

ESRC Workshop: October 21, 2014 4pm-6pm EBC

Event details: 24 stakeholders in attendance: academics, council representatives, tourism practitioners

Upon voting, 92% of workshop attendees agree that health and well-being tourism is a significant business growth opportunity, 8% disagree. This is good, these individuals are seeing the value in health and well-being tourism.

69% agree that customers/visitors seem to be more aware of health and well-being as part of their routine, 31% disagree. This statistic seems accurate, as healthy lifestyles are an emerging trend and the rise is wellness tourism in response to this is also rising. Tourism stakeholders are looking to continue their health/well-being routine while on holiday.

81% agree that health and well-being facilities/services are essential components of their offer to the market, 19% disagree.

My focus group consisted of 8 people:

What are the barriers to developing a health and wellness destination?

- 1) **Practitioner:** People to share ideas with and/or network. This workshop should help share expertise and exchange knowledge on how to use well-being as a destination resource.
- 2) **Practitioner:** Bournemouth has to be all things to all men. As someone who works at a hotel (focused on accommodations), I can't imagine having a hotel with 10 people on a wellness holiday and 90 people on a stag holiday. I can't imagine reception on a Sunday morning because those of two very different crowds unless you were very good at dividing your business up. Conference hotel, to a well-being hotel one weekend to the next is very difficult. **"It used to be much more about eating and drinking, but not anymore. There's a lot of people now incorporating activities that contribute to their well-being into their holidays"** (Tourism Practitioner) **Practitioner:** On the flip side of that we take a lot of stag groups out for challenging/adventurous sports (jumping off cliffs, getting wet, go carting, yatching, surfing lessons, water sports) so we are seeing that consumers are incorporating a well-being aspect into their stag/hen weekends. The types of activities they engage in definitely contribute to personal well-being. Stag/hen parties have become more than just sitting around in a pub, they're incorporating activities that contribute to their well-being so it's not all about getting black out drunk. **Practitioner:** We can't kid ourselves and say that Bournemouth is a well-being destination, at the moment. **Council:** But there are elements of health and well-being all over the place and I think you're using elements of well-being already and perhaps not even realizing it or thinking that it is. North of Bournemouth area there is the natural beauty, coastal activity park

in Bournemouth. Wellness tourism is a niche market, don't think it can be from one weekend to the next, wellness and

- 3) **Practitioner:** People have a perception of Bournemouth so that is difficult to change. It has two extremes it's either the stag/hen capital or the old person's retirement home. **"In the holistic community there are lots of people doing alternative therapies, offering alternative services for wellbeing but maybe they feel a disconnect between the mainstream. So getting into big conference centres so there is a bridge that needs to be made in those two areas" (Tourism Practitioner).**
- 4) **Council:** Once you step out of your hotel there are huge opportunities to engage in well-being right at your doorstep. Parks, sports, walking, cycling, etc. In terms of businesses, as it currently stands, the town centre doesn't offer much at the moment; however, the town centre will look quite different in the next few years. A lot less retail and much more hospitality type businesses, cafes and restaurants with health options such as organic, vegetarian, yoga bars, health clubs (more niche markets). These opportunities have the ability to change and develop the health and wellness. People are changing their lifestyles to become healthier and this is being reflected in local businesses and town planning. **"What's happening on the high street is a lifestyle change that's happening now and probably within the next five years. We will see a completely different high street picture as an offer and it's up to us to help guide that picture for town planning and such like" (Council Member).**
- 5) **Practitioner:** **"Rather than spending money on improving and expanding health and well-being products and services, I think those products and services are already there so we need to spend money on promoting the well-being options in Bournemouth".** There are simple things available in Bournemouth – sitting in the sand, going for a walk, cycling, all sorts of FREE activities that just need to be promoted more. It's not all about the beach, it's lower gardens, central gardens, etc. And these free things like walking, cycling, going for a paddle, etc. can be done in a short stay or day visit (majority of the market are short stay or day visits) so we need to be able to capture well-being in a short amount of time. Identifying these simple well-being activities and telling/informing people of those, need to improve the marketing of these activities as it could be very beneficial. **Practitioner:** Perhaps Bournemouth could offer some pop up healthy activities for day trippers such as tai chi on the beach, volleyball, yoga classes on the beach, coastal part activities. The conclusion is that all health and well-being activities need to be better promoted: Advertisements on the trains and coaches, Bournemouth app and website (app and website currently being developed).
- 6) There's lots of people who want to dance and have fun but don't want to be around all the drunk people. So they can turn to dance.
- 7) Perception of well-being is completely different from one individual to another. Something that is relaxing to someone might be considered activity for another. Natural fundamental things that we can do for free. It doesn't

- have to be about spa, hot stones, premium stuff which is quite expensive. “However for an area of natural beauty, this doesn’t have to be the case. Tourists can pay for their accommodation and food and the rest of free. There’s lots of wonderful opportunities right in our doortstep”.
- 8) Bournemouth offers wonderful activities right on our doorstep for free and that needs to be promoted.

Value

All participants definitely see a value in using well-being as a destination resource. Most were incorporating well-being aspects into their products but not even realizing it or necessarily promoting it. Again, it is because of the difficulty in defining exactly what “wellness tourism is”.

Using Tourism in Product - Practitioner: “The dance that I do is a conscience dance, basically no drugs and alcohol and using a breath and meditation technique as well. And this is a trend that is huge in America and it’s beginning to come to England. That’s the thing, people think Bournemouth is just stag and hen does but there are still lots of people who want to dance and have fun but don’t want to be around all the drunk people” (Tourism Practitioner).

Policy

Public health and tourism are coming together.

Bournemouth Council has a 4 million pound budget for health and well-being through public health.

Businesses feel supported by policy initiatives on health and well-being. Sometimes businesses tend to stay in their box and it’s safe in that box. If you come out and try something different, there are costs involved in promoting a wellness holiday, it is expensive to market. First year you could spend a lot of money before word of mouth becomes enough to bring them down.

Bournemouth is missing a brand: What is the main key message? I think it’s a whole town discussion”. Bournemouth is working on what exactly they are. Don’t confuse message – it needs to be one key message. Should it be health and well-being? It needs to be one message so people aren’t confused. There is definitely a feel good factor associated with Bournemouth.

Council (Representing 800 small businesses in Bournemouth): “There’s a real culture of health and well-being. There’s a heck of a lot of people selling dietary aids, fitness opportunities, mental health programs and whatever so that is filtering into the business community. How we then use that collection of growing small businesses promoting health and healthy activities to help restore the town is something we need to look at”. This is being driven by demand. 3-4 dietary aids, mental health clinics, fitness classes, everywhere I turn there is new health and wellness activities. **Council:** “Particularly, always being made aware that obesity is king at the moment in this country and we need to cut down on costs. People are finding solutions that fit with their business and give them a profit so that everyone

wins". It's an age thing too because a young person wants to be fit for different reasons who wants to

Currently using well-being as a destination resource

Yes, we do use it as a destination resource. We have some posters that say "Come on a tour with us, it will improve your life!" in a jokingly way, so yes we do. It's up for discussion as to how they're life will improve but they do absolutely love it. Spas, promote the landscaping, yes.

The esos (energy savings opportunity scheme). of the business is then reflected in the marketing. It all comes from within and whatever is driving the business. If we promote that our business uses the best products, you know in every facet of it is in line with the whole sense of well-being and making the world a better place rather than a chavvy place. Where we get our food, where we get our linens for the table cloths. And that telling that story quite well without being too conceded about it and then people are banging down the door. For example, telling someone to that the food is all bought locally at a restaurant is a fantastic message. Tell this story about how we run our business and then people are banging down the doors. It's not a regimented process, it comes from within and whatever is driving the business. Get materials from people who use all organic stuff that promote well-being. That is how we choose to do it and we tell people that.

General Discussion at end of workshop:

What are the barriers to developing a health and wellness destination?

- 1) Defining wellness tourism is a barrier. Well-being is a very broad concept. Each individual/business defines well-being differently, people interpret it differently. Wellness tourism should be categorized. For some, it's adventurous sports, sports, rest and relaxation and for others it's going to the spa. For other's it's just lying on the beach and walking in the gardens.
- 2) Wellness tourism is associated with luxury, potentially and eliteness. People often use "high end" products and services when discussing wellness tourism, but isn't it much more than that? Depending on age category, young people may not be able to afford a well-being holiday, as they tend to be more expensive holidays. Wellness tourism can be quite simple and include stuff that has no cost such as a walk on the beach, walk through the gardens, etc. which has long-lasting effects on the individual. It doesn't always have to be a luxurious holiday.
- 3) Tourists seem to be taking short holiday trips and/or day visits so in this short time it is difficult to capture well-being.
- 4) This is specifically to Bournemouth: need to disaggregate Bournemouth from its traditional connotations of a party town to a town focused on well-being. Hard to promote Bournemouth as a wellness destination when its so heavily associated with nightlife and restaurants. The marketing for Bournemouth and the marketing for Dorset are very different. Bournemouth is associated with hen does, stag parties, nightlife and eating out. Dorest is associated with

Durdle Door, Old Harrys Rocks, etc. and is easier to promote well-being than it is Bournemouth.

Enablers to developing a health and wellness destination:

- 1) Culture in council – should be nurturing and encouraging businesses to promote wellness and use it as a destination resource. A campaign run by the government geared at categorizing well-being would be helpful. Government agencies such as VisitEngland should come up with a branding campaign so that business/consumers can identify what wellness means and then businesses could tailor their marketing/products to suit this. There is a perception that wellness is high end, but it doesn't have to be. Director of Public Health should also be involved – public health and tourism can marry quite well together. Marrying the two not only benefits tourists but also residents. For example, developing infrastructure in local area (i.e. bike hire) could also be benefits to local residents because they could use it.
- 2) Consumer climate – If a business has commodities that are associated and/or marketed using words like wellness, well-being, etc., consumers are buying them. Individuals are looking at ways to better take care of themselves, as they want to live healthier lifestyles. This type of marketing and branding is very well developed in Europe. In fact, wellness holidays are often given on prescription in Europe but not in the UK. It is not developed in the UK, wellness tourism is still an emerging market.
- 3) Better marketing of current well-being products and services – that are often FREE! Although walking on the beach, going for a paddle, walking in the gardens, cycling, art and culture, are all free well-being activities, huge amount of value to the individual but does not cost the individual anything. It's not necessarily up to the individual business to promote and it should be a responsibility of the local authority, the voice of the town to deliver this message to consumers. So it's not all about the elites of tourism and not focus on the 5 star resort with spas and hot stones, etc. There needs to be a culture within the council to foster and encourage this message to consumers because many small businesses don't necessarily have the resources to take on liabilities, risks and costs of marketing so council should be nurturing and encouraging this to allow businesses who want to promote well-being to prosper.

Comments about conference:

Asked participants if they will be thinking more about well-being after attending this conference?

Yes, participants said they will begin to use key words (wellness, well-being) in their marketing/promotions to create a better image as a wellness destination. A slight

tweak (not necessarily radical changes) to marketing will create a new image and drive a new market.

Barriers:

- 1) Defining well-being tourism – a well-being holiday encompasses many activities and means something different to everyone – does it have to be for high end individuals or can it be for everyone? Potentially a very niche and elitess. Each person and business may define it differently.
- 2) Being able to capture well-being in a short period of time
- 3) Destination Perception: Although there are lots of great activities that contribute to health and well-being happening in and around Bournemouth, it still has the perception of being a hen/stag destination. Or at the other extreme it's an old person's retirement town. Difficult to balance being a hen/stag party destination and at the same time be a wellness destination – the two draw very different crowds
- 4) Better Marketing – we need to advertise what we currently have. Most of it is free activities.
- 5) Facilitators/space to do more health and well-being activities - a set bit of space to rent, especially for spiritual, non-drinking, wellness-focused activities. Finding these vacancies is seen as a barrier.
- 6) Brand – Bournemouth versus Dorset. They are completely different destinations – Dorset is seen as more of a wellness destination than Bournemouth which is often associated with hen and stag does. Bournemouth almost needs a sub-brand.

Tourism can be good for everyone in terms of well-being, it isn't just good for someone who is on a dedicated wellness holiday. All holidays are supposed to make you feel better because it is a break from everyday life, etc.

Focus groups contained an eclectic representation of tourism stakeholders