

# Forest Path Treatment Method to Promote Wellness Tourism: Concept Paper for Economic Development in Sri Lanka

Anoma Rathnayaka

Department of Sport Science and Physical Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya-  
Sri Lanka

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2025.10060062>

Received: 02 June 2025; Accepted: 06 June 2025; Published: 09 July 2025

## ABSTRACT

Tourism makes a direct contribution to the economic development of a country. For this, creative and quality projects are being implemented in various countries of the world. Attention should be paid to new creative projects for the development of the tourism industry. It seems that both domestic and foreign tourists are interested in visiting Sri Lanka, a developing country. It is a timely need to focus on wellness activities to promote tourism in Sri Lanka, which is blessed with natural beauty and ancient cultural heritage. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the feasibility of introducing the “Forest Path Treatment Method” (FPTM) to promote tourism in Sri Lanka. Data was collected for this purpose based on literature review, participatory observation, field notes and friendly discussions with tourists. Accordingly, the concept paper has been created based on thematic analysis.

**Keywords:** Wellness Tourism, Economic Development, Sri Lanka, Forest Path Treatment Method (FPTM)

## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly urbanized world, governments and international organizations are striving to increase the productivity of cities, recognized as hubs of economic growth, as well as to ensure a better quality of life and living standards for citizens. Citizen health issues such as mental health, non-communicable disease risk, malnutrition and obesity are linked to well-being. In addition, citizens suffer from various environmental hazards such as pollution, overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate waste disposal and lack of access to safe drinking water. Nature-based approaches such as parks, green spaces, blue spaces, biodiversity and integrated approaches to the environment can be used as solutions that can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of citizens. It will have an impact on strengthening the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental environments of a country. Researchers have pointed out the need for healthy human resources to strengthen a country's economy. Through this, the potential to strengthen the local economy and earn foreign exchange should be explored. Nature-based solutions have potential in addressing mental, physical and emotional well-being. Forest bathing (Japanese: Shinrin-Yoku), which originated in Japan, is the practice of immersing oneself in a natural environment to reap its therapeutic benefits (Park, Tsunetsugu, Ishii, Furuhashi, 2008).



Tourism is a strategic economic drive that can be used to accelerate a country's economic growth. Researchers have shown that the contribution of the tourism industry to economic growth is an important factor. They have

further shown that the tourism industry attracts foreign direct investment inflows that support sustainable economic growth.

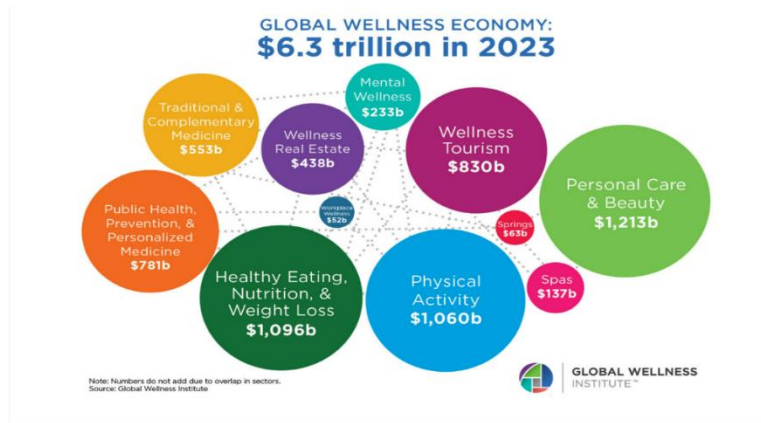


Figure 1: Global Well-Being Economy

Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner in the country and a major contributor to the Sri Lankan economy, accounting for about 5% of the country's GDP. According to Central Bank of Sri Lanka statistics, 2,053,465 tourists visited Sri Lanka in 2024, generating a revenue of \$3,168.6 million.

Tourism was identified as the third largest and fastest growing sector in Sri Lanka in 2018, after personal remittances and textile and apparel exports. It accounted for \$4.4 billion or 4.9 percent of the GDP in 2018. Sri Lanka received 1,010,249 tourists in the first six months of 2024. A significant growth of 61.6% compared to the same period in 2023 strengthens the tourism sector and highlights the need for improved global travel-driven conditions, enhanced marketing efforts and renewed tourist confidence in the destination, according to the 2024 Review released by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. Based on the statistics, an analysis of tourist arrivals has also been provided. It provides a better understanding of the factors influencing the choice of Sri Lanka for travel (Figure 02)

## Analysis of Purpose of Visit

Table 3: Analysis of purpose of visit

Country	Pleasure/ Vacation	Visiting Friends and Relatives	MICE	Business	Other or not responded (or VFS related online Visa)	Total
India	71,464	9,006	7,926	8,622	87,450	184,468
Russian Federation	69,760	786	14,481	41	29,036	114,104
United Kingdom	51,812	12,692	1,453	994	22,401	89,352
Germany	46,618	3,779	2,494	385	16,794	70,070
China	43,141	907	1,576	1,111	17,081	63,816
France	33,910	2,928	3,687	246	8,567	49,338
Australia	17,048	9,526	460	392	13,320	40,746
United States	17,834	3,995	1,052	624	9,212	32,717
Poland	16,484	168	2,502	55	4,687	23,896
Maldives	51	48	6	14	23,684	23,803

Chart 3: Tourist arrivals by purpose of visit – 2024 (Jan ~ June)

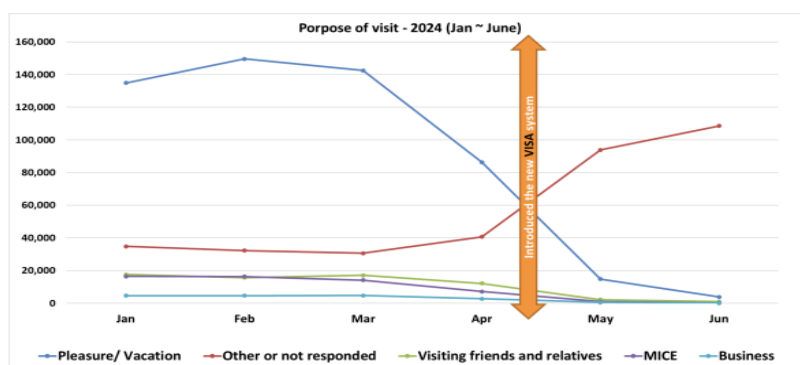


Figure 2: Global Well-Being Economy) Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority Review Reports 2024

The main attraction for tourists visiting Sri Lanka is the country's natural beauty. The diverse ecosystems including rainforests, beaches and wildlife sanctuaries, and the national parks including Yala and Udawalawe, where elephants, leopards and other wildlife can be seen, are the most popular destinations among tourists. In addition to its natural beauty, Sri Lanka is also known for its unique culture and a rich history associated with indigenous medicine.

Based on all the above, this project will study the introduction of the FPTMP to promote wellness tourism based on Sri Lanka's natural ecosystems, and the identification, development and use of "Wild Paths" nationally to enhance economic development through their sustainable use.

Therefore, this study is based on one main objective and five sub-objectives. Accordingly, the main objective is to identify the fusibility of promoting healthy tourism and specific objectives are to improve public health, conserve biodiversity, support the local economy, contribute to strengthening foreign exchange and to identify new employment opportunities

### Problem Statement

The demand for wellness tourism has grown significantly over the past decade due to the rapid increase in mental and physical health problems worldwide. Unlike traditional tourism, which often focuses on relaxation and sightseeing, many travelers focus on relaxation. Wellness tourism prioritizes experiences that enhance an individual's overall well-being. This includes activities such as yoga, massage therapy, meditation workshops, and nature-based interventions such as forest bathing.

In the post-pandemic world, the importance of wellness tourism has become even more prominent. The (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the need for mental health, stress management, and lifestyle changes, and individuals are increasingly turning to nature for solace and rejuvenation. "Forest therapy" has emerged as a beneficial activity, particularly due to its scientifically proven benefits on individual well-being and accessibility: 2022 Countries such as Japan, South Korea, Finland and the United States have already adopted "forest therapy" as a key component of their wellness tourism strategies. For example, Japan has established over 60 forest therapy trails that have been certified by their health research. Similarly, South Korea has developed healing forests as part of its national health policy and has introduced guided programs that integrate forest bathing with traditional medicine. The size, share and trends of the global wellness tourism market are growing rapidly. (Figure 03) This is being studied to see if this can be used to promote the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

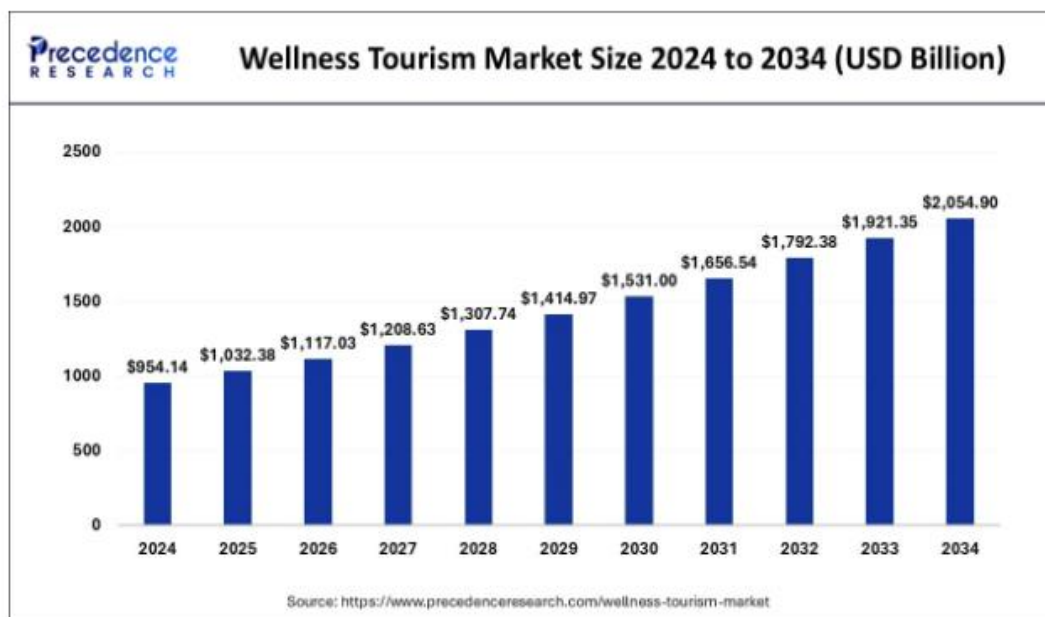


Figure 03: World Wellness Tourism Market Size, Share and Trends 2025 to 2034. Pandey, 2024

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Various business strategies are used to boost the economy of a country, where tourism holds a special place, which has the potential to achieve very high economic development. Especially for a country like Sri Lanka, the tourism industry is unique among the activities that can contribute to economic development by making the most of the resources available in the country to strengthen the economy. This is because Sri Lanka has won the attraction of many tourists from around the world. Not only the human resources for that, but also many natural resources exist in the country. Recent research has highlighted the need to develop Sri Lanka's tourism industry (Fernando, 2015). They have further pointed out that although the resources for this are naturally available in the country, they are being diverted from the country due to various circumstances (Dias et al., 2024;). Digital marketing, new destination branding, hospitality skills shortages, multilingual capabilities, and inadequate infrastructure, lack of accommodation facility, traffic, social and cultural changes, are among the areas that need to be addressed in research (Chandrasiri, 2015; Samarathunga, 2016; Semasinghe, 2016; Pathmananda Kumar, 2018; Ranasinghe et al., 2023; Vijesandiran & Kumudhini, 2024; Vijesandiran & Kumudhini, 2024). Therefore, it was revealed that the need for strategic approaches, innovative technologies, and creative communication methods for tourism promotion are areas that need to be addressed in research.

To attract tourists in a competitive market, it is important to develop businesses by making the most of a country's natural resources. Because not every country in the world has tourism businesses based on the natural environment. Many countries have created them and entered the competitive tourism market. There, tourism businesses in countries with biodiversity can occupy a special place. Gossling, 2017 has shown that there is a great interest in tourism businesses based on the natural environment. The MoMD&E, 2019 has shown that the necessary factors for this can be observed in Sri Lanka. When paying attention to the issues indicated by the United Nations Organization, 1992 on the biological components, it is clear how Sri Lanka is suitable for it. Environmental factors have a direct impact on the tourism business. Gossling, 2017 has further mentioned the interrelationship between tourism and climate change. On the other hand, Amoiradis, 2023 has explained that to create sustainable tourism, all aspects of economic, social, environmental and transversal sustainability should be covered. In the expectation of sustainable development, the relevant criteria for sustainable tourism have been introduced by focusing on sustainable components (UNESCSC, 2020).

Researchers have also drawn attention to the importance of wellness tourism for the tourism industry. Wellness tourism business opportunities, which are a current need, are not seen in every country in the world, but this will be a great help in developing tourism in countries rich in natural resources. Accordingly, "wellness tourism" has been identified as a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry, and wellness tourism has been introduced as a field that has attracted the attention of researchers in the field (Syed Ahamed Suban, 2022).

The specialty here is that it emphasizes not only social, economic, and environmental factors but also the physical and mental health of the individual (Lali Lindell et al., 2021). Yoga, meditation, traditional experiences, and resorts are among the wellness tourism trends in Asia (Tripathi & Ben Said, 2023). It has been pointed out. (Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2022) It is pointed out that through wellness tourism, physical and spiritual balance, and the resolution of chronic health problems are promoted, spa resort treatments are implemented. Through this, self-esteem and coexistence are developed (Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2022). It is pointed out. Thus, the rapid increase in the attention of researchers regarding "wellness tourism" has revealed the need for this and the importance of introducing it as an essential sector in the tourism industry through literature searches.

### Successful Wellness Tourism Initiatives

There are instances of nations all over the world that have spearheaded the promotion of wellness travel. As a result, nations like Finland, South Korea, and Japan are giving this more thought. Researchers note that the wellness tourism industry is expanding (Syed Ahamed Suban, 2022). Thus, it is evident that wellness tourism, as it is practiced in various nations, has its own distinct activities and customs. The integration of sustainable tourism strategies with natural environments is unique. For instance, the Japanese government has authorized the country's "Shinrin-yoku," or forest bathing program. As a result, the literature search showed that this is



well-liked in a lot of Japanese cities. Additionally, studies have demonstrated scientific validation and public health results.

### Average Annual Growth: Wellness Economy Versus Global GDP

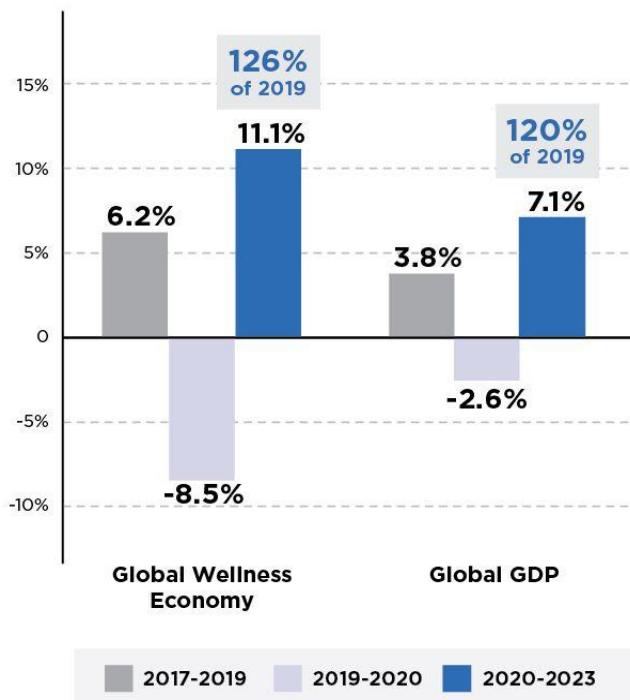


Figure 04: Average Annual Growth Rate of Wellness Economy

Researchers have also noted that one example of health tourism is wellness tourism that incorporates health. In South Korea, similar initiatives have been launched, and the government has backed the appropriate handling of the human resources needed for them. This includes government intervention and therapeutic programs run by certified counselors in the forests (Park et al., 2010; Lee & Park, 2021). Traditional practices like Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation have influenced wellness tourism, especially in India. Special wellness brands have been created, and incorporating local wellness practices into wellness tourism has helped draw tourists to locations like Kerala (Romao et al., 2022). According to the Global Wellness Institute (2024), wellness programs in places like New Zealand have included “Maori therapies” as a traditional healing method.

In their review of the literature, Tripathi and Ben Said (2023) noted the various models that have been proposed by researchers for the development of wellness tourism in rural areas. To customize wellness services based on local resources and stakeholder needs, Tripathi and Ben Said (2023) have introduced the necessity of multi-spatial levels and diversified approaches that take destination and regional factors into account. Additionally, studies have highlighted the value of wellness packages that prioritize tradition while incorporating traditional practices, outdoor experiences, and mental healing components. In addition to highlighting the need for extensions and extension systems that stress the significance of using physical, mental, spiritual, and environmental well-being, Dini and Pencarelli (2022) have suggested a clear need for wellness tourism. In order to create successful wellness tourism strategies centered on rural areas, Dini and Pencarelli (2022) have emphasized the significance of holistic approaches with traditional identity. Finland has implemented a similar program. Its primary goal is the "Everyman's Right" concept, which seeks to foster a relationship between humans and the natural world and to promote activities like sauna therapy, berry picking, and nature walks as commonplace wellness practices (Konu, 2015).

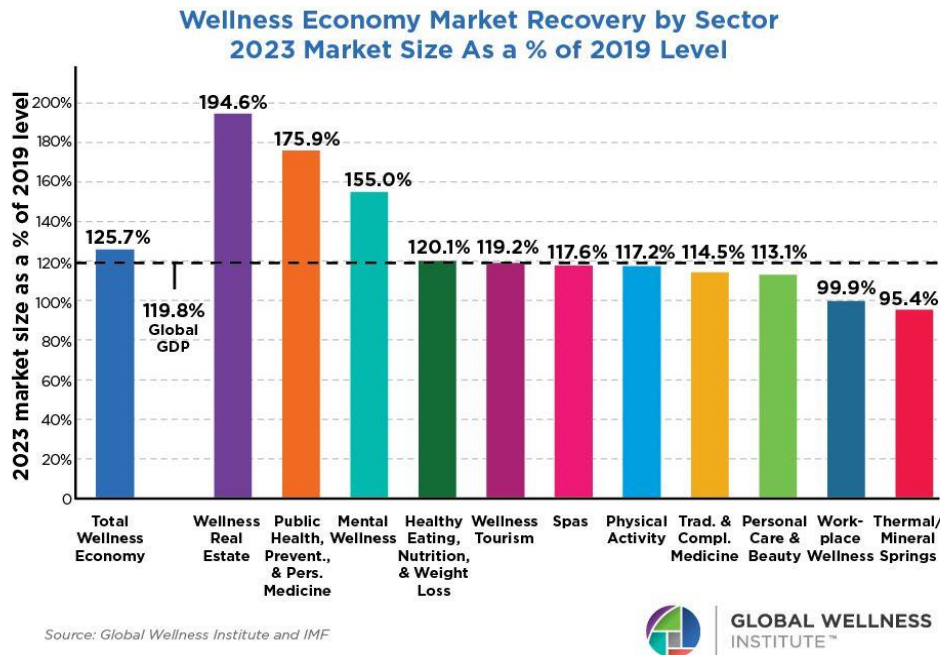


Figure 05: Wellness Economy Market Recovery by Sector

Regarding community involvement and environmental preservation, It is thought to have the potential to further the development of wellness travel. Numerous theoretical frameworks and models have been proposed for the promotion of wellness tourism, as noted by Romao et al. (2018) and Tripathi & Ben Said (2023). This demonstrates that researchers are using a variety of methodologies to examine wellness tourism activities and the ways in which these services can be offered. Global Wellness Institute, 2024; Dini and Pencarelli, 2022. They added that this will lead to holistic packages that include mental healing, nature experiences, and traditional practices.

### Wellness Economy and Size/Wealth Comparisons: Top Twenty Markets, 2020

	Wellness Economy Size		Gross Domestic Product (GDP)		Population		GDP Per Capita	
	US\$ billions	Rank	US\$ billions	Rank	millions	Rank	Current US\$	Rank
United States	\$1,215.7	1	\$20,893.8	1	329.5	3	\$59,886	8
China	\$682.7	2	\$14,866.7	2	1,402.1	1	\$8,760	76
Japan	\$303.6	3	\$5,045.1	3	125.8	11	\$38,903	25
Germany	\$223.9	4	\$3,843.3	4	83.2	18	\$44,637	18
United Kingdom	\$158.4	5	\$2,709.7	5	67.2	21	\$40,350	23
France	\$133.1	6	\$2,624.4	7	67.4	20	\$40,054	24
Canada	\$95.1	7	\$1,644.0	9	38.0	34	\$45,192	17
South Korea	\$94.1	8	\$1,638.3	10	51.8	27	\$31,601	30
Italy	\$91.8	9	\$1,884.9	8	59.6	23	\$32,649	29
Australia	\$84.4	10	\$1,359.4	13	25.7	46	\$55,915	11
Brazil	\$82.6	11	\$1,444.7	12	212.6	6	\$9,978	70
India	\$77.6	12	\$2,660.2	6	1,380.0	2	\$1,981	128
Russia	\$71.4	13	\$1,478.6	11	144.1	9	\$10,724	66
Spain	\$62.6	14	\$1,280.5	14	47.4	29	\$28,197	34
Mexico	\$46.5	15	\$1,073.9	15	128.9	10	\$9,343	73
Netherlands	\$41.0	16	\$913.1	17	17.4	54	\$48,800	13
Taiwan	\$38.4	17	\$668.2	22	23.8	47	\$25,062	38
Switzerland	\$38.2	18	\$751.9	19	8.6	78	\$83,700	2
Indonesia	\$36.4	19	\$1,059.6	16	273.5	4	\$3,885	108
Turkey	\$34.6	20	\$719.9	20	84.3	16	\$10,629	67

Source: Global Wellness Institute (based on extensive primary research and secondary data sources); IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2021 Edition (GDP data); World Bank World Development Indicators (population data).

Figure 06: Top 20 Wellness Tourism Markets

Ayurvedic healing, yoga, meditation, and spa treatments are all common components of wellness tourism in Asia (Tripathi & Ben Said, 2023). As part of a larger health and wellness strategy, Portugal has concentrated on rethinking its thermal tourism offerings with an emphasis on sustainability, quality, innovation, and competitiveness (Gonçalves & Guerra, 2019). Health, satisfaction, experiences, and the relationship to medical tourism are important research topics in wellness tourism (Tripathi & Ben Said, 2023). Understanding tourist motivations, behaviors, and satisfaction is crucial for developing effective wellness tourism strategies (Gonçalves & Guerra, 2019).

One of the most resilient and quickly expanding sectors of the global tourism industry over the last ten years is wellness tourism. This industry is still thriving despite economic downturns, outpacing the growth rates of traditional tourism by a wide margin (Yeung & Johnston, 2016; Kazakov & Oyner, 2020). According to the Global Wellness Institute (2018), wellness tourism grew at a remarkable 6.5% annual rate between 2015 and 2017, more than doubling the average growth rate of 3.2% for all tourism. By 2022, it was expected to reach a market value of US \$919 billion. According to recent reports, the global wellness tourism market is expected to grow to a value of around US \$1.10 trillion by 2028 (Vision Research Reports, 2021). The estimated impact of the global wellness economy, which includes wellness tourism in its broadest sense, was US\$6.3 trillion in 2023, highlighting its significant influence in the travel and health-related industries.

Beyond its market value, wellness tourism is significant because it promotes economic recovery and diversification in economies that depend on tourism. This industry is acknowledged on a global scale as a stabilizing factor propelling tourism growth, especially in times of pandemic recovery or global recession (Pyke et al., 2016). In 2023, India rose to 12th place among the top 20 wellness tourism destinations, while the United States, China, and Japan were ranked first, second, and third, respectively. This indicates a shift toward greater geographic distribution and market competition in Asia. The global ranking of the top wellness tourism countries highlights the strategic role emerging markets now play.

Stakeholders must comprehend consumer preferences and behavior when it comes to selecting wellness travel to fully realize this potential. Natural settings, cultural authenticity, and customized wellness services are all important to wellness tourists, according to studies. They frequently choose locations that provide both contemporary wellness facilities and conventional healing methods (Yeung & Johnston, 2016; Kazakov & Oyner, 2020).

In keeping with this trend, Sri Lanka can gain a lot of knowledge from prosperous international models. Based on a cultural emphasis on mindfulness and the natural world, "shinrin-yoku," or forest bathing, has been scientifically proven to have health benefits in Japan. South Korea's forest healing centers combine preventive healthcare with natural immersion, while Finland's nature-based wellness program thrives on sauna culture and public access to the outdoors (Konu, 2015; Park et al., 2010; Lee & Park, 2021). Important elements that these models have in common include robust governance frameworks, wellness practices that are culturally appropriate, and careful integration with environmental conservation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Feasibility Study - Natural and Cultural Assets of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's natural environment is characterized by unparalleled biodiversity and scenic beauty, making it an ideal destination for nature-based tourism. It is home to diverse ecosystems, including rainforests like Sinharaja, dry zone forests like Yala, and montane forests in the central highlands. Each of these ecosystems provides a unique setting for forest therapy, with diverse flora, fauna, and landscapes that appeal to different visitors' preferences.

In addition to its natural assets, Sri Lanka's cultural heritage emphasizes a deep connection with nature. Traditional healing systems such as Ayurveda involve the use of plants, herbs, and natural elements to promote holistic well-being. Buddhist principles, which advocate mindfulness and coexistence with the environment, further align with the philosophy of forest therapy. By integrating these cultural elements into forest therapy

programs, Sri Lanka has the potential to offer a unique experience that connects with both domestic and international tourists.

Sri Lanka's tourism industry faces several challenges that hinder its growth. Political instability, economic disruptions, and environmental degradation have negatively impacted tourist arrivals and revenue generation. Moreover, the lack based tourism, attracting tourists who value well-being.

The proposed action plan for promoting the "Forest Path Treatment Method" in Sri Lanka is given in table 1. The second table (Table 2) shows the expected results. Wellness is the process of making an individual healthy in all aspects, mental, physical and spiritual. In this context, activities that take place in the natural environment can be pointed out as a forest therapy approach in adapting to it. The areas that need to be focused on in adapting to it have been emphasized here based on the information obtained through a literature review. The main objective of this is to reduce the individual's stress, improve mental health, improve physical health and improve the connection with the environment by spending time with nature through walking activities.

Table 1: The proposed action plan for promote wellness tourism through "Forest Path Treatment Method"

Suggested activities		
SR No.	Theme	Description
01	Forest Trail Development	Identifying suitable forest areas with high ecological value and scenic appeal. Designing trails that include eco-friendly infrastructure such as quiet paths, viewing platforms, etc.
02	Implementing wellness programs	Organizing practical and theoretical sessions required for introducing and implementing the "Forest Trail Therapy System" with trained guides and facilitators. Creating plans for activity opportunities such as yoga, meditation and nature walks. Incorporating local traditional healing practices such as herbal therapy, aromatherapy and radap airchayaha based on indigenous medicine into the walking programs of the trails.
03	Community Participation	Selecting suitable individuals from among the local residents and training them as forest therapy guides and issuing them a certificate recognized by the government for that purpose. Training residents as other service providers required for that purpose and issuing them a certificate recognized by the government for that purpose. Involving local artisans and manufacturers to sell related eco-friendly products such as herbal teas, natural oils and handicrafts.
04	Research and Consultancy	Implementing joint programs with state universities to study the health benefits and economic benefits of the forest path treatment system. Sensitizing local and foreign researchers to study the benefits of the forest path treatment system.
05	Sustainability and Conservation	Developing forest trails without any harm to the natural environment. Implementing waste management systems without any harm to the natural environment and educating tourists about conservation practices. Educating local and foreign entrepreneurs in the tourism industry about this. Identifying potential problems in implementation and preparing a suitable methodology to minimize them and drawing the government's attention to the necessary regulations and regulations for that. Promoting trails as a complementary therapy for mental and physical well-being.

Source: Developed by Researcher





Figure 4: The expected activities plan for promoting wellness tourism through FPTM

Source: Developed by Researcher

Table 2: The Expected Outcomes for promote wellness tourism through FPTM

Expected Outcomes	
Economic benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellness tourism contributes to the economic development of Sri Lanka</li> <li>Job creation for local communities</li> </ul>
Environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job creation for local communities</li> <li>Increased focus on forest conservation</li> </ul>
Social benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness of the importance of biodiversity</li> <li>Improved mental and physical health for participants</li> <li>International exposure to Sri Lanka</li> </ul>

Source: Developed by Researcher

### Target Audience (Customers/ Audiences/ Marketers/ resource providers)

- Domestic and International Health Tourists
- Health-conscious individuals seeking alternative therapies
- Local communities near the proposed forest trails.

### Media Plan for Promotion of FPTM

A well-planned media plan is essential to attract, educate, and motivate domestic and international tourists to “Forest Path Treatment Method” A detailed plan has been presented regarding the strategy, target audience, key messages, media channels, and implementation steps (Table 3).

Table 3: The proposed media plan for promotion for promote wellness tourism through FPTM )

Theme	Description
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To educate the public and stakeholders about the benefits and accessibility of forest therapy.</li> </ul>
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To generate interest and encourage participation in guided programs and activities.</li> </ul>
Tourism promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To attract wellness tourists seeking nature-based experiences.</li> </ul>

Conservation advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To highlight the ecological importance of forests and promote responsible tourism.</li> </ul>
<b>Target audience</b>	
Domestic tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban residents seeking stress relief and relaxation.</li> <li>Families, young professionals, and retirees seeking weekend getaways, local communities, conservation organizations, and tourism agencies</li> </ul>
International tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellness enthusiasts from countries where forest therapy is popular, such as Japan, South Korea, and Europe.</li> <li>Ecotourists and tourists seeking recreation/relaxation/rest.</li> <li>Government agencies and private organizations that organize employee wellness programs.</li> <li>Stakeholders and partners Local communities, conservation organizations, and tourism organizations</li> </ul>
Special interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and wellness communities, including yoga practitioners and meditation groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Key campaign messages</b>	
Core message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Connect with nature: Experience the healing power of Sri Lanka’s Forest healing trails.”</li> </ul>
Supporting messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Discover the scientifically proven benefits of forest healing trails.”</li> <li>“Explore Sri Lanka’s stunning forests while nourishing your mind, body, and spirit.”</li> <li>“Support sustainable tourism and conservation with every visit.”</li> <li>“Wellness begins in the heart of nature.”</li> </ul>
<b>Media channels / digital media</b>	
Social media platforms (Instagram & Facebook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For visually appealing content such as photos, videos, and testimonials.</li> <li>YouTube: To showcase tours and guided therapy sessions.</li> <li>LinkedIn: To inform target wellness professionals, corporate HR teams, and travel agencies.</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a dedicated website with trail details, booking options, testimonials and articles about the benefits of forest trail therapy.</li> </ul>
Marketing Search Engines (MSE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using advertisements to promote trails for health and ecotourism seekers.</li> <li>Content curation with keywords like “forest trail therapy”, “wellness tourism Sri Lanka” and “nature-based healing”.</li> </ul>
Travel Bloggers and Vloggers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inviting popular travel bloggers and vloggers to experience and share “forest trail therapy.”</li> </ul>
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletters to wellness enthusiasts, travel agencies, and ecotourism networks.</li> </ul>
<b>Mass Media</b>	
Print media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articles and advertisements in travel and lifestyle magazines regarding “Forest Path Therapy” wellness.</li> <li>Collaboration with newspapers on wellness tourism regarding “Forest Path Therapy” wellness.</li> </ul>
Television and Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short programs on television and radio highlighting “forest trail therapies” and their benefits.</li> </ul>
Outdoor Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displaying billboards and posters in urban areas, airports, and transit centers.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Relations</b>	
Media Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizing trips to “forest trail therapy” sites for journalists and travel writers.</li> <li>Publish press releases announcing project launches and milestones.</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with international tourism boards and wellness organizations to expand the business.</li> </ul>

Source: Developed by Researcher

Setting a proper time frame for the implementation of any project will provide guidance to achieve the desired objectives of the project. (Stark, 2020) has shown that implementing a schedule for detailed planning and effective control affects its success. They have further shown that it can also provide the necessary understanding to complete the project. With the development of modern technology, research has also focused on software systems that can be used for this purpose. It has been shown that it is possible to improve the accuracy of project tasks and time management (Abdul Muhyi et al., 2020; Muttaqin & Hardaningrum, 2020; (Muttaqin & Hardaningrum, 2020). It has been shown that implementing projects according to a schedule can minimize errors, minimize delays, make accurate analysis judgments, use resources correctly, and identify accurate assessments and priorities (Waltz et al., 2015; (Waltz et al., 2015). Accordingly, Table 4 presents a model time frame that can be used in implementing this as a project. This has been prepared with a focus on practicality.

### Strategic Implementation Plan: Forest Path Treatment Method Project (Fptm)

**Vision :** To develop sustainable, wellness -focused forest path trails in forest areas in Sri Lanka

**Mission :**

- To promote mental and physical well-being
- Supporting eco- tourism
- Supporting community livelihoods
- Supporting environmental conservation

Table 4: Strategic Implementation Plan: (FPTM)

Phase		Duration	Basic Activities
Phase I	Planning & Research	Months 01-03	Feasibility studies Environmental assessment Community consultation
Phase II	Trail development (Pilot)	Month 04-07	Identify forest locations Construct basic trail paths Develop basic facilities
Phase III	Program integration (Well-ness)	Months 08 to 10	Yoga places Meditation places Herbal gardens Rest huts (Foods etc)
Phase IV	Human resource management	Months 09 to 11	Train guides (local and foreign) Train facilitators (wellness) Train hospitality providers. Train first aids
Phase V	Launch/Marketing	Month 12	Promotions (Locally & Internationally)
Phase VI	Monitoring/Assessing	Months 13 to 24	Evaluating outcomes Introducing other eras with improvements

Source: Developed by Researcher

### Proposed Methodology for Measuring Success

Here, it is proposed to measure success through four (05) main areas.

- Visitor Engagement
- Economic Impact

- Environmental Indicators
- Community Participation
- Digital Engagement

There are unique approaches for these methods. As an example, it is possible to obtain evaluation information by preparing a questionnaire through the online method and taking steps to obtain responses from tourists through it. For this, it is possible to direct tourists to it more simply and easily by creating digital scanning codes: Under tourism benchmarking methods, these analyses can be conducted based on factors such as the revenue generated from ticket sales to tourists, the number of arrivals, the reasons for arrival, the minimum amount of money spent by one tourist, etc. For media coverage, analyses can be conducted based on basic information such as the number of articles, blogs, airtime allocated to television and radio, and revenue generated from advertisements. For community participation, analyses can be conducted based on information obtained from the sale of goods and services, the number of employment opportunities, and business locations.

### Key Stakeholders

A wide range of important stakeholders must work together to successfully execute the Forest Path Trails Project (FPTP), with each playing a unique role and responsibility. The project's national promotion, regulatory support, and policy guidance are all provided by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). By carrying out assessments, approving appropriate forest areas, and enforcing conservation protocols, the Ministry of Environment and the Forest Department of Sri Lanka will play a crucial role in guaranteeing the project's environmental sustainability. Municipal and provincial government representatives play a crucial role in local infrastructure development, project integration into regional planning, and communication between communities and central agencies.



Figure 5: Key Stakeholders for FPTM

Source: Developed by Researcher



The local communities that live close to proposed forest trail locations are equally significant. Their involvement in positions like maintenance staff, wellness service providers, and trail guides guarantees that the project is culturally relevant and owned by the community. Yoga instructors, Ayurvedic practitioners, and eco-lodge operators are among the wellness and ecotourism service providers who will help create and provide guests with comprehensive wellness experiences. Research, monitoring, and training initiatives that build local capacity and quantify socio-environmental effects are ways that academic institutions can help the project. International partners like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) may also provide financial support, technical know-how, and international best practices.

Lastly, funds, branding, and marketing strategies from private sector investors, such as travel agencies and hospitality associations, could help the FPTP become a scalable and sustainable wellness tourism project in Sri Lanka.

## FUNDING SOURCES

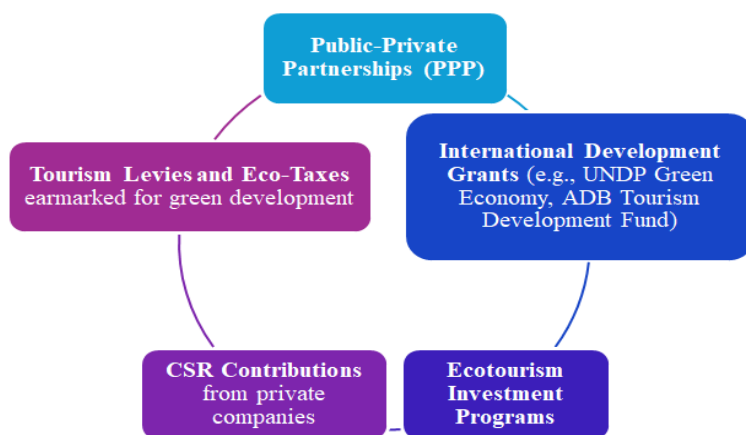


Figure 6: Key Funding Sources for FPTM

Source: Developed by Researcher

## Risk Assessment Strategy For Fptm

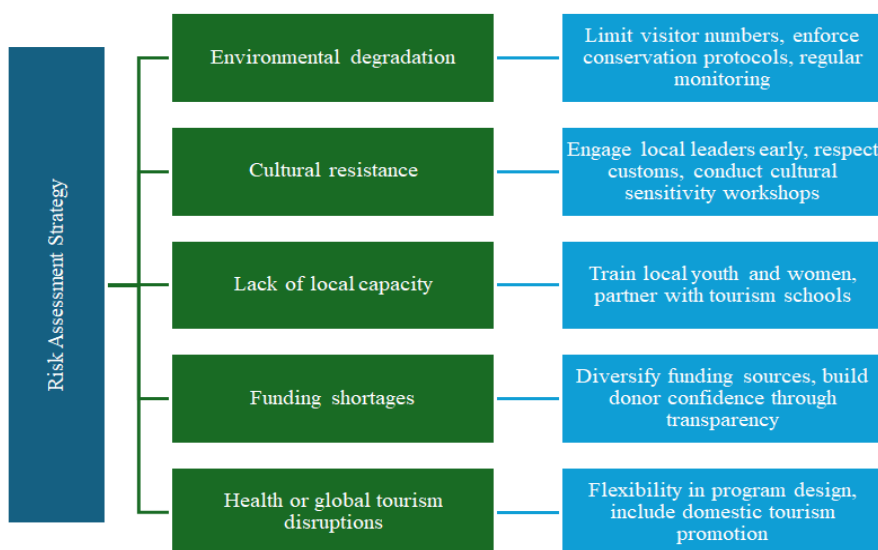


Figure 7: Risk Assessment Strategy for FPTM

Source: Developed by Researcher

## Marketing Strategies to Promote the FPTM

To guarantee the Forest Path Trails Project's (FPTP) success and visibility in both domestic and foreign wellness tourism markets, a robust and focused marketing strategy is necessary. The creation of a specialized digital platform that will act as the main repository for all FPTP-related information is one of the strategy's main components. Online reservations, trail maps, customized itinerary planning, and rich narrative content highlighting the forest trails' scenic beauty, cultural significance, and therapeutic potential should all be included in this platform. By emphasizing the life-changing experiences provided by nature-based wellness, narratives told through video diaries, testimonies, and immersive photography can captivate prospective tourists. To reach a larger audience and integrate with social media channels for ongoing promotion, the website should be mobile-friendly and SEO-optimized.

The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) can significantly contribute to the FPTP's promotion by prominently showcasing it on its official tourism portals and brochures in addition to the digital platform. Additional exposure to international audiences can be achieved by taking part in wellness-focused tourism conferences and international travel fairs like ITB Berlin and WTM London. These platforms offer the chance to connect with wellness service providers, foreign travel agents, and investors seeking out sustainable, one-of-a-kind experiences. Working together with eco-tourism bloggers, wellness travel content producers, and social media influencers is a crucial part of FPTP's marketing strategy. These collaborations are crucial for increasing emotional appeal and credibility, especially with younger and more adventure-seeking travelers. Influencers can authentically endorse the project by sharing their real-time experiences through blog posts, Instagram stories, and vlogs. Working together with nearby yoga studios and wellness retreats can also generate cross-promotional opportunities and referral networks.

Additionally, providing wellness packages via well-known online travel agencies like Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb Experiences will greatly increase accessibility and visibility. Through these platforms, tourists can find carefully chosen, specialized experiences, and the FPTP can gain from user reviews, ratings, and increased global visibility. Custom packages that appeal to different market segments, like digital detox programs, weekend retreats, or forest bathing experiences, should be displayed with thorough descriptions and costs.

The Forest Path Trails Project will be positioned as a premier wellness tourism destination in South Asia thanks to this integrated marketing approach, which combines digital innovation with genuine, locally driven outdoor experiences.

## Framework for Measuring the Success of the Proposed Method through Key Performance Indicators

KPI Category	Key Performance Indicator	Measurement Frequency	Purpose/Objective
Visitor Engagement	Number of domestic and international visitors per month	Monthly	Track popularity and reach of the trail
	Visitor satisfaction ratings (via surveys or digital feedback)	Quarterly	Assess service quality and overall experience
Economic Impact	Local employment generated (number of local staff, guides, artisans involved)	Bi-annually	Monitor contribution to local livelihoods
	Total revenue generated from bookings, services, and partnerships	Quarterly	Evaluate financial viability and sustainability
Environmental Indicators	Biodiversity index or number of flora/fauna species protected or reintroduced	Annually	Ensure ecological conservation goals are met
	Waste reduction and management effectiveness (kg waste collected or recycled)	Quarterly	Promote and track environmental sustainability
Community Participation	Number of community-led wellness programs (e.g., herbal treatments, yoga, traditional food)	Quarterly	Encourage inclusive local involvement

	Community satisfaction and feedback scores	Annually	Measure alignment with local values and needs
Digital Engagement	Website/app traffic and booking conversion rate	Monthly	Evaluate digital marketing effectiveness
	Social media engagement (likes, shares, comments)	Monthly	Track global awareness and promotional reach

### Challenges Associated with Implementing the FPTM

The fear of change is one of the major obstacles. There is frequently a propensity to only use conventional means of generating revenue, which impedes the transition to creative strategies. Concerns about the time, effort, and money needed for innovation are frequently the root cause of reluctance to adopt new approaches, which influences the willingness to support such initiatives.

The village is the perfect place to start such projects in Sri Lanka because the required environmental conditions, like forested lands, are primarily found in rural areas. Nevertheless, there are a few difficulties in carrying out these programs in accordance with rural cultural norms. Language hurdles, sportswear sensitivities, and, in certain situations, the operation of activities at night must all be carefully considered. Thus, one of the most important challenges is adjusting to local cultural expectations.

Concerns regarding whether Sri Lankan tourism enterprises are truly satisfying demand or are just carrying on with long-standing practices were raised by an examination of the annual tourism industry reports released by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). Important elements like visiting tourists' age demographics, preferences, and countries of origin appear to receive little attention. On the other hand, the design of this proposed project took into account both domestic and foreign demand. It is still difficult to recognize these needs and inform stakeholders so that their companies can align with them. Although it would significantly benefit the industry, entrepreneurs' motivation, interest, and willingness to base new ventures on data-driven insights vary.

Launching such creative projects also must deal with the uncertainty brought on by changing international travel trends and the appearance of new rival travel destinations. These patterns are subject to quick changes due to outside influences like international competition and pandemics and other public health emergencies. As a result, other tourist destinations' healthy environments start to matter. Another major obstacle is the lack of interest in wellness-focused activities among domestic travelers.

### CONCLUSION

This study has been conducted specifically for Sri Lanka. However, it has presented a model for implementing a wellness tourism approach to promote tourism by focusing on new approaches for any country that carries out tourism activities, improving the physical, mental and physical well-being of people, which is a current need. It is felt that such studies will help to focus the attention of researchers on practical plans and projects that are a current need in this field and create interest in them. Presenting such research will be a necessary guide to fill the gaps in the tourism industry. Because presenting research on such practical approaches in nurturing the tourism industry towards not only consumer needs but also timely and long-term development will also provide a service to the literature in the field of tourism. It is hoped that this research will help to generate interest in the need for exploratory approaches to the discovery of new knowledge. Overall, this research will lay the foundation for future studies.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to emphasize that no financial contribution was received for this research. The accuracy of the research information used in the literature review has been maintained. The heading of the Acknowledgment section and the References section must not be numbered.

## REFERENCES

1. **Amoiradis, C., Velissariou, E., & Poullos, T.** (2023). Overview of sustainable development and promotion in tourism. *Economics and Business Quarterly Reviews*, 6(3), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1992.06.03.516>
2. **Bermejo-Martins, E., Pueyo-Garrigues, M., Casas, M., Bermejo-Orduna, R., & Villarroya, A.** (2022). A forest bathing intervention in adults with intellectual disabilities: A feasibility study protocol. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(20), 13589. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192013589>
3. **British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).** (2022, December 19). BBC analysis on Sri Lanka's economy. BBC Sinhala. <https://www.bbc.com/sinhala/sri-lanka-64026154>
4. **Central Bank of Sri Lanka.** (2021). Sri Lanka socio-economic data 2021. [https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb\\_documents/publications/otherpub/publication\\_sri\\_lanka\\_socio\\_economic\\_data\\_folder\\_2021\\_e.pdf](https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb_documents/publications/otherpub/publication_sri_lanka_socio_economic_data_folder_2021_e.pdf)
5. **Chandrasiri, S.** (2015). The skills gap in four industrial sectors in Sri Lanka.
6. **Dias, K., Lanka, S., & Dias, K. L.** (2024). Discovering innovative destination branding strategies through digital marketing: A bibliometric analysis. *Sri Lanka Journal of Management Studies*.
7. **Dredge, D., & Jenkins, J.** (2011). *Stories of practice: Tourism policy and planning*. Ashgate Publishing.
8. **Fernanco, S.** (2015). Tourism in Sri Lanka and a computable general equilibrium (CGE) analysis of the effects of post-war tourism boom.
9. **Global Wellness Institute.** (2024). Global wellness economy monitor 2024. Global Wellness Institute. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/2024-global-wellness-economy-monitor/>
10. **Gonçalves, F., & Guerra, I.** (2019). Health tourism and wellness: Concepts, impacts, and challenges. In M. Á. Pedreira & J. C. Correia (Eds.), *Tourism and wellbeing* (pp. 45–62). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91692-7\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91692-7_4)
11. **Gössling, S.** (2017). Conclusion—Wake up... this is serious. In S. Gössling (Ed.), *Tourism and global environmental change: Ecological, social, economic and political interrelationships* (pp. 305–320). Routledge.
12. **Konu, H.** (2015). Developing a forest-based wellbeing tourism product together with customers—An ethnographic approach. *Tourism Management*, 49, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.02.006>
13. **Kumar, V. P.** (2018). Potentials, challenges and opportunities for tourism development in the Eastern Province Sri Lanka. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, 7, 343. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0269.1000343>
14. **Lee, J., & Park, B. J.** (2021). Development of forest healing programs and management strategies in South Korea. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(4), 1941. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041941>
15. **Lindell, L., Sattari, S., & Höckert, E.** (2021). Introducing a conceptual model for wellbeing tourism – Going beyond the triple bottom line of sustainability. *International Journal of Spa and Wellness*, 5, 16–32.
16. **Moscardo, G.** (2011). Exploring social representations of tourism planning: Issues for governance. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(4–5), 423–436.
17. **Muttaqin, M. Z., & Hardaningrum, F.** (2020). Analysis of project implementation schedule using Microsoft Project (Case Study: Trenggalek City Square Area). *International Journal of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology*, 2(1), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.29138/ijeit.v2i1.1148>
18. **Park, B. J., Tsunetsugu, Y., Ishii, H., Furuhashi, S., Hirano, H., Kagawa, T., & Miyazaki, Y.** (2008). Physiological effects of Shinrin-yoku (taking in the atmosphere of the forest) in a mixed forest in Shinano Town, Japan. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 23(3), 278–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02827580802055978>
19. **Park, B. J., Tsunetsugu, Y., Kasetani, T., Morikawa, T., Kagawa, T., & Miyazaki, Y.** (2010). The physiological effects of Shinrin-yoku (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing): Evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan. *Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine*, 15(1), 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12199-009-0086-9>



20. **Patterson, I., & Balderas-Cejudo, A.** (2022). Baby boomers and their growing interest in spa and wellness tourism. *International Journal of Spa and Wellness*, 5, 237–249.
21. **Precedence Research.** (n.d.). Wellness tourism market size, share and trends 2025 to 2034. <https://www.precedenceresearch.com/wellness-tourism-market>
22. **Pyke, S., et al.** (2016). Wellness tourism trends and economic growth. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(6), 579–587.
23. **Ranasinghe, C. N., Ranasinghe, K. U., Munasinghe, N., Priyaratne, M., Harshanath, B., & Rajapakse, S.** (2023). HistoMind: AI-based historical place navigator. 2023 5th International Conference on Advancements in Computing (ICAC), 639–644.
24. **Romão, J., Kuehr, R., & Rodrigues, P. M. M.** (2018). Territorial capital and wellness tourism development in rural areas: Evidence from Portugal. *Anatolia*, 29(3), 396–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2018.1478473>
25. **Samarathunga, W.** (2016). Challenges in cruise tourism in relation to shore excursions: The case of Sri Lanka. *Culture Area Studies eJournal*.
26. **Semasinghe, W. M.** (2016). International tourism of post-war Sri Lanka: Development, challenges and opportunities.
27. **Stark, J.** (2020). Plan and schedule.
28. **Suban, S. A.** (2022). Wellness tourism: A bibliometric analysis during 1998–2021. *International Journal of Spa and Wellness*, 5(3), 250–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24721735.2022.2107815>
29. **Tanguay, G. A., Rajaonson, J., & Therrien, M. C.** (2013). Sustainable tourism indicators: Selection criteria for policy implementation and scientific recognition. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(6), 862–879.
30. **Tripathi, A., & Ben Said, F.** (2023). Significant trends in Asia’s wellness tourism and research agenda: A systematic literature review analysis. *Journal of Tourismology*, 9(2), 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.26650/jot.2023.9.2.1328064>
31. **Tripathi, S., & Ben Said, F.** (2023). Redefining wellness tourism: From spiritual healing to sustainable development. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 9(2), 152–170. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-05-2022-0095>
32. **United Nations.** (1992). The Convention on Biological Diversity. New York, NY: Author.
33. **United Nations Economic and Social Council, Statistical Commission.** (2020). Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.
34. **UNWTO.** (2020). Guidelines for the development of sustainable tourism. United Nations World Tourism Organization.
35. **Vision Research Reports.** (2021). Wellness Tourism Market Size, Share, Trends, Growth, 2021–2028. <https://www.visionresearchreports.com/wellness-tourism-market>
36. **Waltz, T. J., Powell, B. J., Matthieu, M. M., Damschroder, L. J., Chinman, M. J., Smith, J. L., Proctor, E. K., & Kirchner, J. E.** (2015). Use of concept mapping to characterize relationships among implementation strategies and assess their feasibility and importance: Results from the Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC) study. *Implementation Science*, 10, 109. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-015-0295-0>
37. **Yeung, M., & Johnston, R.** (2016). Wellness tourism: A differentiated understanding. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 41(4), 1–5.