



PHENOMENA OF WELLNESS TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF THE ACTUALITY OF WELLNESS TOURISM PARTICIPANTS IN SAYAN VILLAGE

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the authentic value of wellness tourism from several points of view, namely from the tourism sector, tourists, stakeholders, and experts. This research describes wellness tourism in terms of the perspective and image of health tourism. This research uses qualitative methods by examining the recent wellness tour phenomenon. The key informants in this research are stakeholders and psychologists. The main informants in this research are domestic and foreign tourists who carry out wellness tourism activities in Ubud, Bali. The results of this research provide positive results from a wellness tour perspective on the image of wellness tours.

Keywords: *perspective, tourism, wellness*

1. INTRODUCTION

The wealth of Indonesia encompasses various aspects, one of which is tourism. Indonesian tourism offers destinations that are highly sought-after by both international and local tourists. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Bali, Indonesia, ranked as the second most popular destination according to TripAdvisor in 2023. This is due to Bali's diverse array of tourist attractions. One of the attractions is located in the Ubud District of Gianyar, renowned for its wellness tourism. With the global development of wellness tourism, Ubud has become a prominent name in this field. This is evidenced by several studies that highlight Ubud's significance in the realm of wellness tourism (Purnamawati et al., 2019).

Looking back, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic has supported the development of tourism attractions through events and festivals (Rahjasa et al., 2022). As a renowned destination for wellness tourism, Ubud hosts various internationally recognized wellness events. These include the Yoga Festival Ubud, the Ubud Food Festival featuring organic and healthy cuisine, the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival with seminars discussing mental health and meditation, holistic health workshops covering topics on natural remedies, and the Ubud Body, Mind, and Spirit Festival focusing on overall health and well-being. The successfully executed events have significantly impacted tourist visits

to Ubud, particularly for health- related purposes.

Simultaneously, Ubud has gained global recognition, being selected as one of the world's best cities by Travel and Leisure. In addition to Ubud's distinctive characteristics of tranquility, comfort, and serenity, as highlighted by Travel and Leisure, Ubud also boasts wellness centers. Focusing on the environmental aspects that support wellness tourism, the western part of Ubud, specifically the village of Sayan, stands out. Sayan Village holds immense potential for wellness tourism, supported by its environment and association with the local community's spiritual traditions related to physical and spiritual cleansing. The local government, along with the residents, is making efforts to focus on the development of village tourism strategies, including the expansion of wellness tourism.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of people were required to stay at home, resulting in limited activities and social interactions. This became a supportive factor for tourists to engage in wellness tourism in Indonesia. Heritage and culture were positioned as indicators that attracted tourists. This phenomenon also became a motivating factor for travelers to resume journeys with a focus on health. Post-pandemic, travel preferences have shifted towards staycations, emphasizing the improvement of well-being and lifestyle. This change has become a popular trend in Indonesian tourism, appealing to both foreign and local tourists.

Currently, health tourism has become a crucial part of the tourism industry (Thio et al., 2017). A wellness tourist is someone who understands how to be a healthy individual, effectively utilizing their money and leisure time, and leveraging tourism as a supportive element for their health (Meikassandra et al., n.d.). According to Modise and Johannes (2016), wellness is generally interpreted as a balance between physical, mental, and spiritual health that results in overall well-being. In 2020, the Global Wellness Institute stated that the purpose of tourists visiting wellness tourism destinations is to achieve holistic well-being. The concept of wellness represents a high-level health concept with six dimensions, as follows (Sunaryo et al., 2023):

1. Social wellness is the process of creating healthy relationships.
2. Physical wellness is the process of fostering flexibility, cardiovascular health, and maintaining an energetic and strong body.
3. Emotional wellness is the process of understanding and expressing feelings, as well as engaging in healthy self-dialogue.
4. Intellectual wellness is the process of using our minds to understand and appreciate the universe and ourselves.
5. Environmental wellness is the process of creating defense mechanisms and enhancing the quality of life in the universe.
6. Spiritual wellness is the meaning and purpose that demonstrate values through behavior.

Therefore, wellness tourism destinations provide activities and supporting facilities for tourists, such as yoga, meditation, retreats, sports facilities, biking facilities, jogging areas, hiking, spa and beauty services, body treatments, and some medical wellness facilities (Gössling et al., 2020). However, despite previous research proving the importance and benefits of wellness tourism, some aspects of wellness tourism still have internal and external shortcomings. This phenomenon is an interesting topic for discussion. Internally, some wellness points are not fully understood, causing concerns for tourists. Wellness tourism is often used for personal interests, potentially affecting the authentic value of wellness tourism (Permata Sari et al., 2019). This, in turn, triggers negative perceptions from external parties about wellness tourism. Additionally, from an external perspective, wellness is sometimes viewed with indifference, resulting in a decline in the authentic value of wellness tourism.

The use of the term "wellness" is highly variable, depending on the context. According to the World Health Organization in 2020, "wellness is a state of mental, physical, and social well-being that is holistic and not merely the absence of illness or weakness. On the other hand, The National Wellness Institute defines wellness as an active process through which individuals become aware of and make choices towards a more successful existence. If we understand that these two concepts are not exactly the same, we can assume that, overall, they share a similar mechanism" (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Some parties also generally consider "medical tourism" to be the same as "health tourism," but these two concepts have different directions and focuses (Tretiakova et al., 2018).

Some individuals still adhere to the old belief that the initial focus of wellness tourism was on the development of potential, plans, and strategies in the tourism industry (Goodarzi et al., 2016). With the evolution of time and changing tourist expectations, researchers in recent years have discovered that the demand side of tourists indeed aligns with the pursuit of optimal health (Liu et al., 2022). Based on this description, this research aims to dissect and provide a comprehensive understanding of wellness tourism from two perspectives. First, in terms of how wellness tourism is perceived from a scientific and academic standpoint, second, exploring how wellness tourism evolves from the tourist's perspective while maintaining academic quality makes it worthy of scholarly investigation. The development of the discipline as a fundamental part of this evolution will also be presented.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is conducted to delve into the authentic value of wellness tourism from various perspectives, incorporating fundamental concepts from experts as references, the selection of previous research data, and the data collection techniques to be employed. Based on the background presented, this research can be classified as qualitative research. Qualitative research utilizes methods that focus on investigating phenomena, where the researcher acts as the instrument. The data collection techniques emphasize meaning and present phenomena or research objects through social activities, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals or groups (Sugiyono, 2020)

As supporting instruments for this research, data and information are gathered from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, and previous research. In connection with this, the study will discuss (1) the perspectives of psychology experts on wellness, (2) the understanding of the authentic value of wellness tourism from the practitioners of wellness tourism, and (3) the implications of external parties' negative perceptions of wellness tourism. This research essentially utilizes triangulation, which involves examining the fundamental ideas of a phenomenon from various perspectives to obtain a higher level of truth (Sugiyono, 2015). Triangulation aims to enhance the measurement of the validity and credibility of information. Information was collected by conducting interviews with several sources and informants who were directly involved with wellness tourism, such as yoga trainers, tourists participating in yoga, and business people in the field of yoga itself. Additionally, the research also involves on-site observations related to the studied case, focusing on a specific area, namely the village of Sayan in Ubud.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research is conducted in the village of Sayan, located in the Ubud area of Gianyar Regency, Bali. Based on the observations made in the village of Sayan, there are several establishments that delve deeply into wellness, starting with yoga, meditation, retreats, and spas. Participating tourists come from diverse backgrounds, ranging from local to

international visitors. The available facilities are quite comprehensive, encompassing environmental aspects, professional personnel, and the active involvement of the local government and residents in contributing to the development of wellness in the village.

Perspectives on Wellness Tourism

Given the multitude of perspectives, this significantly influences the understanding of wellness itself. As explained in the background, wellness is generally interpreted as a balance between physical, mental, and spiritual health, resulting in an overall sense of well-being.

"If interpreted according to the field of psychology, wellness can be called psychological well-being which means overall well-being which is influenced by several factors such as mental, physical and environmental health."

(SA, 16 Oktober 2023)

Based on the statement by the psychologist above, it has provided scientific support for the understanding of wellness itself. Currently, many tourists embark on wellness-themed journeys with the aim of healing or simply seeking tranquility to take a break from the hustle and bustle of city life. Alongside the progress of time, this has impacted tourists, with many now daring to engage in wellness tourism based solely on knowledge obtained from social media.

"This is my first time coming to a yoga, and I first know about it from exploring Instagram."

(Br, 14 Oktober 2023)

"As long as I maintain and sell this yoga activity, in my opinion it seems like yoga is more spiritual in nature."

(St, 14 Oktober 2023)

This supports how the image of wellness is perceived by tourists participating in yoga and wellness providers themselves. Most tourists relying on social media tend to interpret wellness as activities that align with a peaceful environment and come to seek experiences without fully understanding the profound benefits of those activities. From the perspective of the sellers, wellness is often limited to activities more focused on spirituality and tranquility. This can be attributed to the fact that wellness lacks optimal education. Therefore, wellness education needs to be well-implemented to enhance in-depth knowledge for tourists and strengthen the authentic value of wellness.

Image of Wellness Tourism

Several aspects influence the image of wellness tourism. The authentic value of wellness itself inherently provides a satisfying image. However, the challenge lies in the lack of education and the limited influence of information from social media, leading to a decrease in the authentic value of wellness. Additionally, there are individuals who use their mental health as a reason to engage in wellness, using it as an escape from their responsibilities.

"The views of many people will never be unified, because wellness tourism involves many parties and each individual or organization has different goals. Then, if individuals use wellness negatively, they use self-diagnosis to escape from their responsibilities."

(SA, 16 Oktober 2023)

The potential held by wellness tourism is a necessity for businesses to capitalize on

opportunities. In addition to the significant potential of wellness tourism as a tourist destination, tourists who optimize wellness holistically will have a different value compared to those who are merely seeking experiences to satisfy their curiosity. This is further complicated by individuals who use wellness as an escape and only rely on self-diagnosis as a basis. Self-diagnosis is a condition where an individual understands their feelings and allows for the interpretation of various things (Groot, 2010).

“Most tourists from Europe use yoga and meditation activities for their health, and most of them are also elderly. Meanwhile, if people come from Asia or locally, they are more interested in fulfilling their FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).” (Nn, 14 Oktober 2023)

Thus, this has become a factual occurrence in the field: the diverse image of wellness is caused by various parties involved with their respective values and assessments of wellness tourism.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the perspective of wellness tourism is influenced by various parties, and this plays a crucial role in shaping the image of wellness tourism in the eyes of tourists. How information circulates on social media is important to present informatively and accurately, correcting any misconceptions that may have previously had a negative impact on wellness tourism. Therefore, the use and promotion of wellness activities should be organized attractively and informatively to enhance the appeal of wellness tourism and deepen the authentic value of wellness itself.

Secondly, the image of wellness tourism actually already has a distinctive authentic meaning if all parties have the same knowledge. From the perspective of wellness tourism providers, it is essential to consider steps to educate tourists so that they have views aligned with the authentic values of wellness and not merely exploit opportunities for individual or organizational gain.

On the contrary, from the perspective of tourists, it is crucial to discern and wisely consume information related to wellness tourism to preserve and uphold the distinctive authentic values of wellness itself. In conclusion, it can be affirmed that wellness tourism has significant positive impacts for those involved, but it certainly requires optimal and sustainable contributions. It is also hoped that this research can be a means for practitioners to overcome problems that hinder the development of wellness tourism or things that can damage the value of wellness tourism. Moreover, this research provides new insights into the development of wellness tourism in Desa Sayan, Bali, and globally.

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