Self-oriented Consumption: Exploring Participation in Wellness Tourism as an Identity Marker Among Urban Indian Women in the Klang Valley

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, wellness tourism has begun to take priority in the lives of those living in contemporary cities. Individuals' well-being is becoming an important determinant in the rush of urban development, as components of 'leisure' and 'work-life balance' are increasingly incorporated within urban employment structures. In this paper, the tendencies of working adults in finding solace through wellness tourism are explored, within the locale of the Klang Valley, Malaysia. A sample within a minority community will be studied, Indian women who are involved in professional employment, and who are also mothers. No detailed study on wellness tourism has been done in this community. Using a gendered and ethnographic lens, this paper is an exploratory attempt to capture the underlying values and attitudes of these women's decisions to either indulge, or not, in wellness tourism. Gendered, socio-economic or ethnic interpretations are sometimes glossed over in tourist narratives, highlighting only escalating types of travel or strategies to enhance tourism. The inter-disciplinary approach of this paper draws on historical, cultural and sociological factors to postulate the factors that shape wellness-based holiday motivations among this community. Underlying this discussion is the contested nature of the identity construct among this group of women. The findings could be used to enlighten academics or practitioners of the tourism industry on nuanced elements that could be considered in the development of wellness tourism.

Keywords: Wellness tourism; Indian women; Urban; Identity.

INTRODUCTION

This paper begins with a background discussion of how leisure has taken on a vital role in the lives of urban dwellers. Because 'work' has now taken on meanings that include higher social roles, more social responsibilities and increased social expectations (Shaw & Williams 1994), 'leisure' on the flip side, has also reinvented itself into more complex forms. There are researchers who claim that since definitions of leisure incorporate freedom, choice and flexibility, leisure is actually more suitable than work in defining urban identity today (Rojek, 1995; Blackshaw, 2010).

Within the domain of leisure, a wellness revolution is taking place globally, where "holistic health" is now the priority. "Multiple health dimensions" that include "body", "mind", and "spirit" together with "active self-responsibility" and "healthy lifestyles" are currently highlighted (Voigt & Pforr, 2014, p. 3). Packaged with the commercial organization and operation of 'wellness tourism', participation in this phenomenon are growing as an urban lifestyle (Becker, 2013). Exploring how a particular community in Malaysia views this expanding occurrence as an urban identity marker is what this paper will discuss.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The increased emphasis on leisure, and the commercialized value of 'tourism' is gaining traction, especially in urban societies. Tourism is indeed one of the world's largest industries, as evidenced by official references (Becker, 2013; Singh, 2009). Within the tourism industry, wellness tourism is now an international phenomenon

that is "repeatedly cited as one of the fastest-growing tourism niche markets" (Voight & Pforr, 2014, p. 3). First-world countries in the 'West' were previously referred to as the source of 'the health care universe'. Voight and Pforr (2014) cite statistics that the wellness industry had grown to over 500 billion dollars in the United States of America (USA). However, the USA is now considered 'the old giant' (Becker, 2013) as Asian countries are now taking over (Ormond, 2011). China is considered 'the new giant' (Becker 2013) and other Asian, and specifically Southeast Asian countries are now posited as the international go-to destinations for health and wealth (Singh, 2009; Hitchcock, King & Parnwell, 2009).

There is now a proliferation of wellness tourism (Voight & Brown, 2011) and a large portion is made up of 'medical tourists'; individuals who travel outside their own healthcare boundaries in pursuit of medical intervention elsewhere (Ormond, 2011). According to statistics, Malaysia is the best destination among Southeast Asian countries for medical tourism (Frost & Sullivan, 2015). Political unrest in Thailand and the high costs of healthcare in Singapore make Malaysia a better destination than its competitors (Frost & Sullivan, 2015). Malaysia is also a target for the larger wellness industry, as promoted heavily by Malaysian politician Khairy Jamaluddin (while he was Minister of Youth and Sports). Khairy talked about using "holistic activities" to enhance the "mind-body connection" so that Malaysians can maintain a healthy lifestyle, prioritizing wellness.[2] Khairy asserted that Malaysia has "the industry players here" who can turn wellness tourism into "a revenue-generating industry" for the nation.[3]

Wellness tourism is chosen as the leisure entity in this paper due to its far-reaching premises in its definition; encompassing spiritual awareness, beauty, physical and mental health, and environmental values. Categorizing the engagement of individuals in any of these areas as pursuing a lifestyle of wellness is thus justified. As much of the data on wellness tourism exists as public narratives studied quantitatively (Singh, 2009; Tang & Lau, 2017), my study is an attempt to fill the qualitative gap in the contemporary study of wellness tourism.

Apart from wellness tourism, the issue of identity is also conceptualized in this paper. The study of urban identity takes into consideration the alterations of quotidian life based on mobility and technology, and also how people define work and in the case of this paper, leisure. Urbanity in this context also relates to class, as all research participants belong to the middle-class employment sector. While 'middle class' is not theorized, the intersect of class and gendered identity reveals that most of the research participants in this study hold 'decision-making' jobs. These few components of identity refer to what Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1993); individuals having a privileged "social space" in a society where "possibilities for action" are further enhanced (Swingewood, 2000, p.214).

However, apart from 'urban' and 'women' (both markers bound up with the middle class), the remaining identity marker of 'Indian' is the proverbial throwing of the spanner in a simplistic understanding of identity. This is because numerically, and in terms of representation in dominant discourses, middle-class Indians have been a minority (Manickam, 2010; Arasaratnam, 2006). The emphasis on social issues faced by working-class Indians, who form the majority of this ethnic group, perpetuates the marginality of the middle-class cohort (Muzaffar, 2006). Thus, when studying the research participants' wholistic identity per se, the individual markers of 'urban', 'female' and 'Indian' pose a rich yet complex subjectivity. These individual women, who have grown up as middle-class Indians living in urban Malaysia, carry identities that relate to multiple social categories. Their engagement with wellness tourism is the study of this paper.

METHOD
This empirical research uses responses from sixteen (16) women. Although this study is part of a wider research, only the responses that relate to the section on leisure and wellness are used in this paper.

Feminist methodology is the large framework that is used, so that "various conditions which shape individual identities" can still fall within the "feminist allegiance" (Bart, 2000, p. 209). This is because all the participants in this research are females who are also mothers. Three criteria are committed to, within this broad gendered framework: that the research should include women's lives and concerns, minimize the harms of the research process, and support the research of value that can improve women's status (Metso & Le Feuvre, 2006).

Within the feminist frame is the choice to use the qualitative lens; in research design, research questions, research methods, and research analysis. Qualitative data aims to capture the quality of people's lives, and how they feel or think, or why they make certain decisions (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting and uses methods that solicit active participation from the participants, while maintaining sensitivity to their privacy (Creswell, 2003). Unlike quantitative data which prioritises statistical information

devoid of deeper interpretations and meanings, qualitative research seeks to explore the richness of the responses at hand. With reference to this research, the use of qualitative inquiry would be able to "advocate the inclusion of women's experience" in reported and recorded accounts of lived reality (Bart, 2000, p. 209).

In terms of the qualitative strategy, this study can be seen as a small-scale case study, or using a popular phrase, a snapshot, of these women's lives. The two main research tools that are used are

      i)   the semi-structured interviewing technique and
      ii)   the practice of reflexivity

The participants had agreed in advance to a scheduled time when the researcher would go to their homes to conduct the semi-structured interview. The purpose of the research is clearly outlined in a pre-interview phone call, and upon arrival to the home of the participant, informed consent is confirmed through a form to which they put their signature to. Informal chatting is used as the 'door-opener' to deeper conversations. This helps the conversation to develop naturally, where the researcher and the interviewee can be seen as joint collaborators in the research process. The researcher asks for the research to be conducted in a quiet place, necessitated also for recording purposes. The semi-structured interview is perfect for the research as although the main questions are pre-determined, other aspects or tangents are also able to be visited through the openness of the dialogue. The semi-structured interview actually enables a "conversation", where "the stories told" by the participants encourage a more open-ended dialogue to proceed (Kvale, 1996, p. 124).

Reflexivity as a tool enables the researcher to map the interviewee's responses against larger perspectives, and this is crucial in getting the deeper meaning of responses (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008). The 'positioning practice' within reflexivity enables where "the broader social landscape within which research and researchers are positioned" to be explored further (ibid, p. 485). In practice, after each interview process, the researcher conducts a reflexive exercise, where the responses of each participant are mapped against other factors gained through the research process. For example, the distance of the participant's home from her workplace, the upkeep of the home, or the slip of the tongue by the participant with regards to feeling a sense of burnout are all important pieces of information in reflexivity. This is especially important for the analysis of identity, where the women's motivations for well-being tourism are mapped against other factors.

The Research Site
The research location is the Klang Valley, which overlaps the states of Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. It is an administrative, commercial and educational hub. The first reason that the Klang Valley is chosen is due to the residential area of the researcher. The other reason is due to its contextual relevance to the residential location of the research participants. During the time of the research, the Klang Valley population was about 7.2 million, which was more than one-fifth of Malaysia's total population. The Klang Valley conurbation experiences heavy in-migration, induced by opportunities of higher learning, and employment. Apart from greater Kuala Lumpur, Klang Valley is also defined as one of the largest urban centres in the country.[4] It is a fitting site for the study of urban identity and wellness tourism.

Sampling
The sample of this research is made up of sixteen (16) professional Indian women. The purposive sampling technique is used to select these women, all having common variables of

      i)   being married,
      ii)   having children (at least one),
      iii)   having their husbands live with them (and not be working outstation or overseas),
      iv)   constituting a dual-income, nuclear household, and
      v)   having jobs that are termed professional

In the larger research these women belong to, snowballing and convenience sampling techniques were employed to get the number of participants required.

Ethical considerations
All research participants are assured that their responses are treated with total confidentiality. An informed consent form was administered before the research was conducted, to ensure the participants understand that all information given by them is confidential and to be used for research purposes only. Research participants are asked if their actual names can be used and if not, only pseudonyms are used to represent their identities.

RESULTS

The responses of the women in relation to wellness tourism began with a discussion on non-work time. Definitions of leisure and wellness are discussed in the early stage of the interview. Parameters of 'wellness' are allowed to be broad, defined as any time-based activity that brings a sense of peace, calm, or relaxation. 'Tourism' is identified as the commercialization of these wellness pursuits, in terms of holiday packages or out-of-town travel destinations. The responses of the women are categorized into three broad categories. In a few cases, the women's responses have blurred the categories but the researcher has made the effort to preserve the varied responses in spite of this. The categorized responses of the women are discussed below.[5]

1. **Leisure? What's that?**

The first category is made up of women who struggled even to define wellness pursuits. This includes the women who could not even identify 'leisure' in their lives. Fifty-year-old Mary is a medical doctor who says:

> *"I drive a lot, and I don't sit at the clinic. My medical team is a panel for many major companies, and they have clinics in their factories, where I have to go with my nurses. So, apart from actual work, which is until 9pm on certain nights, there is also a lot of driving... So no, I don't have time for leisure activities".*

Forty-nine-year-old Navisha is a Securities Commissioner who says:

> *"If I'm home by 8pm, everyone feels I'm home early. If it's late, it can be midnight. Otherwise, it's between 9-9.30pm. Leisure is a luxury I can't afford…".*

Mary and Navisha are part of the category of women who have no leisure time, and who have difficulty in defining it. Others in this group define leisure as times on the weekends when the family gets to go out for a meal. Thirty-nine-year-old Komala thinks of leisure along these lines, and her children choosing theme-based menus, like going Italian or Thai, is novelty enough.

For this category of women, what is clearly observed is that the concept of wellness is something that is absent. What does occur, if pursued, are pockets of time-filling leisure activities engaged with family members. In the words of forty-seven-year-old Kumari, *"We watch a lot of TV together"*. Going about the quotidian, eating out, or watching tv occasionally as a family validates this group of women from *not* pursuing wellness, let alone planning for tourism.

2. **Conscious attempts**

The second category of women is those who have made some conscious attempts to pursue personal wellness. A few of them define wellness in terms of spending time with their girlfriends. Thirty-nine-year-old Shamala is a busy businesswoman, who initiated her own retail cake-making shop, but she makes time for her friendship circle:

> *"Yes, we do make it a point to meet up – not as often as we like, but yes, we do meet up. We have in a way grown up together from our college days, and we have fun just going out and being together. Especially when the kids are not with us".*

It is the same for forty-two-year-old Priti and thirty-nine-year-old Jigna, where friendships with their girlfriends are crucial. Priti is a busy restaurant owner, but her girlfriends are willing to come by. In Priti's words,

> *"I am busy with my business, but if friends want to pop by, they are most welcome… Or if they are ok to dine at my restaurant, then catching up becomes much easier. My friends have to accept my crazy life".*

The friendships that these three women have with other women secure important and empowering spaces for themselves, and this is their wellness. Other women in this category actually pursue wellness through travel, which usually occurs during the children's school holidays. However, when probed a little more, it is revealed that these travels are made not to tourist destinations but to the homes of relatives. Forty-four-year-old Annie says,

> *"I have a brother-in-law in Sabah and we often go over to stay with him. Or sometimes we go to India, where my parents live. We stay with them during the holidays".*

Forty-four-year-old Devi, an airline officer, and her children spend all of the school holidays at her mother's place in Raub, Pahang:

> *"We always end up at mum's place. It is like our second home, where we eat, do laundry, and spend time together. My children have grown up coming here. Even when we have long weekends, we end up here for a holiday".*

Some of these homestay visits are not even outstation. Living on the outskirts of Selangor, fifty-year-old Patricia says her children love to stay the entire school holidays at her mum's place at Old Klang Road:

> *"My children love school holidays as we all go and stay with my mum. They love grandma's place as she is a great cook, and my unmarried sister really takes care of them.".*

The role of kin in the lives of these women seems essential and this affirms traditional theorizations of leisure, which highlight communal responsibility over individual choice and wellness (Param, 2019). On a reflexive note, this is identified in the lives of the Indian women in this research. Their definition of 'holiday' is being able to combine personal wellness with familial obligations.

The remaining women of this category are those who have dabbled with wellness, although at a premature level. These women define wellness pursuits as their 'me time'. Forty-four-year-old Annie says,

> "*I go do my hair and nails…[and] massages… like once a month".*

Forty-year old Yasodha says,

> *"The kids go to bed by 9.30pm…so my facial lady comes around 9.30pm, or a therapist for reflexology. Since my kids don't like me going out, that's how I manage my 'me time'".*

Forty-one-year-old Selvam seeks a consciously carved out ideal time:

> "*I get up very early, like at 5am. It's just me myself…. That one hour of being alone is enough".*

Fifty-two-year-old Navina says,

> *"Sometimes at 9.30 or 10pm, I'll be watering my plants. It's nice, you know? Just being out there in the garden… nothing to think or worry about…it's my time".*

Female friendships, kin-based staycations and personal 'me times' are efforts the women of this category consciously pursue as a form of wellness. These attempts are part of "tracing the mechanisms of identity creation" - which are crucial in shifting old trajectories for new ones (Taylor & Spencer, 2004, p. 11). Although actual engagement with wellness tourism is still absent, the move towards pushing the figurative borders toward a newer understanding of the self is evident.

3. **Actual wellness practices**
Only the third and last category of women fully comprehend what personal wellness is, and incorporate this into their tourist motivations. Forty-year-old Yashodha says,

> *"I do make an effort to look into wellness. My life is packed, so it is important that I also take care of myself. My husband and I have a group of friends who try to travel together. Although we are busy, we try to squeeze in a short trip once a year. Last year, we went skiing at an alpine resort in Melbourne…"*

Forty-nine-year-old Ramani is also intentional on travels, albeit more religious in her focus:

> *"I have this group of friends who are interested to travel like me, so we plan for trips together as often as we can. We are of different religions, but we don't mind visiting temples and going for meditation together. This December, we are going to Vietnam, and soon we are planning to go to India".*

Fifty-two-year-old Navina shares her motivation is to 'get away' from work:

> *"I love planning for get-away holidays, and I think this is important for a healthy lifestyle. I try to take one of my [three] boys with me when I go. In February, we went to Sri Lanka, and last year, we went to Tibet. Prior to this, I have taken the older boy to the USA. I need this breather, and I also use this time as my bonding time".*

These few women attempt to regulate wellness travel into their lived realities. They see the getaway as an important avenue to refresh and recharge and consider this move as a lifestyle choice. Although busy with their work schedules, these three women have managed to adopt a must-do perspective in terms of incorporating wellness into the commercial organization of tourism. They are a minority within a minority.

DISCUSSION

Sociologically speaking, it needs to be remembered that these women have access to the 'structural' features that enable them to participate in tourism and leisure. Based on their jobs and position in society, they possess the knowledge, the cultural capital (that comes with being middle-class), access to trending narratives on tourism, and enough disposable income to spare for wellness pursuits. In other words, unlike women in less privileged positions, these women are not "alienated" from the "leisure experience" nor are they hindered from "avenues for social participation" (Shaw & Williams, 1994, p. 50). Based on so much access that modern, urbanizing societies have to tourism-based engagements, why is it that the majority of women in this research don't pursue wellness tourism, or even wellness pursuits that are not commercialized?

Local references to ethnic-based travel studies reveal something startling. In studying the travel behaviour of older Malaysians, Musa & Sim (2010) summed up their findings based on the three major ethnic groups of Malaysia; the Malay, Chinese, and Indian. In their analysis of travel motivation, Chinese respondents were highest at 66.7% for 'relaxation' and 'giving self a treat'. Indian respondents not only scored low for these motivations, but under the preferences of domestic destinations, they also scored lowest in the 'highland resorts' and 'islands' categories. Although generalised and not gender-based, these findings do show a link between ethnicity and wellness travel. The categories of 'relaxation' and 'giving self a treat' do imply wellness priorities, and the categories of 'highland resorts' and 'islands' do imply likely destinations of wellness spots. The Indian community scored lowest in these four categories.

Cheah and Tan (2014) studied determinants of wellness in terms of physical activity among Malaysians, and their findings also illustrated health-lifestyle motivations between ethnic groups. Their study showed how many hours of physical exercises each ethnic group engaged in, per week. The Chinese were the highest, with 6.5 hours per week, and the Malays were 2 hours per week. The Indian community was the lowest, at 48.5 minutes (or 0.8 hours) per week.

In a more recent study on the physical activity of Malaysians (Tam et al, 2016), the categories of 'vigorous', 'moderate' and 'light' were identified as types of physical engagement by the various racial communities, and it was found that when it came to 'light activity', the Indian community were more likely than others to engage in it (Tam et al, 2016).

Although some of these studies are dated and all of them are generalized and quantitative, the results are surprisingly parallel to the outcome of the Indian women in this study. Leisure or wellness remains limited and sporadic for the majority. Some of the postulations will be discussed here, according to the sub-themes in the results section.

1. Leisure? What's that?
It is interesting to note that the Indian working women of this research are not so much concerned with their "paid job obligations" (Quah, 2009, p. 124), as they are with their children's educational needs. Research on Asian urban motherhood in other societies reveals the same preoccupation. In India, Donner describes "middle-class motherhood" in relation to how education is institutionalized at home (Donner, 2008, p. 132). Leisure is not even mentioned as all their time is taken up being involved in their children's "multitude of activities" (ibid, 2008, p. 133).

Similar findings are echoed in the lives of Japanese and Korean women, where it is deemed inappropriate for mothers to have time for "other interests" like "self-oriented consumption" (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004, p. 38). The middle-class women in this paper evidence this Asian cultural trait. Their lifestyle self-negates leisure time

because the "key project of mothering practices" these women adhere to is being educational agents for their children's school performance (Yeoh and Huang, 2010, 33).

History (and background data on these women) tell us that all the women in this research (and their husbands) have grandfathers who were part of this middle class; either in India or newly migrated to Malaya. These Indian men were the ones who ensured that their children would continue the heritage of education in this new diasporic land (Arasaratnam, 2006). This socio-economic context shaped the research on women's early girlhood experience, and this perpetual inculcation of educational importance is thus integral to their identity. And now, perhaps working on preserving this educational heritage in their children's lives cause these women to stay away from leisure attempts that might distract them from the straight and narrow.

2. Conscious Attempts
For the women in this category, leisure space is present, but only when experienced with friends or family. This raises questions about identity formation, as there is research that proves that people enjoy leisure when others are part of the experience (Tam et al, 2016). Although not translated into actual tourist-based endeavours, the women in this category have attempted to create spaces of wellness in their lives. Although a few are experimenting with 'me time' versions of wellness, for the majority in this category, "multigenerational collectives" have resulted in communal obligations which are "agendas" that need to be fulfilled (Stack & Burton, 1994, p.33-34).

3. Actual wellness practices
This small category of women is the ones who engage in wellness pursuits that involve tourist tendencies. In terms of "tracing the mechanisms of identity creation", these women are willing to shift old trajectories for new ones (Taylor & Spencer, 2004). If historical or cultural traits had held them back in the past, they are willing to undo these older understandings in order to embrace the reality that "leisure is more important…than accounted for" (Oman 2020, p.11).

Together with this discussion, the researcher forwards suggestions that the local industry can include as part of their action plan.

Industry-based Solutions:

a) Creating the need for wellness tourism is necessary for this community. Local research findings by Musa and Sim (2010) evidence older Malaysians, especially the Indians, spend leisure time with family members. In that vein, perhaps wellness travel packages could be fashioned for extended families. Travel data claim that "Malaysia's coast and islands" and "hill stations" are "popular venues" (Singh, 2009, p 288). And yet, 'islands' and 'highlands' are the two travel destinations that Indians don't quite prefer (Musa & Sim, 2010). If kin-based travel packages could target these destinations, it would be a win-win for both the industry players and the potential tourist clients.

b) These wellness travel plans could also draw attention to spiritual packages like visiting places of worship or going for religious retreats that teach the skills of yoga or meditation. Travel writers have claimed going to a place of worship is such a 'highlight' for Indians in general (Singh, 2009). While this observation is contextualized within India, the symbolic significance of focusing on spirituality is something that Indians adhere to in a generalized vein, even in "contemporary times of increasing modernity and secularity" (ibid, p. 81). If this is the case, these religious angles of wellness could inspire Indians to increase their travel motivations. Three women in this research enjoy spending time with their friends, and quite a number of the women mention the 'school holidays' as a common time for leisure. These women should tap into the plethora of travel packages offered during these seasons. These combined efforts would enable the Indian community to maintain and defend their kin-based or friendship-based social identities while enjoying wellness tourism. As the accounts of the few women who dabble with 'me time' show, the ability to singularize the self and the needs of the body over responsibilities will probably morph into a larger following, over time. Current popular narratives that highlight relaxation outcomes of individuals engaging in spas, 'meni-pedi', or body massage treatments enable wellness centers to garner the proliferation of media attention. These reputable outlets can also draw clients in the name of wellness tourism. [6]

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is the researcher's hope that this research offers a rare look into the qualitative quotidian lives of urban Indian women in Malaysia. International discourses have tended to be quantitative when studying leisure patterns, and the lack of a qualitative lens is now beginning to be addressed (Stebbins, 2017; Parr & Schmalz, 2019). Malaysian narratives and media representations of identity also tend to be quantitative, and in terms of race as an identity marker, the B40 category has been prioritised, as this is where the 'majority' of Indians fall into. Although research on urban-dwelling individuals prioritizing personal health and lifestyle issues is slowly increasing, data is mostly quantitative or focusing specifically on medical tourism (Seow, Choong & Chan, 2018; Tang & Lau, 2017). There seems to be a dearth of qualitative analyses on the lives of urban Indian women, with regard to travel motivations along the lines of personal wellness.

In spite of evidence of a large leisure gap in the lives of urban Indian women, all is not lost. Enjoying a societal position that has full access to wellness forms and discourses, these women should consider exercising the agency they have to explore tourist-based inclinations. Urban society is largely formulated along wellness lines today, especially in non-work domains (Parr & Schmalz, 2019; Mansfield, Daykin & Kay, 2020). These global changes in urban life can further shift the perspectives of these women.

This paper ends with a significant quote in relation to the importance of wellness in the understanding of personal identity:

> "*This article…finds that leisure is more important to the nation than accounted for in official reports…This article prioritises everyday understandings of well-being [in relation to] leisure studies and policy-making for well-being" (Oman, 2020, p. 11, square brackets added by researcher).*

This quote strongly implies how cultural traits of the past (that negate leisure and wellness) need to give way to more forward-thinking aspects of sustainability in personal wellness. Oman (2020) goes one step further to include policy-making, calling lawmakers and politicians to revisit traditional priorities that stopped individuals from embracing wellness pursuits that have been wrongly labelled as 'self-oriented consumption'. The participants in this research contend with multiple identity markers; wellness tourism, being urban, being Indian, and being a woman. Gendered urban identity is already posited to find meaning and significance through multiple accesses to resources that are readily available. Only the identity marker of being Indian is one that needs to be empowered in the embrace of wellness tourism.

It is the researcher's hope that the women of this research will allow for 'everyday understandings of well-being' to permeate their lives. This would then be a triumph in the lives of urban Indian women in the Klang Valley. Other age groups within the Indian community need to be studied, like the youth and the elderly. Using similar ethnic cultural traits as the framework, elements of sustainability in personal wellness among these varying age groups need to be explored.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

The lead author* affirms that this manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported; that no important aspects of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned (and, if relevant, registered) have been explained.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no self-interest in the study conducted.

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End Notes

[1] a phrase taken from Tsuya & Bumpass (2004, p.38), in their narrative of how Asian women tend to limit leisured time for themselves, as it is deemed inappropriate.

[2,3] Malaysia should tap potential in wellness tourism, says Khairy. https://www.thesundaily.my/archive/1661124-MSARCH345618

[4] Malaysia: Economic Transformation Programme (ETP): A Roadmap for Malaysia (2010). https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/1271

[5] Each of the women's responses are part of the findings of the researcher's unpublished PHD thesis, entitled 'Sustaining Middle-Classness: Studying the Lives of Indian Working Mothers and their Children in Malaysia' (2016).

[6] 4 wellness activities in Malaysia that will rejuvenate your senses. https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/travel/2019/02/06/types-wellness-activities-available-malaysia