

ASIA: SRI LANKA

1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to wellness or wellbeing?

Wellness is somewhat an oxymoron in Sri Lanka in the current context. While it has been practiced for over 5000 years in Sri Lanka and is a core way of life, the term “wellness” is not prevalent in day-to-day life in Sri Lanka. Most Sri Lankans just live a well life.

Buddhism, which is the main religion in the country, attends to the wellness of the mind and spirit, Ayurveda tends to the wellness of the body. Ramayana, the Hindu epic, describes how Ayurveda was first introduced in Sri Lanka:

“Hanuman leaps over the ocean, and across the whole of India, to the Himalayas. When he arrives at first he can't find the Medicine Mountain. When he finds it at last, it is covered with herbs and he doesn't know which is the magic healing herb. So Hanuman wraps his arms around the whole mountain, pulls it out of the ground, lifts it up onto the palm of his hand and flies with it back to Lanka”

However, in today's world context, Sri Lanka is just conceiving wellness as an industry. The country is realizing that there is this buzzword and trying to associate multiple different things with wellness from spa's to Ayurveda.

However, Sri Lanka is well positioned in the region and may be the whole world to become one of the top wellness tourism destinations. Many factors contribute to this including:

- Location and accessibility - Sri Lanka is centrally located between the so-called east and the west of the world providing a great mixture of culture, food, etc. Sri Lanka is closer to any Middle Eastern, European, or Americas East Coast tourist than Thailand or Bali, the leading destinations in wellness tourism. With the end of the civil war that plagued the country for decades, Sri Lanka is becoming an aviation hub with almost all of the world's airlines coming to Sri Lanka directly or through code-sharing partners.
- Mindfulness culture associated with Buddhism - Over 70% of the population of Sri Lanka is Buddhist and Sri Lanka hosts the holist Buddhist temple of the world, the Temple of Tooth, Kandy, where Buddha's tooth relic is kept.
- Ayurveda and traditional healing - As mentioned above, Ayurveda pre-dates the recorded history of Sri Lanka and has been practiced in the island for over 5000

years. Apart from Ayurveda, there is a traditional system of healing in the country that is still widely practiced.

- Highest density of world heritage sites – 8 UNESCO world heritage sites within 26,000 square miles, make Sri Lanka a top tourist destinations in the world. While the potential for wellness is immense as described above, there is not a single dedicated wellness resort in the country. A major break-through was achieved, in this regard with the launch of “Santani” slated to open in early 2016. Santani, is the first integrated wellness resort in Sri Lanka and made headline news throughout the region.

2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think are important developments in your country for each of the following:

Spas: Sri Lanka does not have a single fully-fledged spa at the moment. There are few urbane and hotel based massage centers. However, vice is more associated with these than wellness of any sorts with a common belief that you can end up with a “happy ending” from these establishments. Santani is filling this gap for the first time and will be the first and only destination spa in the country.

Wellness Tourism: Sri Lanka does not have a single fully-fledged spa at the moment. There are few urbane and hotel based massage centers. However, vice is more associated with these than wellness of any sorts with a common belief that you can end up with a “happy ending” from these establishments. Santani is filling this gap for the first time and will be the first and only destination spa in the country.

Wellness Living Communities/Real Estate: Does not exist.

Beauty: Beauty is a fast growing area with the rapid increase in the per capita GDP and the resulting increase in dispensable income since the end of the civil war.

Fitness Fitness in general is popular with Sri Lanka being a very outdoorsy country. However, it is still in an infant stage with limited qualified human resources available.

Nutrition: Does not exist in the wellness sphere.

3. How would you describe the state of workplace wellness in your country?

Sri Lankan work place is still a relatively stress free place with most employees enjoying higher job security and work-life balance. Hence there is not much emphasis on work place wellness.

4. What has been the general attitude about investing in spa/wellness in your country in 2015? Specific examples?

While wellness is used, as a means to sell standard hotel rooms, there is no proper integrated wellness facility or resort in Sri Lanka. However, as mentioned a major breakthrough was achieved with the launch of Santani, Sri Lanka's first wellness resort and destination spa. Since then multiple projects have come up in wellness related investments.

5. Whose responsibility is it to create a well world?

Everyone from employers to employees, retailers to consumers, healthcare industry to insurance industry, education sector are responsible as keeping the population healthy or well is lot more productive to the whole world and lot more cost effective than caring for a sick population. It is more than the cost of healthcare but rather the lost productivity of the populace.

There is a special onus on the research industry as there is still very limited clinical or other research based consensus on most of the therapies provided within the wellness space. As long as these therapies associate the pseudo science tag, it will be difficult for the industry to truly achieve its potential.

SUBMITTED BY:

Name: Vickum Nawagamuwage

Title: Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Company: Santani

Email: vickum@santani.lk

Phone Number: (+94) 779 449 144

