from wellness travelling, which ranged from happiness, peacefulness, and serenity, to excitement and connection. In particular, one respondent (R3) noted “it’s very exciting you are not in your normal place, your mind is very open to new people, you develop as a person a lot...there are no hard feelings, your are more like yourself...

Similarly, participant (R5) described the experience of wellness traveling as follows: “I felt happy, wellness for me is happiness, love, ease of mind, spiritual fulfillment, good energy...after the trip I feel happy, satisfied, relaxed, I felt a fresh born person come home, calm, focused...feeling happy for a month”.
Another respondent (R11) illustrated that the main feelings experienced were relaxation, escape from daily life, motivation to integrate healthy activities in daily life, excitement, joy, living in the moment, and not thinking about the future. More precisely, participant (R11) explained that a wellness trip feels more justifiable after achieving a goal, as a way of rewarding yourself. Another participant (R6) noted “if I do this trip it’s because I think I will be better...I always feel better after a wellness trip... “It makes me think about the future...it makes me enthusiast...at the end I was always very happy...so I always feel better after a week of wellness holiday... peaceful...as I have time to think make reflection about my future...” Other respondents indicated “I feel more relaxed, more in balance, happy because it’s a good experience but also sad because it ends” (R10).

“I didn't expect to be at peace with myself after the trip...I felt complete...you dedicate time for yourself after the trip I hit the gym...the activity gave me more confidence...spiritually also...to think that life I good towards you that is an opportunity to learn” (R7).

Among the participants, one respondent (R8) indicated that the experience is stressful in terms of booking preparation, adding that airplane flights are environmentally unsustainable and stating “I try not to do it when it’s not necessary...I try to avoid CO2 emissions”. Moreover, participant (R3) illustrated as follows:

“It was a super experience for me...for me its was amazing to live the experience...I feel very good after that...I remember I slept like a baby...you fell very relaxed and rest... I try to live the moment...be present...to feel the present moment...live the experience...usually the experience is positive sometimes you have problems in the trip...but it disappears...this kind of sensation is amazing...I feel tired...even if I have a relaxed travel I always feel tired in the case that I take flights... but at the same time happy and recovered...ya... because you are able to disconnected really disconnect from your routine this is therapy...

Wellness Travel Benefits
When asked about the main benefits they seek of a wellness trip, participants in this study indicated that escape from daily life, mind relaxation, stress relief, connection with nature, as well as happiness, and disconnection comprise the core drivers in a wellness trip.

More specifically, one respondent (R11) illustrated that the main benefits sought from such trips are relaxation, distress from daily life, nourishment of mind and body. For this participant (R11) the social element didn’t add to the experience. Another participant (R10) said the main benefits sought after wellness trips is to get away from daily activities and dedicate time to hobbies and activities, not possible in daily life.

Another participant (R3) described the benefits as such “relaxation, disconnection from routine, a brake from crazy life, peace, clean the mind as wellness share the experience, and escape from daily life”. Similarly, respondent (R5) emphasized the following benefits:

“Inner fulfillment, forget about the troubles, have a spiritual connection with God...discharge negative energy, recharge batteries...if I’m happy this is wellness for me...I like the adventure that gives me physical fulfillment...I feel health...amusement...the mere sight of exploring novel places contributes to personal happiness”.

Other respondents noted “I would like to visit a new place...I would like to go to some place back in time...some place remote where I can be at peace...no phone connection...complete isolation...I wand to better myself...physically speaking...and them mentally...strengthen my mind...I learned a lot of meditation techniques...breathing techniques and memorization techniques“(R7).

More particularly, one participant stated “wellness is always an asset...if you do it is good for you...you can inspire other people...to a safe place...with a good ambiance...I would opt it...there should be some kind of certifications...you can check from the label itself...if it is something related to health...it would be certified from a medical association...I would also check the hygiene of the accommodation...“(R9).
4.1.3. Conative-oriented themes

In the ultimate round of the interviews, participants were asked about the travel organization and purchase decision process in the context of wellness tourism.

Peers’ recommendations

Millennials in this study relied heavily on peers’ recommendations and online travel reviews throughout organizing and planning a wellness trip. In particular, the overwhelming majority of the respondents stated that friends’ and family recommendations are a trustworthy and credible source of travel information. Indeed, one respondent (R10) stated “I mean I would take into consideration the opinion of my friends if I already know the country” and another respondent (R8) similarly noted “recommendations from friends if someone has actually been there and you talk to this person it’s always a better recommendation “

Celebrities’ endorsement

However, when asked about the effect of celebrities’ endorsement on the travel behavior, the majority replied that they are unswayed by this type of advertisement. In fact, one respondent (P2) uttered “I think they are so fake…I want to see other people…I don’t care about likes or comments”, whilst another participant (P3) agreed by explaining “I trust more my friends than celebrities…I’m not sure if they are really honest or if they are just promoting”. Indeed, another respondent (R4) illustrated that friends’ opinions are more reliable than celebrities and further remarked “I trust more friends that celebrities…if I want to go to a place it is because someone told me that it is a good place and I trust.” Similarly, for another participant (R11) celebrities didn’t impact the travel choice, with the exception of advertisements from athletes, which were perceived as more truthful. Respondent (R10) also remarked “I would probably not go over famous people… I would not say that just because they post it I would decide to go there”.

Online reviews

In total, online reviews played a significant role in the travel decision process, nevertheless with some conflicting views.
More specifically, one respondent (P5) indicated that online reviews are trustworthy and therefore relied on them for travel information. In a contradictory response, one participant (R1) illustrated “…there are so many fake reviews…20 percent of all reviews are fake…you don’t know how reliable they are…so you can’t trust…you don’t know which ones are fake or not”.

More in particular, another participant (P2) pointed out “…if I want to see a hotel review I go to Trip Advisor… I don’t trust blogs there is too much sponsoring…I would read the reviews in hotels sites…you have to be critical”.

Besides, another participant (R3) explained, “My main channel to investigate is Internet. If the place is a far away place then I use to buy Lonely Planet guide…because they have very good references…for hotels I only take a look Booking because it’s one of the most cheapest I would say… and also Trip Advisor…then I see all the opinions…people don’t write the comments they upload photos…is a good channel to select…”

Another respondent (R5) said that friends’ recommendations are more convenient than online reviews, while another (R11) expressed certain doubts in relation to the authenticity and credibility specifically stating “if they only have bad reviews then it says something…only really good reviews would make me skeptical…if there is a mix I guess it is fine… Finally, another participant (R3) specified that online reviews are sincere and reliable, especially in Trip Advisor, a platform where people upload real photos.

**Communicating wellness travel experiences**

When asked about communicating their experiences whether by leaving reviews or in social media after completing a trip, some respondents commented that they would rather communicate their experiences in person, and not in social media communities, while others indicated that they leave reviews on certain occasions.

In particular, one respondent (R7) noted “I put state in Instagram…I don’t put posts so much…I’m not very social media active…but I would put a story …with a pictures and a video…Instagram and Snapchat…not Facebook…social media everyone uses
it you don’t want to feel left out… I use it for browsing but not to post… only for travelling”.

Another respondent (R3) said “I’m not very open to social media… in this instance I prefer to do it personally… this is not the way to communicate my experiences”, whilst participant (R1) also expressed a reluctance to share travel experiences in social media, displaying a preference to leave reviews for either very low quality or exceptional service rather than average or mediocre travel experiences. Similarly, participant (R11) noted “I’m not a big Instagram person… I leave reviews only for really good or really bad experiences”, further clarifying that Airbnb is a platform, which motivates (R11) to leave reviews, on account of the fact that the communication in this accommodation booking platform is more personal. Another respondent (R2) felt committed to leave bad reviews in order to warn other people against a bad travel experience. More particularly, another participant (R8) indicated in reference to leaving reviews “I would do it if the owners ask me to write a review… then I would probably write one”. In fact, one respondent (R10) explained that leaving reviews feels more justifiable to do so for smaller businesses, which need the publicity.

Social Media

One participant (R1) noted, “Social media is a waste of time”, highlighting that travel blogs online reviews and more genuine and honest. Likewise, another respondent (R4) noted “I prefer family ad friends as a source of information… social media… I don’t like social media… it doesn’t reflect the reality… it is exaggerating… Instagram or Facebook I don’t trust… not for booking a trip”. Indeed, several participants remarked that social media don’t serve as a source of information when travelling, with one respondent (R2) saying that “ I don’t trust picks… they are not trustworthy… it is an unnecessary thing in your life”, and several others agreeing that social media are not trustworthy, and hence they rely on other sources of information, such as Wikipedia, participants’ (R4) preferred choice, and travel magazines, and guides for another respondent (R3) respectively.
Yet, some participants illustrated that social media served as a means of travel inspiration. Precisely, participant (R8) stated “If feel like there are more advertisements and less content…I’m not really much a social media poster…I would prefer to do it in person…if I would post I would probably do it in Instagram just 1- 2 pictures from the holidays I want to keep my life private” while others (R11) indicated “I love using Pinterest and Instagram…I’m a visual person…pictures make me want to decide…”(R11) “Instagram makes me feel I enjoy my life…personal wellness…it makes me feel alive”(R5).

**Accommodation**

In this research, millennials indicated that the accommodation’s standards don’t play a crucial role in planning a wellness trip. In fact, one respondent (R11) remarked that when travelling for wellness, the accommodation is of secondary importance, unless planning to spend more time in the hotel resorts. Yet, (R11) stressed the importance of sanitation standards in reference to the hotel accommodation. Likewise, another respondent (R5) emphasized that the hygiene, sanitation, along with the location’s security, and the budget exerted the most significant influence on the purchase decision. Likewise, participants (R4) and (R3) stated that the sanitation standards play the most important role in booking an accommodation, rather than the luxury. Indeed, another respondent (R3) stated “it doesn’t have to be luxurious…clean and comfortable”.

Another participant (R5) illustrated that the attractiveness of the location plays a more important role than the hotel accommodation. Likewise, participant (R3) indicated that the authenticity of the place is the most significant consideration, when planning a trip, followed by the flights and accommodation booking respectively. Nonetheless, this respondent (R3) stressed that the cost impacted the final travel purchase decision. Nevertheless, those participants who travelled for yoga indicated that when travelling for wellness, the location, the quality of the resort, together with the instructors’ professional accreditations are the most significant considerations.
Participant (R1) indicated that the environment and location of the accommodations is very important for a wellness trip, pointing out that busy cities for instance are not an ideal location for a wellness travel experience. Similarly, another participant (R10) illustrated that an easy to access location is the most important consideration aside from the cost further stating “I’m very price sensitive…if I would have the money I would prefer the luxury…I would like to have good showers not dirty…I don’t have to be in luxury”.

Moreover, one respondent (R2) noted “I don’t care if it’s bad service…the location is very important…and the activities…for me nature is a place where I can relax very easily”. Another respondent illustrated “…You have to compromise in certain places…you can’t expect 5-star hotels wherever you go you have to compromise… I think it’s believe its part of the betterment… being out of your comfort zone learning to compromise…it needs to be cheap because I’m a student” (R7).

Finally, millennials in this research noted that the politeness of the hotel personnel didn’t exert significant influence on the customer satisfaction or guest loyalty. In particular, one respondent (R1) stated, “I would not travel to meet a certain person again”. Likewise, another participant (R11) remarked, “no I don’t care about the staff that much to be honest because you don’t have that much to do with them so…no I wouldn’t care about the staff and mostly I didn’t experience any bad things with staff because mostly they rely on you and your money so they are mostly nice anyways … and I mean as long as you are nice to people they are nice to you”.

**Accommodation booking platforms**

The results of this study revealed that the accommodation when travelling for wellness is less important than the wellness activity and the destination attractiveness. What is more, millennials in this study were found to utilize exclusively 2 specific platforms, namely Airbnb, and Booking.

Precisely, participant (R6) stated that Booking contains attractive offers, at a reasonable price, while respondent (R4) explained that booking is a trustworthy platform, very easy to use, and the best way for booking an accommodation. In
particular, another respondent (R3) illustrated “Booking is one of the cheapest, also Trip Advisor, I use it just to select, then I see the opinion, I book through Booking, it’s cheaper”. Indeed, participant (R5) indicated that Booking, besides offering cheap, affordable, and practical offerings, is a platform very easy to navigate, and another respondent (R8) also noted that Booking is the most favorite booking platform.

Besides Booking, another popular accommodation booking platform for millennials in this research was found to be Airbnb. In fact, the majority utilized this platform frequently when travelling, indicating benefits such as affordability, and ease of access, with respondent (R10) describing the experience in this platform only as positive. Besides, respondent (R7) stated “I check Airbnb and Booking usually…Airbnb it’s more user friendly you can ask directly the owner”.

Moreover, 4 out of 11 respondents, who travel for fitness activities illustrated that they prefer to book small privately rented cottages, bed & breakfast in rural areas, Yet, the overwhelming majority indicated that they book accommodation through those accommodation-booking platform, namely Airbnb, and booking.

**Wellness Activity**

In this study, participants pursued mainly yoga and meditation trips, recreational trips, i.e. spa and pampering activities, along with physical fitness activities, namely, hiking, surfing, scuba diving, and skiing. More precisely, 4 out of 11 respondents travelled for yoga and meditation, whereas 3 out of 11 participants for fitness, i.e. hiking, and skiing, and the remainder for spa pampering treatments, surfing, and scuba-diving.

What was found to be common among the respondents was the spontaneity in purchasing as well as the cost of the activity, which exerted the most significant influence on the fitness enthusiasts, and less on the spa and yoga tourists, who considered the quality more important than the price.

More specifically, the respondents who travelled for yoga, or massage treatments illustrated that the professional accreditations of the instructors and spa personnel
were of prime consideration. More precisely, one respondent (R1) stated “I think it’s difficult to evaluate if a company has a good quality or not because there are so much in Internet you can book for wellness travelling…You need good instructors with experience…I mean it’s so easy to get any certificate on the Internet but this doesn’t prove that the quality of the teaching is good…it’s very important to have to have qualified instructors so that they don’t harm the travellers…every person is different…every person needs to be treated differently depending on the personal circumstances”.

More in particular, one respondent (R5) expressed indisposition to pay more for wellness activities previously experienced, further stating “if there is a novel activity then I don’t compromise the price because it’s new experience”. Another participant (R3) highlighted that the flexibility of the time schedule of the spa treatments is important, stating “it’s amazing to access during the night…8pm…”

Another respondent (R10) indicated that when travelling for a specific wellness activity the novelty isn’t that important illustrating further “for ski for example the novelty isn’t important for me…I want to go to a place I know it’s good quality and I will have fun and good time…a good value…I don’t need the novelty”.

Yet, another (R9) pointed out “It should be a mix…not just hiking…hiking to a place where you can meditate…mental and physical should be mix and match…people should know the importance of both…”

Another respondent (R7) illustrated “I would search of ratings…in terms of qualifications…social media, Instagram, Pinterest, Redid…but not just the pictures…if you are going for healing…you would need to know the qualifications”.

For participant (R3) the main considerations in reference to the wellness activities selection process were described as follows:

“On the one hand maybe the schedules are important for me…maybe some time you need to combine this activity with others…so for me is amazing you can access these kind of places at strange hours you visit the city then you access to strange hours…like during the night during the day you spend the time visiting the city and then you can go at like 8pm maybe you can spend 2 hours swimming…”
Personalized Trips

When participants were asked about ready-made wellness travel packages, the majority perceived packages as costly, and hence declared that they preferred to personalize the trips themselves.

In fact, one respondent (R11) stated “I hate packages, I like to do it piece by piece, I hate someone structuring the day for me”, and another participant (R2) also noted “I would prefer to do it myself...I like the control...not travel agency...I would organize it myself instead of taking something fixed” Likewise, participant (R3) uttered “I’d rather organize it myself...if it is a good price then yes” and another participant (R10) noted” I never go through a travel agent I like organizing it on my own and it doesn’t cost anything”.

Nonetheless, another participant (R5) indicated that a ready-made package offered at a low budget would trigger a purchase, stating, “I always go for the shortcut”.

Future wellness travel scenario

In the ultimate round of the interviews, the respondents were asked to comment on future travel preferences and expectations.

In particular, one respondent (R1) noted “I don’t like visiting places for the second time...I like new experiences... a new element...environment...I can do the same activity but in a new place...it’s better investment for your money...why pay for the same thing?...It is important to discover something new when travelling for wellness”. This respondent (R1) further illustrated that for yoga trips the cultural aspects of the destination as well as the hotel facilities don't impact considerably the purchase decision. Another participant (R3) identified the destination attractiveness, the authenticity of the place, along with the culture, the diversity of activities, and local gastronomy as the main drivers in future wellness trips. “I would travel again in the future, to learn more, for relaxation...the destination is key...I know that spas are everywhere” further clarifying further that only for an outstanding offering the destination wouldn't impact the travel decision. Additionally, another respondent
(R10) indicated “I always try to go to different places…I don’t go to Trip Advisor because everyone goes there…I like to go to more private places…get a real feeling of the culture not like the fake overpriced…in general I’m excited in seeing new staff…experiencing difference cultures…going on an adventure…I don’t like to do the very touristy things…more private places not too crowded”.

In effect, millennials in this study were found to seek novelty and diversity of activities when travelling for wellness. Specifically, one respondent (R5) indicated “the more I have variety the more I enjoy myself…place is more important than hotel”, adding further that the safety of the location is yet another important consideration. Similarly, another respondent (R8) stated that in the future the novelty of the destination would shape the wellness travel decision respectively, and another (R2) illustrating that the experience of something new plays the most important role. Moreover, another participant (R8) noted that the variety and diversity of activities positively affect the travel decision with a lack thereof translating to boredom. Likewise, several respondents (R4, R11) replied that the novelty, and diversity of activities primarily shape the wellness trip decision. One participant (R11) stressed that the cost of such trips is pricey, and hence unaffordable.

Besides, some participants associated such type of travelling with stress relief and relaxation, which isn’t that much needed at this life stage. In fact, one respondent (R1) indicated, “the need for relaxation becomes more evident when working”, with several participants (R8, R11) agreeing that wellness trips are more needed when working.

What is more, for another participant (R6) it is the attractiveness of the destination, followed by the accommodation that exerts the most significant influence on a wellness trip further indicating “the most important factor for me to be physically tired at the end of the day…the price of course…it’s related to the price most of the time…maximum 200 euros for a week…” The respondent (R6) also illustrated that when travelling for a specific wellness activity, it is the activity that outweighs the aforementioned factors.
Another respondent (R10) noted that when travelling for wellness the environment and location are important, along with the quality of the offerings, further indicating “for me personally I would rather have less things offered because then I know it’s good quality…rather than have too many options…I feel people can focus more on things…I feel like if they have less they can do a better work on maintaining everything keeping things in good quality…it should be about relaxing and when you have too many options maybe you are overwhelmed”.

For respondent (R7) the most important element in planning a wellness trip is to find trustworthy information and at the same time good price adding further “I would refer to word-of mouth…first you find your purpose and then you fit anything else according to you purpose.

To sum up, millennials in this study associated wellness with physical, mental, and spiritual elements, along with spa pampering treatments.

The majority perceived wellness tourism as a healthy type of tourism, yet with some participants stating that it is costly, and unnecessary at this life stage.

The most important considerations in planning a wellness trip ranged from the cost, and destination’s attractiveness, to the element of novelty and variety of activities.

More precisely, the fitness enthusiasts expressed price sensitivity and budget consciousness to a greater extent that the yoga travellers, who placed emphasis on the overall quality of the trip, specifically in terms of the instructors’ professional accreditations and extended experience.

What is more, the participants in this study relied primarily on peers’ recommendations, and online reviews, although some perceived online reviews as fake and unreliable. The findings if this study also indicated that the respondents were motivated to leave reviews either for high quality travel experiences or really unsatisfactory ones, rather than average wellness travel experiences.

Social media advertising and celebrities endorsement didn’t exert any significant influence on the purchase decision, with the majority illustrating that such types of promotion are not genuine and deceptive.
The most popular accommodation booking platforms were found to be Booking and Airbnb, due to ease of use, and affordable offerings. More in particular, social media were utilized mainly for travel inspiration, especially Instagram and Pinterest. Further, millennial travellers in this research opted for adventurous, authentic, novel and personalized travel experiences, whilst seeking benefits such as escapism from daily life, relaxation, discharge of negative feelings, and experiencing feelings ranging from happiness, excitement, and peacefulness to tiredness and bittersweet nostalgia. Finally, the respondents narrated prior wellness trips, ranging from to yoga and meditation in India, Spain, and Nicaragua, hiking and skiing in Austria, to scuba diving in Egypt, surfing in Brazil, and spa pampering in Blue Lagoon, in Iceland, together with public thermal springs in Japan.

5. Discussion

The objective of this chapter is to build upon the key findings of this study with the aim of extracting insightful information, which will enable the reader to obtain a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the attitudinal characteristics of millennials wellness tourists. To this end, this section outlines the core insights generated from the series of interviews and deconstructs the attitude of this generational segment based on the theoretical model employed, which involved the cognitive, affective, and conative components.

Through scrutinizing the interview transcripts, retrieved from 11 rounds of interviews, significant statements and meaningful units of information emerged, which were clustered into thematic categories. Hereafter follows a report of this research’s results, structured into three main thematic categories, namely the cognitive, the affective, and the conative respectively.

5.1. Cognitive Component

In the initial round of the interviews research respondents were asked about the mental associations in reference to the notion of wellness, opinions about wellness tourism, and wellness tourists in general as well thoughts about previous wellness travel experiences.
It was interesting to observe that millennials in this inquiry associated the concept of wellness with mental, and physical relaxation, pampering spa treatments, yoga or more vigorous physical activities i.e. hiking, skiing.

Millennials in this study also reported that they regard wellness tourists as open-minded individuals, highly conscious of their physical and mental health as well as those individuals travelling for wellness on a very frequent basis.

The results of this research also revealed that wellness tourism, although perceived as a healthful, and rejuvenating type of travel, respondents in this study consider wellness trips high-priced. It is possible that the high cost inhibits millennials in this study from travelling more often, and that a lower price would likely prompt more frequent wellness trips.

5.1.2. Affective Component
In the second round of the interviews, respondents were asked about the benefits they seek when travelling for wellness along with the emotions experienced.

Some reported escape from daily life, stress relieved, and relaxation, while others mentioned spiritual connection, inner fulfillment, living in the moment, discharge of negative feelings, and reflection about the future as main benefits sought from a wellness trip.

Most common feelings experienced when travelling for wellness ranged from peacefulness, excitement, enthusiasm, passion, and happiness, to physical exhaustion, nostalgia, and sadness.

It is clear from these responses that millennials in this study are conscious of their health, and appreciate the psychological benefits wellness travelling entails.

5.1.3. Conative Component
In the ultimate round of the interviews research participants were asked about the travel decision process and purchase behavior.

The study's findings indicated that when it comes to travelling for wellness peers' recommendations and online reviews constituted the most significant sources of
information and exerted a considerable influence on millennials' travel decision. In particular, participants in this research revealed that the opinion of friends and family along with online reviews in travel blogs and communities were perceived as the most credible sources of information, and hence played the most important role in the buying behavior.

However, in conflicting responses, some respondents reported that they regard online reviews as fake, exaggerated, and unrealistic, whereas others didn't express concerns or doubts.

Another finding of this study relates to the stronger inclination towards spreading positive online reviews rather than negative. It is unclear why millennials in this study are less motivated about leaving negative reviews. Possibly after conducting their trips, respondents are more encouraged to leave a positive review.

Research participants were also asked whether celebrities’ endorsement or social media influencers had an impact on the travel purchase decision. Although millennials are constantly connected, and active in social media platforms, the study demonstrated that millennials in this study remained unswayed by celebrities or Internet influencers. It is possible that respondents consider social media and celebrity advertising not genuine and far-fetched. Clearly, millennials opt for personalized travel experiences and strongly dislike ready-made packages.

A substantial relationship was found between the cost and the buying behavior. In fact, millennials in this inquiry were conspicuously price sensitive and budget conscious, nevertheless, quality conscious. More particularly, millennial yoga tourists in this research reported that the instructors’ professional accreditations were more important than the cost, and hence nonnegotiable, as opposed to the price sensitive sports enthusiasts. Yet, in reference to accommodation standards, almost all the respondents stated that beside the price, sanitation, safety, and location played a more important role than luxury.

In line with previous studies (Pentescu, 2016; Fromm, 2017; Sofronov, 2018) millennials in this research sought authenticity, and novelty when travelling. More precisely, the results of this study pointed to a desire to immerse with the local
culture, in an attractive, yet safe destination, which offers a wealth of activities.

To recap, millennials in this study associated the concept of wellness with mental, and physical relaxation, as well as fitness and sports. The act of travelling for wellness was perceived as a salutary, and revitalizing type of tourism, yet costly. The findings indicated that escapism from daily life, and stress relief, were the benefits, sought, and the sentiments experienced from wellness travelling involved peacefulness, excitement, happiness, and nostalgia.

Yoga tourists in this research were less budget conscious and price sensitive than the sports enthusiasts, with the former group placing more emphasis on the quality of the yoga experience, and the latter considering the cost of the trip to a greater extent.

Lastly, peer recommendations and online reviews played a significant role in the travel decision process, as against celebrities’ endorsements and social media advertising.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter the reader will be provided with information regarding the conclusion drawn from this study, along with theoretical and managerial implications derived from this research, and limitations and future study.

6.1. Answer to the research question

In conclusion, this research purported to gain a better understanding on millennials’ wellness tourists’ attitude. To this end, an exploratory, qualitative research comprised of 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews was conducted, based on an interview guide of a list of cognitive, affective, and conative oriented questions.

The study indicated that this generational cohort associates the concept of wellness with fitness and sports, yoga, along with sauna, and pampering spa treatments. The destination appeared to be a major driver in the travel decision process, yet the accommodation didn’t exert an important influence on the purchase behavior, given
that the overwhelming majority stated that luxurious facilities weren’t as significant as safety, sanitation, and affordability.

In fact, the research revealed that the millennium generation is extremely price sensitive and budget conscious, and steer clear of purchasing ready-made packages, which were perceived as costly.

What is more, based on the study’s findings, millennials prefer personalizing the wellness trips themselves rather than relying on travel agents. More importantly, this study confirmed that this age cohort trusts the opinion and recommendations of friends and family, to a great extent. In particular, celebrities’ endorsements, along with social media influencers were found to exert negligible influence on the purchase behavior.

In addition, this study shed light on the most popular communication platforms, among millennial wellness travellers. More precisely, the research demonstrated that Airbnb, Booking, and Trip Advisor, were perceived as trustworthy and credible sources of information to resort to for booking accommodation.

Aligned with prior studies (Pentescu, 2016; Fromm, 2017; Sofronov, 2018) authenticity, novelty and adventure played an important role in millennials’ travel behavior. In particular, this study reveal that in the future this age cohort would opt for a novel destination, which offers a wide diversity of activities, and follow the decision process earlier noted, as regards the planning and booking preparation.

To finish up, the main benefits sought during wellness travelling included enhanced health, relaxation, escape from daily life, happiness and connection with nature, while the emotions experienced throughout the trip ranged from excitement, enthusiasm, peacefulness, to nostalgia, and tiredness, yet positively.

6.2. Theoretical and managerial implications
6.2.1. Theoretical Implications
As earlier noted, the wellness industry has transformed over the last decade into a multi billion business, sparking the interest of not only the business world but also of the academia. In fact, prior research and academic articles have centered on
wellness tourism in a broader context, with the vast majority of papers focusing on the Baby Boomers.

The uniqueness of this study lies in narrowing the scope of this research on the millennium generation, which constitutes a lucrative market in tourism industry, and hence justifies the need to fill a gap in the academic literature.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the tourism academic literature, by investigating a niche category, namely wellness tourism and further adds knowledge to consumer theories of travel behavior, expanding on the theory of attitude in a travel context.

6.2.2. Managerial Implications

Wellness Industry stakeholders and key players in tourism are advised to target this age cohort with affordable offerings, given millennials’ price sensitivity and budget consciousness. It should be noted, however, that for yoga enthusiasts the accreditations and professional experience of the instructors was more important than the cost. It would be therefore prudent to make visible the yoga instructors’ professional certifications both online and offline, in order to enhance trust and safety.

What is more, ready-made packages didn’t appeal to this generation. In fact, the research demonstrated that millennials opt for personalized, authentic experiences, and are strongly inclined to customize their trips. As such, marketing specialists and tourism professionals are recommended to develop tailor-made offerings, which cater to this cohort’s unique tastes and needs.

More importantly, the study’s results indicated that the element of novelty and variety in terms of activities played an important role in millennials’ wellness travel behavior. Thus, wellness industry professionals could aim for a diverse array of activities in the offerings.

It was also evident that this generational cohort relied on peers’ recommendations and online reviews prior to travelling. Besides word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, the research indicated that online reviews exerted a significant influence in the purchase decision. In fact, millennials in this study considered Trip Advisor a trustworthy and reliable source of travel information. Yet, this cohort appeared to be rather cautious
of online reviews, since the overwhelming majority of the research participants expressed concerns about the validity and credibility of online rankings, annotating that numerous reviews are paid and hence fake and exaggerated. Hence, it isn’t advisable to use paid online reviews as a promotional tool, since millennials value originality above all and would rather shape realistic expectations regarding a wellness trip.

More importantly, industry experts are recommended to personalize the advertising messages according to the type of wellness activities and benefits sought. For instance for the yoga tourists, emphasis should be placed on the instructors’ professional qualifications, whereas for the spa tourists on the resort’s amenities and location’s attractiveness respectively.

The findings of this research revealed that this generational cohort relied on peers’ recommendations and travel communities’ online reviews for information. Accordingly, managers are recommended to incentivize millennials to leave reviews in the form of discounts. Besides, the findings of this study also demonstrated that celebrities’ endorsement and Facebook advertisements didn’t impact this age cohort’s travel purchase behavior.

Finally, based on the research’ findings, industry stakeholders and marketing experts are advised to invest on digital marketing strategies, namely search engine optimization (SEO) and Ad words, to improve the organic reach, and drive prospective clients to companies’ websites.

6.3. Limitations

Limitations in research are an inevitable component, and merit further discussion.

As previously noted, this study focused on a narrowly defined market, namely the millennium generation, and hence findings of this study cannot be construed as representative or generalizable to broader populations. More specifically, 11 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted upon a non-probability convenience sample, of university graduate students. Furthermore, given the research participants’ multinational profile, the interviews were carried out in
English, which might have acted as a language barrier, inhibiting the authenticity of the respondents’ responses, up to a certain extent.

Ultimately, due to time constraints, the research was delimited on specific subgroups of wellness tourism, namely recreational/leisure tourism, spa tourism, as well as yoga and meditation tourism.

6.4. Future Research

Future studies could expand the scope of the research across diverse geographic regions, by conducting cross-cultural studies, and examine the profiles and behavioral patterns of wellness tourists, based on distinct ethnic and cultural values. By doing so, wellness industry stakeholders and marketing specialists could better customize and communicate the offerings by region, according to the unique meanings and expectations each attributes to wellness tourism. For example, a yoga and meditation tourist in India might seek different experiences from a recreational/leisure tourist in Latin America and so forth.

Also, it is interesting to investigate the tourists’ profiles of health and wellness tourism subcategories, namely medical tourism and spa tourism, and underline any subtle differences in terms of the travel decision process, behavior and expectations. For instance, by detecting the factors that exert influence on the purchase decision, tour operators could create personalized packages that cater to the particular needs, tastes, and preferences of wellness tourists across various, and diverse categories.

What is more, in the future researchers are also advised to narrow the study based on socio-demographics, such as age, gender, and education, to add to the accuracy and precision of the findings. Another recommendation is to utilize the wellness activities, as a segmentation tool, that is, sports activities, i.e. hiking, biking, skiing, yoga and meditation activities, i.e. yoga, meditation, pampering activities, i.e. spa, thermal and hot springs. As such, wellness industry experts could accentuate on the benefits and experiences sought of each segment in their communication and promotional material.
Additionally, further research could dig into factors such as the country-of-origin (COO) image and destination attractiveness, alongside the accommodation amenities. Further, it is worthwhile inquiring into the effect of online reviews, peers’ recommendations and eWOM marketing on wellness tourists. Finally, from an academic perspective, research in the future could utilize different theoretical frameworks ranging from psychoanalytic and values theories, to motivation theories, whilst from a research methodological standpoint, researchers could employ mixed research methods, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies, and increase research’ validity.

7. References


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Montevago, J. (2018). Wellness Tourism: Four Trends To Expect in the Coming


8. Appendix
8.1.1. Interview Guide

Section 1: Cognitive-oriented questions

Q1: When you hear the term wellness in general, what is the first thing that enters your mind?

Q2: What do you think of wellness travel? What do your think of wellness travellers? Can you describe your wellness travel behavior? Can you elaborate further? Would you describe yourself as a wellness traveler?

Q3: Can you describe a recent wellness travel experience you had? Any specific activities that you partake in, and how do you usually choose them?

Q4: Why do you travel for wellness? What benefits do you seek from this experience?

Q5: What do you think the most important factors are in a wellness trip?

Section 2: Affective-oriented questions

Q6: How did it feel when organizing your wellness trip? Any memories you would like to share?

Q7: Would you describe yourself feeling better after the trip and more motivated to
pursue health-enhancing activities like the one(s) you mentioned earlier?

Q8: How do you feel when traveling? What emotions you experience?

Q9: How do you feel after the trip?

**Section 3: Conative-oriented questions**

Q10: Before organizing a wellness trip, can you describe the process you normally follow?

Q11: Are there any specific channels of communication you usually refer to before organizing your wellness travel package?

Q12: During a trip, consumers usually evaluate if the service purchase was a good value for money. Can you remember a wellness travel experience that was too satisfactory as to desire to repeat again in the future? Can you describe more?

Q13: Can you remember of a wellness travel experience that was not according to your initial expectations? Can you elaborate further?

Q14: How did you select the wellness activities during the trip? Were there any specific factors that influenced your decision?

Q15: Assuming that your had a positive wellness travel experience, and you wish to share it with your trusted circle of friends and/or family, would you prefer to do so in a particular online community?

Q16: Would you be motivated to travel for wellness again in the future? Can you indicate the main reasons influencing your wellness travel behavior?

### 8.1.2. Interview transcripts

Upon request

### 9. List of Tables

#### 9.1. Table 2.2.1. Wellness Consumers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well beings</th>
<th>Health is a priority, low concern for price &amp; brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Actives</td>
<td>Highly concerned with balanced nutrition, &amp; exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic Bullets</td>
<td>Opt for fast healthy solutions, such as health supplements, high concern for price &amp;brand image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence Sitters</td>
<td>Neutral towards health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Drink &amp; Be Merrys'</td>
<td>Not concerned with health issues, seek instant gratification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2.1. Wellness Consumers  
Source: Adapted from Kickbusch, 2003

9.2. Table 2.2.2. Millennial Wellness Tourists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ‘most-well”</td>
<td>Adventurous, novelty &amp; sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘most-unwell”</td>
<td>Fitness activities enthusiast, not keen on wellness &amp; sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “amenity-seekers”</td>
<td>Clean, comfortable facilities, variety of activities &amp; sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “after-hours”</td>
<td>Nightlife venues &amp; not interested in socializing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “escapers”</td>
<td>Escapism from daily life &amp; not interested in socializing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2.2. Millennial Wellness Tourists  
Source: Adapted from Hritz, Sidman & D’Abundo, 2014

9.3. Table 2.3.1. Millennials subgroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hipennial</td>
<td>cautious, global, charitable, &amp; information hungry, social media use for entertainment rather than contributing content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old School Millennial</td>
<td>disconnected, cautious, and charitable, least amount of time online spent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadget-Guru</td>
<td>successful, wired, &amp; free-spirited, greatest device ownership &amp; active social media content contributor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean and Green Millennial</td>
<td>impressionable, cause driven, healthy, &amp; green, greatest contributor of content especially cause-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Mom</td>
<td>wealthy, family-oriented, digitally-savvy &amp; sociable, high online presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Millennial</td>
<td>locally minded, conservative, seeking comfort, &amp; familiarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3.1. Millennials subgroups  
Source: Adapted from Fromm and Garton, 2013

9.4. Table 3.1. Participants’ demographics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>51', 22''</td>
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<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Swedish</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Ski &amp; Hiking</td>
<td>34', 42''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Spa</td>
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<td>R4</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Austrian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Hiking &amp; Surf</td>
<td>36', 53''</td>
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<td>R5</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>R6</td>
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<td>French</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Skiing &amp; Hiking</td>
<td>29', 49''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Meditation &amp; Yoga</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>30', 36''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Meditation &amp; Yoga</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Skiing &amp; Spa</td>
<td>51', 16''</td>
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<td>R11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Hiking &amp; Yoga</td>
<td>50'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Participants’ demographics

9.5. Table 3.2. Academic Literature Review

Academic Literature Review

Wellness tourism

Table 3.2. Academic Literature Review

10. List of Figures
10.1. Integrated theoretical framework

![Diagram](attachment:Integrated_theoretical_framework.png)

Figure 2.1. Integrated CAC theoretical model: Tourist Attitude

10.2. Figure 2.1.1. Wellness Consumers
Figure 2.2.1. Wellness Consumers
Source: Adapted from Kickbusch, 2003

10.3. Figure 2.2.2. Wellness Travellers

Primary Wellness Travellers
- Spa resorts
- Wellness cruises
- Hot springs resorts
- Meditation & Yoga retreats

Secondary Wellness Traveller
- Sports & Adventure (eco-spa after hiking or biking)
- Business Tourism (day & weekend spa)
- Cultural/arts (spa, beauty)

Figure 2.2.2. Wellness Travellers
Source: Adapted from GWI/Global Wellness Tourism Economy, 2018

10.4. Figure 2.2.3. Millennial Wellness Tourists
10.5. Figure 2.2.4. Global Wellness Economy

Figure 2.2.4. Global Wellness Economy
Source: Adapted from GWI/Global Wellness Economy Monitor, 2018

10.6. Figure 2.3.1. Millennials subgroups
Figure 2.3.1. Millennials subgroups
Source: Adapted from Fromm and Garton, 2013

10.7. Figure 2.3.2. Millennial Travellers

Figure 2.3.2. Millennial Travellers
Source: Adapted from Cavagnaro, Staffieri, & Postma, 2018

10.8. Figure 3.1. A framework for research: the Interconnection of worldviews, research design, and research methods
Figure 3.1. A framework for research: the Interconnection of worldviews, research design, and research methods
Source: adapted from Creswell, 2013