

Cultural and Wellness Tourism: The Potential of Yoga, Meditation and Self-Purification Ceremony

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ABSTRACT

Cultural and wellness tourism is one of the tourism assets that can be developed to support sustainable tourism. Yoga, meditation, and self-purification are components of Balinese culture that are practised by many Indonesians and foreigners alike. Yoga, meditation, and self-purification activities can be used to promote cultural and wellness tourism to attract domestic and foreign tourists. This research was conducted to determine whether yoga, meditation, and self-purification activities support cultural tourism in Bali. The research method used is a qualitative method where data were collected through interviews and field observations. The data were then analyzed descriptively. This study found that yoga, meditation, and self-purification activities can be used to promote cultural and wellness tourism in Bali. This research has implications that yoga, meditation, and self-purification activities can be designed to be used for sustainable cultural tourism activities and can also be used for attractive promotional media.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the industries which is developing rapidly nowadays. Various tourism activities are developed to increase the number of tourists. The development of tourism certainly has an important impact on the growth of the national economy (Winia et al., 2019). Therefore, the government has issued various policies and regulations to support tourism programs. To increase the number of tourists, tourism development policies can be implemented at the village level so that the village government can support all national tourism development policies. The efforts of the government and the community to develop tourism in their villages become very important to be nurtured (Astuti, 2018).

There are many tourist destinations in Indonesia. However, Bali is still the most famous one. Among tourists, this Bali is known for various exotic slogans. It has a unique, exotic, and fantastic

panorama. These make Bali the best tourist destination in the world (Belinda, 2020). The enormous tourism potential and the interest of tourists to visit Indonesia, including Bali, have encouraged the government and local governments to improve tourism management facilities and infrastructure (Darmawijaya et al., 2019). Various policies and regulations have been formulated and enacted to be applied as a reference in implementing tourism. Facilities and, infrastructure, cultural art activities are also developed to support tourism.

Bali has become the epicentre of tourism in Indonesia. Bali has successfully integrated various potentials into tourism consumption products (Arintoko et al., 2020). Culture is part of Balinese life. Thus, Balinese culture has become the most dominant tourist attraction in Bali. This condition can be realized because the Balinese people always introduce, utilize, preserve, and improve the quality of tourist objects and attractions, maintaining cultural norms and values (Adnyana & Primasari, 2020). Therefore, the island of Bali is always synonymous with the culture of customary funds owned by the community.

The Balinese people have a lot of potential to support cultural tourism. Among them are yoga and meditation activities. If this potential is developed, it will be able to support sustainable tourism because yoga and meditation are very synonymous with cultural activities in Bali, which have recently been very popular with people from all walks of life in the world. After all, yoga and meditation are believed to be able to create a peaceful mood and create harmony in life. Yoga and meditation have the potential to be developed to support tourism (Adnyana & Primasari, 2020).

Yoga is a self-journey with capacities in physical, psychological, spiritual, and social consciousness. Together they integrate mind, body, and spirit (Dillette et al., 2019). Yoga tourism is part of particular interest and health tourism. Several studies have shown that it can improve physical and mental health. Therefore, it is very suitable to be developed for tourism activities (Sharma, 2020). The yoga tourism model is a creative tourism model that can be developed to attract tourists and make them take longer to visit because they participate in yoga activities. The yoga activities attracted tourists to stay longer (McCartney, 2019). Various strategies related to yoga activities can be developed to increase peace and clarity of mind. Therefore, yoga activities are very compatible with cultural tourism activities in Bali, so they need to be developed as well as possible (Ashton, 2018).

Besides that, yoga can be combined with meditation. Meditation is training the mind to focus on one thing at a time and be fully present in that moment (Lengyel, 2016). Meditation can make people calmer in dealing with various problems. Several studies have shown that regular meditation can increase intelligence and creativity (Sharma, 2020). Moreover, another study found that integrating meditation into spiritual and cultural tourism can positively impact tourism growth (Ashton, 2018). Furthermore, studies on spiritual tourism have also been conducted in Bali, which revealed that spiritual tourism and local customary activities of the Balinese could be potentially developed in Bali to support the sustainable development of tourism in Bali (Amir et al., 2022; Suardani & Sagitarini, 2020)

Meditation is closely related to wellness since it relates to the balance between body and mind. Wellness is a dynamic and continuous process that includes self-awareness and healthy choices to achieve a prosperous lifestyle. It is based on balancing physical, emotional, intellectual, social,

and spiritual conditions. Meditation is a tool with great potential to reduce stress and improve health (Thimmapuram et al., 2017). Balancing techniques such as yoga and meditation have been shown to relieve boredom, anxiety, fatigue, and exhausted body condition. Meditation is an exercise practised to achieve an equilibrium state of mind.

The most interesting spiritual tour based on Balinese Hindu religious ceremonies is yoga, especially for those who prioritize the spiritual in the physical field. Meditation is the most popular among tourists, with activities to calm the mind (Darmawijaya et al., 2019). Another cultural tourism activity that is recently becoming very popular is self-purification (*melukat*). The *melukat* ritual is believed to eliminate all dirty thoughts, boredom, and the influence of black magic so that people who undergo this ritual can lead a calm, comfortable, peaceful, and happy life. So, it is not surprising that many people experienced that doing yoga, meditation, and other spiritual activities benefits mental health (Dillette et al., 2019)

Cultural tourism in Bali, especially tourist activities such as yoga, meditation, self-purification, and other spiritual activities, are closely related to wellness tourism. It is one of the most popular means of tourism in Bali nowadays. It is health tourism in maintaining harmony between body, mind, and spirit. Wellness tourism development in Bali will involve the local community more closely and embody the principles of sustainable tourism (Meikassandra et al., 2020), so it becomes representative tourism with unique characteristics of Bali utilizing local wisdom. *Melukat*, for example, is a religious tour known as a form of spiritual tourism primarily aimed at gaining inner peace and getting closer to God. The *melukat* activities also aim to self-cleansing from evil spirits or negative energy.

Based on the discussion related to the benefits of yoga, meditation, and self-purification, this research aims to investigate yoga, meditation, and self-purification to support the promotion of wellness and cultural tourism. This form of tourism is very suitable to meet the needs of tourists so that their interest in visiting is increasing and they always want to come to get more experiences. This research was carried out to investigate the potential of yoga, meditation, and self-purification to promote tourism in Bali. By developing cultural tourism activities in the form of yoga, meditation, and self-purification, it is hoped that these activities can attract tourists to visit Indonesia, especially the island of Bali.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with descriptive analysis concerning cultural and wellness tourism in Bali. A qualitative method emphasizes more on observing phenomena and examining the substance of the meaning of these phenomena. The strength of the words and sentences used greatly affects the analysis and the documentation of qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on the process and meaning of the results (Ary et al., 2018). The data were collected by conducting interviews with the tourism stakeholders and direct field observation of the tourism businesses.

The data obtained from the interviews and field observation were first put into the correct heading and category, and then data reduction was conducted to select the most appropriate data related to this study. The interviews and the observation data were critically analyzed to establish valid

and reliable findings. Both data were triangulated and cross-checked by all the respondents to ensure the validity of the data. Then the results were descriptively presented to provide a clear horizon to the readers concerning cultural and wellness tourism in Bali.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, all actual results of this study were briefly elaborated to provide a clear understanding concerning the results and the findings of this study.

Cultural Tourism as a Sustainable Attraction

Based on the results of interviews with respondents showed that cultural tourism in Bali can be potentially developed to promote tourism. They see that culture is one of the aspects of tourism that needs to be developed more intensively because many tourists want to know Balinese culture. Almost all parts of Balinese life contain unique cultural elements that need to be explored to be used as tourist attractions.

Below are some excerpts of the interviews conducted online before visitors visited Bali:

“I want to be in Bali to know about the culture. Understanding the Balinese culture will enrich my knowledge about Bali” (foreigner 1)

“I do not just come to Bali to see beautiful beaches and temples; I want to know about the Balinese way of life and the culture of Bali” (foreigner 2)

“Bali is very rich in culture. It is very different from my culture, so I want to know more about it. I want to stay for a few months in Bali, ideally living in the village with the Balinese” (foreigner 3)

“I read a lot about Balinese culture, but I want to experience it, so I want to stay in Bali for several months. If possible, I live in a village with a Balinese family” (foreigner 4)

Based on the excerpts, it can be understood that many foreigners want to be in Bali to experience the Balinese culture. Cultural tourism can be developed to attract tourists to visit Bali and stay longer. This underscores the growing importance of cultural tourism as a source of cultural consumption. Cultural tourism is a significant potential source of tourism growth. There is a general perception that cultural tourism is outstanding to develop because it does not damage the environment or local culture and significantly contributes to the economy and cultural support. Cultural tourism is a growing market that can be developed in the community to attract tourists (Woyo & Woyo, 2019). Cultural tourism is community-based tourism and its cultural activities (Ary et al., 2018). In the past, culture and tourism were seen as separate areas of social practice carried out by different social groups at certain times.

Cultural tourism is not only about visiting sites and monuments, which has tended to be the traditional view of cultural tourism but also involves consuming the lifestyle of the area visited. Therefore, cultural tourism can be defined as integrating people into cultural attractions away from their familiar places of residence, intending to gather new information and experiences to

complement their culture. According to this definition, cultural tourism includes the consumption of past cultural products and contemporary culture or the way of life of a community or region.

Cultural tourism attracts a lot of attention from tourists who are attracted by uniqueness and art that flows from traditional Balinese culture, both of which are still thick with grip ancestors and culture that has been modified a little modern or the result of acculturation art along with the arts and culture of other regions, everything still fascinates most tourists. Cultural Tourism attracts the attention of quite many foreign tourists with elements of Balinese magic which are very thick, makes some tourists come to Bali to deepen their spiritual side with the specific aim of finding serenity thoughts that they might not be able to get just by travelling or enjoying natural beauty and entertainment. The amount of tourism potential that exists and actually can be developed further should make the interest of Balinese youth think creatively to create and preserve their culture.

The excerpts of the interviews showed that many tourists are interested in experiencing the Balinese culture; therefore, Balinese culture, it is essential to preserve it continually. In practice, the Balinese, especially young Balinese, need more interest in developing and maintaining the culture. Also, from a spiritual perspective in Bali, the currents of globalization and modernization have begun to erode, causing the loss of unique elements that turns into simple one caused by busy Balinese people in terms of career so that very little time can be spent on spiritual improvement. The development of this structure and concept is expected to positively impact Balinese culture and spirituality by integrating tourism as the foundation and driving cultural and spiritual activities to establish harmonious living.

Cultural tourism promotes local cultural items such as yoga, meditation, and local rituals. The core of tourism in Bali is cultural tourism. Bali is famed for its natural beauty and culture, in addition to its natural beauty. The distinctiveness of Balinese culture is a great draw for those who appreciate art in Bali. Cultural tourism encompasses all activities and treatments to develop, maintain, and improve the body, mind, and spirit. It gives an outline of the components.

Yoga, Meditation, and Wellness as Vehicles for Cultural Tourism

Based on the results of observations in various spiritual tourism places in Bali, it was found that yoga and meditation are growing and are very popular with many tourists from various countries. In various areas in Bali, yoga and meditation activities have started, even in villages. This phenomenon can attract tourists to participate in yoga and meditation activities. Besides that, tourists will get to know Bali more deeply and be more interested in revisiting Bali.

Below are some excerpts of the interviews with some yoga followers in Bali:

"I have been in Bali for two months now; I really enjoy my days in Bali because I can practice yoga and meditation. I feel really healthy and full of energy" (Yoga Participant 1)

"Well, I love my days in Bali. I learn yoga and meditation here in Bali, which brings me joy and harmony with my surroundings. I feel more in harmony with myself, and I feel more spiritually minded" (Yoga participant 2)

“I learned yoga and meditation for a while already, but learning yoga in Bali is a different experience. It makes me more relaxed because the exercises are not very hard to do” (Yoga Participant 3)

“Yes, I love doing yoga and meditation in Bali. My yoga teacher is very kind and shares with me much knowledge. I feel more in balance spiritually” (Yoga Participant 4)

Based on the excerpts of the interviews as presented above, it is found that foreign tourists visited to learn or practice yoga because they got various experiences that may improve their quality of life. They feel more relaxed, spiritually minded, harmonious, balanced and energized, and so on. These people have various Bali motivations and inner drives, from physical to becoming yoga students, yoga teachers, spiritual healers, and many others. Moreover, people joining cultural tourism also want to gain a sense of healing. Culture and tradition have become the biggest components of yoga development in Bali. Foreign tourists attained something different from yoga in Bali that had not been obtained in other countries. The practice of yoga is also influenced by Balinese culture, ethnicity, and the environment of Bali. Yoga, therefore, almost all provide a cultural touch.

Therefore, the development of yoga in Bali is closely related to Balinese culture. Therefore, yoga in Bali has additional services. These services are in the form of unique rituals and techniques with local nuances. Yoga products in Bali that offer uniqueness are different yoga tourism products in various countries. The development of yoga in Bali integrated with local cultural and ethnic uniqueness that differentiates yoga in Bali from other places.

The development of cultural tourism, such as yoga and meditation, reflects the need for tourists to spend their free time more profitably by engaging in cultural, physical, educational, and spiritual activities. Factors such as demographic characteristics, individual or group philosophy or ideology, advances in communication, and attitudes toward leisure can all change the patterns of tourism destinations and lead to the creation of new forms of tourism products. Cultural tourism has an impact on people's travel patterns. The role served by work to democratize well-being and to generate a consumer society has given way to leisure and self-development (Ary et al., 2018).

Medical advances have also contributed significantly to the increasing emphasis on people's physical and mental health in industrial and urban environments. Specialized and experience-based tourism product offerings have been increasingly rapidly developed in response to this need. Apart from treatment, cultural tourism based on yoga and meditation is a means to gain social acceptance and recognition (Lengyel, 2016). Yoga and meditation-based cultural tourism also facilitate personal fulfilment, happiness, and pleasure.

Additionally, the most significant advantage for those who practice yoga and meditation regularly is the increased power of the mind. Regular meditation trains the capacity to pay attention and ignore temptation. Those who practice it will feel more alert as if they are using their brains more efficiently. Meditation is the key to success in life because people practice meditation. They can control their wandering mind and then focus on one point. They become more effective in achieving life goals. Meditation can also remove sadness, confusion and help control our emotions.

In the serenity of mind, the mental form that is still which nothing can disturb it. The power of thought is limitless. The more organized and focused the mind is, the greater the power of the working mind. The flow of thoughts, which is continuously controlled, will become regular. When practising meditation every day, our brain gains the ability to concentrate constantly. The mind will focus if the mind is not aware of time. The more time that passes unnoticed, the more successful in concentrating. Usually, it is difficult to concentrate, but by practising meditation, people can master their minds and focus on their minds.

The excerpts of the interviews related to wellness are presented as follows:

"I practice yoga and meditation regularly because I want to get well. I have many symptoms of illnesses because I suffered from mental disharmony" (Yoga Participant 1).

"I often feel nervous and worried about doing new things. That is why I never get any improvement in my life. Doing yoga and meditation can control my feeling" (Yoga Participant 2).

"Being mentally healthy is very important because having a balanced mind may certainly help us to maintain physical health" (Yoga Participant 3).

"Wellness is absolutely important in our life. It can be achieved by practising yoga and meditation. That is why I come to Bali often to practice yoga and meditation" (Yoga Participant 4).

Meditation is not just an activity to calm down or relieve stress. It's not just a breath control process. Indeed, meditation is to control the breath, slowly inhaling and exhaling. This is to focus attention and calm the rhythm of the individual's heartbeat. The effect of meditation on the organs of the body has been proven. Meditation can activate nerve waves in the brain. The increase in nerve waves will also improve the coordination of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. With good coordination, right and left, the control of the autonomic nervous system will be even better. Improved management of the autonomic nervous system will improve the regulatory system for heart function, body temperature, blood flow, and oxygenation of cells and body tissues.

Self-purification (melukat) as Spiritual Tourism

A ritual known as *melukat*, which serves as a place of self- and mind-cleansing. The primary component and medium utilized in the cleaning process is water. The *melukat* ritual itself may be performed whenever and by anybody. However, Balinese people have a particular time that is advised based on significant Balinese holidays. It is done to receive blessings and good things once the rites are performed. One method used by Balinese people to broaden their viewpoints on mental health difficulties is the *melukat* ritual.

The *melukat* ritual is synonymous with self-purification, carried out in places with water sources, such as temples, rivers, seas, waterfalls, showers, and even holy water that has been given a mantra made at the house of a Hindu priest. This activity aims to purify oneself and remove

negative things from a person, such as bad dreams, illness, anxiety, and black magic. Humans undergo a rite called *melukat* to purify their minds and souls. With the aid of the universe, this custom is practised to clear the clutter caused by negative human energy knots. The layers of the human body are cleaned by purification to make them more balanced, and the mind becomes more enlightened, resilient, calm, free of rage, and compassionate. If performed properly, thoroughly, and regularly, this ritual is also said to have beneficial effects.

Below are some excerpts of the interviews conducted with the meditation practitioners who joined the water cleansing ceremony:

"Wow... I felt really cleansed and blessed when I had melukat in the water spring in Bali. I wish I can do this often. It is really good for my wellbeing" (visitor 1)

"Well, I can really express in words how I felt when I have melukat. It is really very good. I was overwhelmed with how clean I felt and had some spiritual experiences afterwards. I certainly will come to Bali again, and I want to have more melukat ceremonies" (visitor 2)

"I had a Balinese friend who took me to a high priest, and I had melukat. I felt really cleansed and experienced a special spiritual feeling that I can really express to you in my words. It is a very good feeling" (visitor 3)

"Well, if you had never done melukat, you cannot understand me. You have to experience yourself. I had several times in Bali already. I felt cleansed and felt more spiritual and gave me a feeling of calmness and harmonious feelings" (visitor 4)

Based on the excerpts, it was found that water *melukat* is conceived as a spiritual activity seen as being able to answer the thirst of tourists for the essential needs of their lives. *Melukat* tourism then becomes an icon that is promoted through various media and processes in various forms as a form of commodification of water. *Melukat* has become a promising tourism activity and enables visitors to experience the local culture (Lengyel, 2016).

Concerning water use, the Balinese people's perspective was very sacred. Water was part of every stage of life. Even in every religious ceremony, the presence of water always accompanies it as a central component that must exist. With all its associated components, water is then seen as a potential object to be managed as a commodity. Therefore, anybody who wishes to be spiritually cleansed can do this tourism activity. It has become trendy among visitors who wish to get a spiritual experience (Sari et al., 2022).

The existence of *melukat* spiritual tourism is one of the increasing tourist visits. The motivation of tourists to take religious tourism trips is generally for reasons of religion, culture, health, and the search for the most profound meaning and the search for identity. *Melukat* spiritual tourism has experienced revitalization through patterns and methods practised by the community in carrying out a spiritual journey.

Moreover, the *melukat* ceremony, as part of the local medical system for treating mental disorders, still exists and is an essential part of the treatment process in Bali and is used together with

biomedical treatment without any conflict or resistance between the two medical practitioners. This method also continues to exist because the *melukat* ceremony is a sub-element of Balinese culture, especially the five main ceremonies which are very functional and becomes a blueprint for the Balinese to achieve and maintain world balance (macrocosm-microcosm/outward-inner).

Concerning wellness, the *melukat* ceremony is still utilized today due to the Balinese people's strong conviction in the personalistic origins of mental illnesses. The *melukat* ritual in Bali is a communication tool and a symbolic representation of the social and psychological stresses people and their families face. At the same time, they are ill, in addition to serving as a way of therapy and self-protection from evil spirits. The *melukat* ritual will give the people the psychological impression that their body and soul have become pure, and this state will have a good effect on the development of their self-confidence in their ability to be healed and free of evil spirits. *Melukat* can therefore speed up the healing process for individuals receiving biomedical treatment.

In treating mental diseases, the *melukat* ritual includes symbolic meanings and functions that inspire attempts to purify the people's bodies and spirits to accomplish or restore the disordered soul's equilibrium. This ritual has both therapeutic and preventative connotations in its symbolic significance. In other words, if a person's mental and bodily state is in a pure state, then the person in question will not be readily disturbed by his soul due to natural or supernatural reasons such as interference from black magic or disruption from spirits. In contrast, a person's soul is weak and emotionally unstable if their body and soul are dirty, so they will be easily disturbed by the black spirit or negative energy.

Cultural tourism in Bali is undoubtedly beneficial to the island. This positive flow must be used wisely, particularly in the tourism-supporting sector, which must have a beneficial influence on cultural development. This must be preceded by collaboration between the cultural and tourist sectors, which should mutually support one another. This collaboration allows tourists to participate in culture while remaining limited in their tours, so there is more value in the form of increased income for cultural development and motivation for cultural developers to continue to improve their art and culture because tourists can be activists, developers, and enrichment for cultural development in Bali.

Increased visitor interest in culture and spirituality undoubtedly inspires youngsters to innovate and has a positive impact on the growth of Balinese culture itself. Furthermore, suppose a good management system is in place. In that case, the cultural sector provides a significant benefit to the Balinese people, allowing the younger generation to focus on the development of culture and tourism in terms of creating new cultural tourism objects that are more appealing to tourists. It is envisaged that with appropriate management and methods, it would build confidence in the continuity of the lives of cultural activists, allowing them to make growth and preservation of its culture.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above highlighted that Yoga, meditation, and self-purification activities could be developed more extensively to attract visitors to stay longer in Bali. Yoga, meditation, and self-purification activities can also be a sustainable promotion for tourism in Bali. Moreover, yoga, meditation, and self-purification can develop wellness. Many tourists visit Bali because they want

to practice yoga and meditation. Yoga and meditation have become attractive activities for many tourists who wish to deepen their knowledge about yoga and meditation.

Moreover, *melukat*, or self-purification is also an engaging spiritual tourism activity enjoyed by many tourists who wish to cleanse themselves from negative energy. *Melukat* can be combined with yoga and meditation activities that calm the mind. *Melukat* can be done at various water springs locations and the residences of Hindu priests in Bali. The existence of *melukat* spiritual tourism is one of the increasing tourist visits to Bali. The motivation of tourists to take religious tourism trips is generally for reasons of religion, culture, health, and the search for the most profound meaning and the search for identity. *Melukat* religious tourism has experienced revitalization through patterns and methods practised by the community in carrying out a spiritual journey. This study implies that preserving the Balinese culture and spiritual activities should be continually carried out to maintain the increase and development of cultural and wellness tourism in Bali.

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