

Typology of wellness tourism based on traditional healing in Bali

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Abstract: Bali has become a leading destination for wellness tourism rooted in traditional healing practices, driven by global interest in holistic well-being and spiritual travel. This study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating field observations, interviews, literature reviews, and focus group discussions across Gianyar, Bangli, and Badung Regencies to explore how wellness experiences are socially and culturally constructed. Findings reveal four key domains—Fitness, Healing, Therapy, and Treatment—categorized into Soft Wellness (preventive, lifestyle-based) and Hard Wellness (restorative, spiritual). These practices reflect the interaction between local traditions and global wellness trends. Theoretical frameworks such as the Experience Economy, Cultural Capital, and the Global Wellness Institute’s Wellbeing Model are applied to analyze the co-creation and symbolic value of wellness experiences. Despite rapid growth, challenges persist, including limited regulation, a lack of professional branding, and insufficient institutional support. This study recommends strategic policy measures to strengthen governance, maintain cultural authenticity, and promote sustainable development of Bali’s wellness tourism sector.

Keywords: Bali, tourists, tourist destinations, traditional healing, wellness tourism

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Introduction

Medical tourism has evolved into one of the most dynamic sectors within the global tourism economy in recent decades, driven by the convergence of healthcare advancements and leisure travel. This niche enables individuals to access medical or wellness services while engaging in cultural and recreational experiences, thus meeting both functional and aspirational travel motivations. Empirical evidence shows that medical tourism has grown approximately 50% faster than the overall global tourism industry (Rosalina et al., 2015) with projected annual revenues reaching USD 38–55 billion (Rosalina et al., 2015). In Asia, India, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore dominate the market, collectively holding the largest share. By contrast, Indonesia, despite its tourism appeal, has yet to secure a strong foothold, as most outbound Indonesian medical travelers continue to seek treatment in Malaysia or Singapore (Rosalina et al., 2015). To address this, since 2014, the Indonesian government has undertaken strategic initiatives, including the accreditation of hospitals, professional certification for medical staff, and the adoption of international service protocols in collaboration with the Joint Commission International.

Bali, one of Indonesia’s most globally recognized destinations, has begun to align itself more systematically with the development of health tourism. Its medical infrastructure spans from high-capacity public facilities to internationally accredited hospitals designed to serve both domestic and foreign patients. The Prof. dr. I.G.N.G. Ngoerah Central General Hospital (formerly Sanglah Hospital) functions as the province’s primary referral hospital, delivering a wide spectrum of medical services. The Bali International Medical Centre (BIMC) in Nusa Dua, accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards International (ACHSI) since 2014, stands as a

benchmark for global-standard healthcare delivery in the region. A more recent milestone is the inauguration of the Bali International Hospital (BIH) in Sanur in June 2025. Situated within the Sanur Special Economic Zone, BIH is a green-certified facility with around 250 beds and specialized centers in cardiology, oncology, neurology, gastro-hepatology, and orthopedics. Its design integrates advanced medical care, post-treatment wellness programs, and cultural immersion experiences—positioning Bali to reduce outbound medical flows and capture a greater share of the high-value health tourism market.

Within the broader health tourism framework, Bali offers two complementary segments: medical tourism, adhering to conventional international models, and wellness tourism, deeply embedded in *usada* Bali, the island's indigenous healing tradition. In Balinese philosophy, health reflects a state of equilibrium between *causa sekala* (naturalistic causes) and *causa niskala* (personalistic or supernatural causes). This worldview supports a holistic conception of well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Over time, Bali's wellness tourism has expanded from localized community practices to a wide range of services, including herbal remedies (*jamu*, *lolo*), traditional massage, sessions with *balian* (traditional healers), spa treatments (*solus per aqua*), yoga and meditation retreats, detoxification programs, organic gastronomy, and aesthetic or cosmetic treatments. Bali's international prominence in this field is reinforced by its ranking among the top global wellness destinations, with an 88% preference rate among wellness travelers (The Global Spa and Wellness Economy Monitor, Kompas.com, June 19, 2015). Ubud, in particular, has become a focal point for these activities, blending traditional, contemporary, and post-modern modalities.

However, the sector's rapid growth is tempered by structural challenges. The absence of a clear typology distinguishing medical from wellness tourism has led to fragmented development, inconsistent service standards, and limited policy coordination. Providers operate independently—ranging from local healers to luxury wellness resorts—without cohesive governance mechanisms or standardized quality assurance. This fragmentation is particularly concerning given the diversity of visitor motivations, which span from achieving physical and spiritual balance to undergoing advanced medical procedures, seeking relaxation, and embracing therapeutic lifestyle changes such as detoxification or organic nutrition. Without a coherent framework, the sector risks both diminishing service quality and diluting the authenticity of its cultural assets.

Beyond its economic potential, wellness tourism makes significant contributions to cultural preservation, employment generation, and destination differentiation. Sutarya (2016) notes that its growth has encouraged hotels, resorts, and wellness centers to incorporate *usada*-based treatments, spa services, organic cuisine, and yoga programs into their offerings. These innovations not only extend visitor stays but also enhance experiential value and product diversity. In line with the Experience Economy framework (Pine B. & James H., 1998) Wellness travelers are increasingly seeking immersive, transformative experiences rather than passive consumption. Similarly, the concept of Cultural Capital is evident in the consumption of traditional healing, which provides not only therapeutic benefits but also symbolic value and a sense of authenticity.

Against this backdrop, the present study develops a typology of wellness tourism in Bali that is grounded in its cultural and spiritual heritage. By differentiating between Soft Wellness (preventive, lifestyle-oriented) and Hard Wellness (restorative, spiritually embedded) modalities, the study offers both a conceptual framework and practical recommendations for sustainable, culturally sensitive development. The findings aim to inform academic debates on the localization of global wellness trends, the commodification of heritage, and governance models for emerging wellness destinations, while providing policy-relevant insights for Bali and comparable contexts worldwide.

Literature Review

1. Global Trends and Definitions of Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism is among the fastest-growing segments of global tourism, driven by increasing awareness of holistic health, preventive lifestyles, and post-pandemic wellness priorities. According to the Global Wellness Institute (2023), wellness tourism refers to travel intended to maintain or enhance one's well-being, encompassing both physical and spiritual components. The sector has shown consistent growth globally and is particularly robust in Asia,

where spiritual traditions and indigenous health philosophies remain deeply embedded in tourism offerings (Gonzales et al., 2001). Bali, with its rich spiritual heritage and ritual-based healing culture, has become a focal point in this movement, offering integrated experiences that blend cultural authenticity with contemporary wellness trends. This growth trajectory has been confirmed by broader studies of wellness economics and supported by global travelers' preference for destinations that integrate natural landscapes with spiritual rejuvenation (Prayag & Jankee, 2009). Furthermore, the repositioning of wellness tourism following COVID-19 places greater emphasis on preventive healing, sustainability, and more profound emotional outcomes (Heintzman, 2020).

2. Typologies of Wellness Experiences

Recent literature conceptualizes wellness tourism through a typology that distinguishes between Soft Wellness and Hard Wellness modalities. Soft Wellness encompasses lifestyle-focused, preventive services, including yoga, meditation, spa treatments, and mindfulness programs. In contrast, Hard Wellness refers to more intensive therapeutic practices, including clinical interventions and traditional or indigenous healing (Smith & Puczkó, 2008). However, emerging studies emphasize that wellness tourists often traverse a continuum between these categories rather than viewing them as binaries (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). In the Balinese context, this hybrid typology is exemplified by the coexistence of spa resorts, yoga centers, and indigenous healing practices such as melukat rituals and sessions with *balian* (traditional healers) (Rosalina et al., 2015). The coexistence of modern and spiritual wellness offerings in Bali exemplifies the concept of "existential authenticity," where travelers seek a deeper understanding of themselves through culturally immersive healing experiences.

3. Experience Economy and Transformational Travel

The shift toward wellness travel is closely linked to what Pine B. & James H. (1998), describe as the Experience Economy—an era in which consumers, including tourists, seek immersive, emotionally resonant, and transformative experiences. Rather than passive consumption, wellness travelers pursue engagements that stimulate physical, emotional, and spiritual change. Supporting this framework, find that emotional fulfillment, experience quality, and perceived transformation significantly shape loyalty and revisit intentions among wellness tourists. Kirillova et al. (2017) further argue that wellness experiences contribute to anxiety reduction and identity formation by fostering existential authenticity. In Bali, this is evident in the rise of wellness retreats that integrate nature-based therapy, sacred rituals, and self-reflection, reinforcing the island's role as both a sanctuary and a site of personal growth.

4. Authenticity, Cultural Capital, and Ethical Challenges

The appeal of wellness tourism in Bali is not only therapeutic but also symbolic. Scholars suggest that traditional healing practices are consumed not merely for their efficacy but for the symbolic value they confer on the tourist, especially in terms of authenticity and cultural distinction. In this context, authenticity becomes a strategic asset: tourists seek genuine cultural engagement, while local actors mobilize spiritual heritage as a form of economic strategy (Aina, 2013; Cohen, 1988). However, this intersection also raises ethical challenges, including risks of commodifying sacred knowledge and spiritual spaces. Reisinger & Steiner (2006) caution that excessive market-driven adaptation may dilute the meaning and authenticity of cultural practices, undermining their role in community resilience and spiritual heritage. This tension must be addressed through culturally sensitive governance and participatory tourism planning (Plog, 1974).

Methodology

This section should be easy enough for any reader to repeat the study under similar conditions. This research employed a qualitative, exploratory approach to investigate the typology and spatial distribution of wellness tourism practices in Bali, particularly those rooted in traditional healing systems. The qualitative design was chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of the cultural, spiritual, and experiential dimensions of wellness tourism—dimensions that are not easily

captured through quantitative metrics alone (Denzin, 2009). Aligned with the interpretivist paradigm, this study sought to construct meaning from the subjective perspectives of local actors, practitioners, and tourists. The aim was to understand how wellness practices are perceived, experienced, and transformed in the context of Bali's socio-cultural landscape. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for tourism studies, where values, beliefs, and identity play a central role (Decrop, 1999). Data were collected through a triangulated strategy involving participant observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions (FGDs). These methods enabled both depth and breadth in understanding wellness practices and their positioning within broader tourism dynamics. Research sites were selected in three districts—Gianyar, Bangli, and Badung—due to their prominence in the emergence and diversification of wellness tourism products.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and FGDs at wellness tourism sites in Gianyar, Bangli, and Badung. Participants were recruited via purposive and snowball sampling, involving local practitioners, tourism officials, entrepreneurs, and tourists. Initial contacts were obtained through community referrals and local tourism institutions. The interview protocol was developed based on key literature and refined through pilot interviews to ensure cultural relevance and clarity. Open-ended questions explored perspectives on wellness practices, healing experiences, and the dynamics of tourism.

Sampling was purposive and theoretical, targeting actors who represent the wellness tourism ecosystem, including *balian* (traditional healers), yoga and meditation practitioners, spiritual retreat managers, wellness-focused entrepreneurs, government tourism officers, and tourists. Twenty-five informants participated in interviews lasting 45–90 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Balinese, Indonesian, or English, depending on informant preference, and were audio-recorded with consent. Data analysis followed Braun & Clarke (2021), updated reflexive thematic analysis model, which emphasizes researcher subjectivity, iteration, and theme development grounded in rich narrative data. Coding proceeded through open, focused, and thematic cycles, using memo-writing and constant comparison to refine categories. NVivo 12 was used to assist in organizing and visualizing the emerging codes and relationships. To ensure research quality, we adhered to the trustworthiness criteria outlined by Nowell et al. (2017), including credibility (via triangulation and member checking), dependability (audit trail), transferability (thick description), and confirmability (reflexive journaling). Ethical clearance and community permissions were obtained prior to fieldwork. Ultimately, this qualitative strategy allowed the research to reveal nuanced patterns of meaning and practice, capturing how traditional healing is not only commodified but also re-signified in Bali's growing wellness tourism sector.

Results and Discussions

1. Distribution of Wellness Tourism Practices

Geographically, the distribution of practice can be divided into three regions, namely:

a. The Core Area includes Ubud village and its surroundings

The development of wellness tourism (hereinafter referred to as WT) in Ubud has been ongoing since the 1980s. The actors who drive WT are divided into several types of actors, including traditionally rooted individual actors, modern individual actors (generally people outside Bali), traditional institution or group actors, and modern institution or group actors. The WT actors spread in Ubud into various forms, such as Yoga teachers, vocational centers, massage therapists, spiritual shops, yoga studios, ashrams, meditation groups, *griyas*, and several other types.

Although the frenetic world of WT in Ubud is dominated by the WT of the eastern world, which is packaged in a modern way, the forerunner of the outbreak of WT is not from the type of modern WT but from a traditional wellness practice of a resident named Pekak Liyer. Liyer is a traditional Palmistry healer figure, who is a method of fortune-telling through the palm line. Palmistry itself is a statistical science based on data. Reading hand lines is a technique based on the results of research on people's tendencies based on palm patterns. Pekak Liyer practices Palmistry at his home in Banjar Pengosekan, Mas, Ubud. Coincidentally, a novelist visited him in the 2000s and was fascinated by Liyer's ability to predict his future.

b. The intermediate area, covering East Gianyar and Bangli Regency

The forms of wellness tourism practices in the intermediate area include wound-healing places and Balinese *usadha* practices, which are often found in practitioners' homes or ashrams, and are widely spread throughout the intermediate area, covering the East Gianyar regency and Bangli regency. Some of these healing service providers are accustomed to receiving visitors from the tourist sector, but most are not experienced in this area. In general, these places are disseminated by word of mouth and not by a specific means of promotion.

c. Outermost area, covering Karangasem Regency

The variety of WT practice forms in the outermost region is like that in the intermediate region, the difference being that in these outermost regions, the WT products are more varied. Even some WT service providers in this area have products that are the forerunners or the beginning of product development. One of them, for example, the yoga classes at Gedong Giri Ashram in Candidasa, as claimed by the manager, are the first yoga classes provided for foreign tourists in Bali, dating back to the 1970s. In this intermediate area, there is also Ratu Bagus Ashram, precisely located in Muncan Village, Karang Asem. The ashram already has hundreds of foreign disciples with very distinctive meditation techniques.

2. Typology of Wellness Tourism Practices

"Pidan kene anggone *boreh*, pidan kene anggone *loloh*." (Once upon a time, we wanted to make it a poison or a spice...) (Informant interview, Karangasem, September 9, 2021).

This fragment of the informant's statement describes one of the parktik wellness tourism (fitness tourism) types of medicine and healing, based on the local wisdom of the Balinese people. Wellness *practices like this* have been developing for quite a long time in Bali, as old as the Balinese civilization itself. Fitness practices have become an integral part of the Balinese healthy way of life, serving as a means of treatment, healing, and disease prevention.

Along with the affirmation of tourism as a way of life (since 1969), fitness practices began to be embedded in it and increasingly gained market share in the tourism world, as health tourism developed in the late 1970s. Decades later, Bali wellness tourism has become an attractive option for tourists as the "fitness movement" emerges around the world. Now, fitness tourism has spread to various tourist destinations in Bali in various forms and types. As seen in Table 1, qualitative data analysis of this study shows that four types of wellness tourism develop in Bali, namely: (a) Type of fitness; (b) Treatment and healing; (c) therapy; and (d) Treatment. The following description is a more detailed description of each of these types.

Table 1. Typology of wellness tourism in Bali

No	Types of wellness tourism	Wellness tourism
1	Fitness Type	a. SPA (<i>solus per aqua/water treatment</i>). b. <i>sport, wellness, Tourism</i> , c. Yoga.
2	Types of Treatment and Healing	a. Balian (<i>Balian panengen, Pangiwa, Ketaxon, Kapican, Usada, and Mixed</i>) b. Healing with incantations c. Healing by needling d. Detox with yellow coconut water e. Healing with Pranic Energy f. <i>Hugging</i> (bathing) in a lucky spring
3	Type of Therapy	a. Laughter Therapy b. Massage Therapy c. Organic and vegetarian food therapy d. Meditation therapy (stress healing)
4	Treatment Type	a. Beauty clinic (body, face, skin) b. Body massage, <i>manicure</i> , and <i>pedicure</i>

Source: Qualitative Data, 2021

a. Fitness Type (Soft Wellness)

The Global Wellness Institute (2018) states that fitness (wellness) is an effort to actively achieve through activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to holistic health conditions. The

holistic health condition in question is a balance between body, mind, and spirit. In its development in Bali, this type of fitness is more intended for healthy individuals. In general, tourists look for certain fitness therapy methods to get a better quality of life as well as maintain health and fitness on their trip.

In line with the Global Wellness Institute's (2018) identification, the type of fitness (tourism) that develops in Bali encompasses six aspects: physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, environmental, and social. Several fitness service businesses in Bali integrate these six aspects into every fitness service and practice they present. A healthy physique, strong mentality, peaceful spirituality, a clean and comfortable environment, and friendly social conditions are aspects that are consistently presented in every fitness service practice.

In the view of fitness service managers, it is stated that, to obtain perfect fitness, these six aspects must be able to be fulfilled in a balanced manner in every tourist activity. Tourists (both domestic and foreign) who want to achieve full fitness must balance these six components in their travel activities. He must maintain a healthy physique, be mentally strong, spiritually calm, have stable emotions, a comfortable environment, and a calm social situation.

To date, the development of fitness-type wellness tourism has not been widespread in Bali. This type is still relatively exclusive because the service model still prioritizes the patterns of luxury (berclass) and modernity (in line with technological advances). The most common examples of this type are fitness through sports (sport wellness tourism), Yoga, Gymnastics, and spas (solus per aqua/treatment with water). The type of sports fitness that develops among them is in the form of fitness services in the form of fitness, gymnastics, leisurely walking, and breathing. Types of Yoga gymnastics include the practice of Yoga in open and closed spaces, involving activities such as meditation, relaxation, breathing, and body gymnastics, for the purpose of developing harmony between the body, mind, and the surrounding environment. Spa fitness types (solus per aqua/ water treatments) include fitness with massage techniques, massage, body scrubs, and aromatherapy.

However, Bali also developed a type of fitness in the form of healthy gymnastics that incorporates breathing. One type of fitness practiced by the SN healthy gymnastics community (Satria Nusantara). This healthy exercise, which combines body movements with breathing, also stimulates chakra points that can generate good energy for overall body health.

"SN is a potential that can be developed. There have been 80 years of development in Indonesia. I've been up to level 10; it's still an elementary level, and there are many more levels to go. Very good for health. Many people recover from their illnesses because they participated in SN. In SN, it is essentially a combination of breathing and motion. I was once told to explain in terms of motion. In all these SN movements, it turns out to rub certain acupoints, and these are chakra points. These points are all combined in the SN, resulting in energy. With that energy, immunity in the body increases, so that our body can fight all types of diseases that already exist or will enter the body. Participating in SN means we have taken a step towards disease prevention. We know prevention is far more important than cure. This is what must be developed" (4th informant interview, Karangasem, September 9, 2021).

According to informants, this type of fitness can promote overall health, aid in recovery from illness, and maintain physical fitness. Like other types of fitness, this type of fitness is also guided by instructors (teachers) to direct movement patterns in order to obtain optimal fitness benefits. If the type of Spa, yoga, or fitness requires a slightly specific environment (place), then the SN type of fitness is not like that. This type of fitness can be conducted in open fields, enclosed spaces, or other suitable locations that are suitable for small-group fitness activities.

If considered as a whole, wellness tourism in this type of fitness is known to emphasize the importance of a better quality of life, and such quality can not only be achieved by having a healthy physical condition but also by being fit. Fitness can be achieved by maintaining harmony between body, mind, and spirit. This factor enables the various forms of fitness listed above to be adaptable in the ever-changing tourism industry and increasingly in demand by both domestic and foreign tourists.

b. Types of Treatment and Healing (Hard Wellness Tourism)

In addition to the types of fitness mentioned above, the typology of wellness tourism that appears capable of developing and being dynamic in the Bali tourism industry is wellness tourism

with a focus on treatment and healing. Qualitative data analysis of this study reveals that this type of wellness tourism is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of Bali, and can even be said to have a heritage in medicine and healing. Balinese people usually call it Balian, or in more popular terminology, Usada Bali

As has been widely practiced so far, this type of tourism (*usada Bali*) emphasizes more on healing and healing techniques based on the concept of *sekala-niskala*, a cultural perspective that emphasizes that body fitness can be obtained if the body is protected from infection (*causa sekala/ natural*) or exposed to supernatural forces (*causa niskala/ magic*). In the past, this perspective was considered archaic and irrational; however, in the current era of digital evolution, it has begun to be revitalized, allowing for the identification of more natural, healthy, and holistic fitness practices.

Based on such a context, the qualitative data analysis of this study found that there are four types of wellness tourism in terms of treatment and healing, namely: (a) *Balian*, (b) *Mantera*, (c) Tneedle Rib, (d) Detox, (e) Pranic Energy, and (f) *Melukat*.

A *Balian*, often referred to as a Balinese shaman, is an individual who can heal or treat the sick. Balinese culture views individuals like this as those who acquire healing and healing skills through heredity, *taksu*, *pica*, or who deliberately learn from other *Balians*. Based on this expertise in Balinese culture, six types of Balian are known, namely: (a) *Balian panengen*, (b) *Pangiwa*, (c) *Ketaxon*, (d) *Kapican*, (e) *Usada*, and (f) Mixed. All Balian can be categorized as wellness tourism because they all strive for the realization of fitness and health in the body in a balanced manner. To achieve that, the body must be completely free of the various scales. Pain in these glasses is more of an imbalanced condition between body, mind, and spirit, with various causalities on these scales.

"Physical pain and suffering are only the visible manifestations; there is also a non-physical dimension, particularly involving the mind and soul. If the mind and soul are afflicted, the body will inevitably be unwell. To heal, it is crucial to first identify the underlying cause of the problem. As a *balian* (traditional healer), I must thoroughly understand this. Treatment may involve medicine, water, or other means, but pinpointing the exact cause of the illness is essential—otherwise, the body will not truly recover and may even deteriorate further." (3rd informant interview, Karangasem, September 9, 2021).

The informant's statement described *wellness tourism* as being achieved through traditional medicine and healing, a treatment technique rooted in the traditional heritage. Fitness can not only be obtained through modern techniques but can also be obtained through traditional techniques that have become part of the tradition of seeking fitness. Like wellness tourism efforts in the era of *Kekikinian*, tradition-based wellness tourism also uses medicinal facilities (herbs), banquets, or other means for the purpose of obtaining fitness (balance of body, mind, and spirit).

One such other means is spells. *Mantera*, also known as *japa*, is one of the methods commonly used by Balian to treat and cure diseases. In these spells, some are accompanied by medicine (*tetamba*), and some are without medicine. Similar to other forms of wellness tourism, this mantra is also one of the techniques used to get fit, although the fitness in question is more likely to lead to recovery from illness. However, in principle, both restore the body to a healthy and fit condition.

"As far as I know, in Karangasem, there are more traditional treatments with *mantera*. The medium is water. I also just knew that. As it turns out, water is the most sensitive conductor of electricity. The mantra is chanted into the air. *Mantera* speech is based on *Nawa Sanga*, if *Ang* is pronounced where the organ is addressed. Where is it going? After that, the water is drunk, and then the *mantera* is given to the sick body. I only found out about all this after I read about the traditional medicine of the Pranic System. Most people don't know much about this because traditional medicine is not like a doctor's treatment". (3rd informant interview, Karangasem, September 9, 2021).

This informant's statement illustrates that incantations are commonly used in medicine to obtain healing from diseases. Mantras have become an integral part of the medical system that Balian utilizes in his efforts to promote healing and body fitness in his patients. Thus, incantations are also one means of integrating fitness into treatment and healing techniques.

Similar in value and function to *matera*, one of the *wellness tourism* practices for this type of treatment and healing can be found in the practices of needleprick, detoxification with yellow

coconut water, healing with Pranic energy, and cleansing oneself to achieve fitness through *mlukat* (bathing) in lucky springs. All these techniques and efforts are wellness tourism practices that essentially restore the body, mind, and spirit to a harmonious state, allowing for the attainment of fitness through various techniques. Wellness tourism practices like this in Bali have been around for quite a while and have even become part of his way of life, allowing him to achieve this balance of fruit and fitness.

c. Type of Therapy

One more type of wellness tourism that is now also dynamic with the development of Bali tourism is therapy. This type is part of wellness tourism, which aims to improve body freshness (physical), restore body health from illness, body care for healing, or seek re-fitness with certain techniques, strategies, and efforts. One form of therapy that has now developed in Bali is laughter therapy. This therapy serves to reduce stress, reduce depression levels, increase solidarity and togetherness, and increase body immunity. This function is in harmony with the meaning of fitness itself, which emphasizes aspects of harmony between body, mind, and spirit. Laughter therapy is one of the therapeutic models that can help the body of each individual to function optimally.

"I already knew that. Now, laughter therapy is developing in Bali. Many benefits can help relieve stress. In Bali, this, if not wrong, is in Ubud and here in Karangasem. If in Karangasem, it is in the Ashram. The ashram of Ratu Bagus, which I heard about even there, the way of therapy is told to inhale tobacco and suck the smell of mako. That's what I heard. In Ubud, I don't really know, but I heard it just by laughing. But laugh in different techniques and ways. Some laughed out loud, some were held in the stomach, some were with their mouths closed—all kinds of things. Everything has its own purpose" (Second informant interview, Karangasem, September 9, 2021).

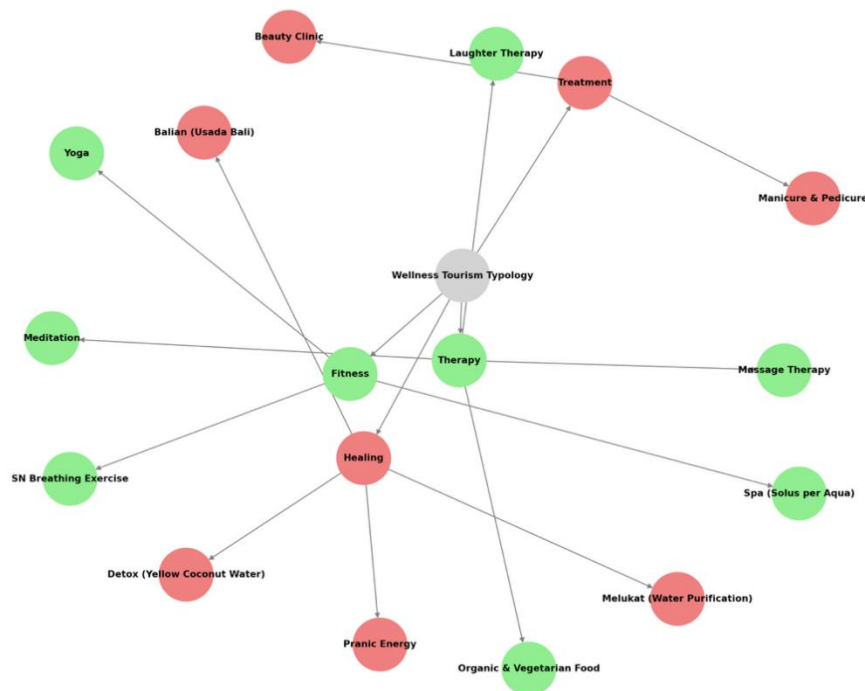
The informant's statement illustrates that this type of wellness tourism (therapy) has long developed in the world of Bali tourism. This therapy is proven to be able to restore body fitness after stress, depression, or other diseases that interfere with metabolism. Unlike other types of wellness tourism, in this type of therapy, pain is understood as a symptom of misalignment between the mind and soul that has an impact on physical body pain. Healing through laughter therapy in the field can restore physical fitness because laughter is believed to release the burdens of the mind and create an atmosphere of joy within oneself, thereby creating balance and harmony between the body, mind, and spirit of the individual experiencing stress or depression. Therefore, this therapy can be classified as one of the wellness tourism activities in its distinctive form, is easy to do, and can be done by anyone.

In addition to laughter therapy, Bali also developed a wellness tourism model that included massage therapy, organic food, and meditation therapy. *Massage* therapy is an effort to restore or increase body freshness (physically) by pressing on certain points on the body. Two types of massage therapy have developed, namely: (a) traditional massage and (b) modern massage, also known as massage. Both types of therapy have been widespread in Bali and have become a habit to find health or body fitness with various causes and problems (such as fatigue, sprains, lumbago, pain, and others). The only difference is that one still uses traditional rural services, while the other is modern and integrated with other tourism service businesses. However, both have become alternative therapies for achieving health and fitness.

In addition to such massage therapy, Bali has also developed by promoting the consumption of organic food and meditation. Organic food therapy is an effort to gain body fitness by choosing and consuming healthy, fresh, pesticide-free, and nutritious foods. Meditation is an effort to achieve physical and mental well-being by calming the mind and processing emotions to relieve stress and control anxiety, thereby achieving peace of heart and soul. Both organic food therapy and meditation lead to the achievement of fitness (harmony between body, mind, and spirit). The difference lies in the medium used to achieve fitness.

Both forms of wellness therapy —namely, meditative and physical-spiritual practices—are increasingly prominent within Bali's tourism landscape, although their availability is not evenly distributed across all destinations. Based on the results of qualitative analysis, these modalities are particularly concentrated in Ubud and Karangasem, with Ubud offering a wider range of options across both types, while Karangasem places a stronger emphasis on meditative practices rooted in spiritual tranquility.

This empirical pattern reflects a broader shift in the paradigm of tourist motivation. Wellness tourism in Bali is no longer framed solely as a form of relaxation or escapism (sunlust). However, it is progressively oriented toward deeper goals—such as psychological restoration (spirituality), environmental awareness (sustainability), experiential exploration, and existential reflection (wanderlust). Increasingly, tourists choose Bali as a destination to pursue holistic well-being, seeking balance among body, mind, and spirit through culturally immersive and spiritually grounded activities. To analytically frame this transformation, Figure 1 presents a conceptual mind map that synthesizes the typology of wellness tourism practices in Bali. This framework visually distinguishes between Soft Wellness and Hard Wellness dimensions, offering a structured lens through which to interpret the diversity and depth of wellness experiences available across the island.



Source: Research Result (2025)

Figure 1. Conceptual mind map of wellness tourism typologies in Bali

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual typology of wellness tourism practices identified in Bali, synthesized through thematic analysis of field data. The visualization categorizes wellness offerings into four primary domains: Fitness, Healing, Therapy, and Treatment, each encompassing a range of culturally embedded practices. These domains are further grouped into Soft Wellness (preventive and lifestyle-oriented) and Hard Wellness (restorative and spiritually rooted), reflecting different health philosophies and service modalities within the wellness tourism ecosystem. This typological structure reflects the multidimensional nature of wellness tourism, as it is both an economic activity and a form of cultural performance. In alignment with Pine B. & James H. (1998), the experience economy, soft wellness modalities such as yoga, spa, meditation, and lifestyle therapies are designed to provide immersive, transformative experiences that engage tourists not just as consumers, but as co-creators of meaning and wellbeing. These practices operate within the esthetic, educational, and escapist realms of experience, positioning Bali as a therapeutic retreat in the global wellness landscape.

Conversely, Hard Wellness practices such as traditional Balinese healing (balian), melukat rituals, and energy-based therapies are deeply rooted in indigenous epistemologies and spiritual

cosmologies. Concept of Cultural Capital, these practices are perceived by both local actors and tourists as “authentic” and symbolically potent. Their consumption reflects a growing demand for experiential depth, legitimacy, and cultural engagement in tourism, often transcending the clinical definitions of health. This framework also resonates strongly with the Wellbeing Tourism Framework proposed by the Global Wellness Institute (2018), which conceptualizes wellness as an integration of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social dimensions. Each node in the mind map reflects one or more of these dimensions, underscoring the holistic and systemic nature of Bali’s wellness tourism. As such, wellness tourism in Bali emerges not merely as a commodified service but as a convergence of cultural meaning, personal transformation, and global wellness trends.

d. Type of Treatment

This type of treatment is one of the wellness tourism practices that is also growing in several destinations in Bali, although the growth is not as fast as that of SPA, yoga, and Meditation. As seen in Figure 1, two types of treatments are now the destination of wellness tourism in Bali, namely: (a) Beauty clinics (body, face, and skin) and (b) Body massage, manicure, and pedicure. Beauty clinics are mostly aimed at individuals or tourists who want to restore or get health and fitness of the body, skin, or face, while body massage, manicure, and pedicure are efforts of tourists to obtain fitness through body care, so that during tourism, a healthy and fit quality of life is maintained. Beauty clinics prioritize fitness through health methods, involving medical personnel and medications, while body massage, manicures, and pedicures are sufficient with the assistance of skilled personnel who have received specialized training in these skills. In many cases, beauty is accompanied by modern equipment and technology, while body massage (including manicure and pedicure) is more often equipped with herbs, massage oils, aromatherapy, and music therapy, as well as clean, healthy, and comfortable rooms, along with friendly service.

The observations of this study show that the two are indeed different in practice and action, but in principle, both aim to create fitness conditions for tourists, thereby improving the quality and meaning of travel. For this reason, tourists who direct their tours for such purposes will always try to maintain fitness or do fitness activities in every tour activity. The analysis of qualitative data in this study has shown such tendencies. Geographically, the distribution of wellness tourism practices in three districts in Bali can be divided into three regions: the core area, which includes Ubud village and its surroundings; the intermediate area, which includes Gianyar and Bangli; and the outer area, which includes Karangasem. Each type of wellness tourism has a different character and distribution. Embriotic wellness tourism, especially yoga, comes from the Candidasa area of Karangasem.

The typology of wellness tourism in Bali can be divided into four types, namely: fitness type, treatment or healing type, therapy type, and treatment type. Traditional-based wellness tourism in Bali has great potential for development but still faces several obstacles, including a lack of clear standardization, inadequate branding, unprofessional management, and weak marketing. To respond to these identified constraints, this study proposes several strategic recommendations for key stakeholders. First, local governments should initiate the development of standardized guidelines that ensure service quality, practitioner competency, safety, and ethical practices in wellness tourism. This includes establishing certification systems for traditional healers (*balian*) and wellness service providers, in collaboration with health authorities and cultural institutions. Such standards would enhance the legitimacy, consistency, and trustworthiness of Bali’s wellness tourism sector.

Second, a place-based wellness branding strategy should be developed through collaboration between tourism boards, local communities, and wellness entrepreneurs. This branding must highlight Bali’s unique value proposition, which integrates traditional healing wisdom and spiritual heritage, while aligning with global wellness trends. Campaigns should promote authenticity and cultural sensitivity, avoiding over-commercialization of sacred practices. Third, wellness tourism operators should be encouraged to invest in capacity building, especially in areas such as sustainable practice management, intercultural communication, and holistic health literacy. Workshops, training programs, and local-global knowledge exchanges could help raise professionalism and service quality across the sector. Lastly, a stronger emphasis on digital

platforms and curated wellness packages can help Bali tap into high-value international wellness markets. Online visibility, transparent information, and targeted storytelling can foster deeper engagement and position Bali not just as a destination, but as a global model for culturally rooted wellness tourism.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on wellness tourism by offering a typological framework rooted in Bali's traditional healing practices. The research reveals that a dynamic intersection of cultural heritage, spiritual epistemologies, and global health-oriented travel trends shapes wellness tourism in Bali. The classification into Soft and Hard Wellness, mapped across the domains of Fitness, Healing, Therapy, and Treatment, highlights the complexity and richness of wellness experiences sought by modern travelers. These practices are more than touristic services; they are meaningful engagements where authenticity, symbolism, and transformation converge. The adoption of theoretical perspectives such as the Experience Economy and Cultural Capital underscores how tourists co-create wellness experiences through immersive, ritualized, and emotionally resonant activities. Simultaneously, local actors strategically position traditional knowledge as both cultural legacy and economic opportunity. However, the study also identifies significant challenges, including a lack of standardized service protocols, fragmented governance, and insufficient branding efforts. Addressing these issues will require coordinated policy action and capacity-building efforts that respect local cultural contexts. By providing a culturally grounded typology and outlining practical recommendations, this study offers both theoretical insights and policy relevance for the sustainable and ethical development of wellness tourism in Bali and beyond.

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