
WELLNESS TOURISM AS A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN LOMBOK, WEST NUSA TENGGARA

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ABSTRACT

Wellness tourism is one of the increasingly popular forms of tourism that holds significant potential to support sustainable tourism development. This research was conducted in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, known for its natural beauty, rich culture, and serene, pollution-free atmosphere, which are key factors supporting health and relaxation-based tourism. The study aims to explore the potential and challenges of developing wellness tourism in Lombok and its contribution to sustainable tourism in the region. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data was collected through observation, interviews with tourism stakeholders and tourists, as well as field documentation. The findings indicate that Lombok, particularly the Gili Trawangan and Senggigi areas, has strong appeal as a wellness tourism destination. However, the development of wellness tourism still faces several challenges, such as a lack of targeted promotion and high domestic transportation costs. These findings suggest that wellness tourism can be a strategic approach to achieving sustainable tourism, provided there is policy support, adequate infrastructure, and active involvement of local communities.

Keywords : Wellness Tourism, Lombok, Sustainable Tourism, Senggigi, Gili Trawangan

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become a key focus in the development of Indonesia's tourism sector. The government is not only encouraging growth in tourist visits but also emphasizing the importance of environmental conservation, local community empowerment, and long-term economic sustainability. Various policies have been launched to support this, ranging from infrastructure development to strengthening digital promotion and the development of eco-friendly destinations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a turning point for global tourism. The emergence of public awareness about the importance of physical and mental health has shifted tourist interest toward fitness- and wellness-based travel. Wellness tourism, as a form of travel aimed at enhancing overall well-being, has become a growing trend post-pandemic. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has even identified this sector as one of the most resilient in facing crises. Globally, data from the Global Wellness Institute (2017) shows that Indonesia ranks 17th in the global wellness

tourism market and second in Southeast Asia, with significant contributions to tourism employment.

However, studies on wellness tourism in Indonesia primarily focus on Bali. Research by Mantra et al. (2023) shows that wellness tourism in Bali positively contributes to sustainable tourism practices. Meanwhile, Diwyartha's (2023) study highlights the high interest of young tourists in health- and well-being-oriented activities. These findings open opportunities to explore other destinations with similar potential that have not yet been fully developed.

Lombok, as a leading destination in West Nusa Tenggara, offers stunning natural landscapes, strong local culture, and a peaceful atmosphere—all elements that strongly support the development of wellness tourism. Areas such as Senggigi and Gili Trawangan have environmental characteristics suitable for health-based activities like yoga, meditation, spa treatments, and outdoor physical activities. However, to date, the development of wellness tourism in Lombok has received little attention, both in practice and in academic studies.



This situation underscores the need for further research to comprehensively understand the potential of wellness tourism in Lombok and identify challenges in its development. This study focuses on the Senggigi and Gili Trawangan areas, aiming to explore how wellness tourism can contribute to sustainable tourism practices in the region. The results of this research are expected to enrich tourism literature and serve as a reference for policymakers and industry players in developing the tourism sector strategically and sustainably.

Concept of Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism is a type of tourism aimed at improving the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of tourists through various health-based activities. The Global Wellness Institute (2018) defines it as travel undertaken by individuals to maintain or enhance their overall health and well-being. These activities include spa treatments, yoga, meditation, healthy diets, exercise, and spiritual practices.

In Indonesia, wellness tourism has gained significant attention post-COVID-19. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy views this sector as a key opportunity for national tourism recovery, aligning with the growing demand for healthy and sustainable lifestyles (Kemenparekraf, 2022).

Dimensions of Wellness Tourism

The Global Wellness Institute (2018) identifies six main dimensions of wellness tourism: physical, emotional, social, mental, environmental, and spiritual. Each dimension contributes to the holistic experience of tourists in achieving balance. Smith & Puczkó (2009) also emphasize the importance of combining natural environments, physical activities, and quality services as determinants of a successful wellness destination.

Products and Activities in Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism is not limited to spas or meditation. Its products and activities encompass various services, including body treatments and fitness (massages, saunas, traditional therapies), health tourism, and nature- and culture-based activities. Ismayanti et al. (2023) highlight key components of wellness tourism in Indonesia, such as hot springs, healthy cuisine, light

exercise, and spiritual programs like yoga and meditation. This demonstrates that wellness tourism can also be developed from existing local resources.

Wellness Tourism and Sustainable Tourism

The concept of wellness tourism is closely related to the principles of sustainable tourism. According to Voigt et al. (2011), wellness tourism practices focused on healthy environments and local community empowerment can contribute to natural conservation and socio-economic well-being. Additionally, sustainability is reflected in responsible destination management, use of local resources, and the creation of authentic and meaningful tourism experiences (Kelly & Smith, 2020).

Previous Studies

Several studies have examined wellness tourism practices in Indonesia, particularly in Bali. Mantra et al. (2023) show that yoga, meditation, and purification rituals add value to sustainable cultural and health tourism. Diwyarthi (2023) identifies that millennials have a high preference for tourism experiences that focus on health and self-awareness. Meanwhile, research on wellness tourism outside Bali is still limited. Lombok, as a destination with natural, cultural, and serene environments conducive to relaxation, has not been extensively studied academically. Areas like Senggigi and Gili Trawangan exhibit strong characteristics of wellness destinations. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by further exploring the potential and challenges of developing wellness tourism in Lombok as part of sustainable tourism.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study strategy to explore the potential and challenges of developing wellness tourism as part of sustainable tourism in Lombok, specifically in Senggigi and Gili Trawangan (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013). Data was collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively, consisting of seven tourists (local and international) and one general manager of a hotel in Gili Trawangan. Data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model (1994) through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The research was conducted in 2024 in Senggigi and Gili Trawangan, Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Potential of Wellness Tourism in Lombok

This research finds that Lombok, particularly Gili Trawangan, has significant potential as a wellness tourism destination in Indonesia. This potential is supported by natural beauty, a conducive atmosphere, and facilities provided by local tourism industry players. One of Lombok's main advantages is its stunning natural environment, which strongly supports the wellness tourism concept. Observations show that hotels in Senggigi and Gili Trawangan offer spa and yoga facilities, with yoga available upon request. The breathtaking natural views are key elements in creating a relaxing and restorative atmosphere for tourists.

In Gili Trawangan, the unique atmosphere immediately experienced by visitors upon disembarking from the boat significantly reinforces its potential as a wellness destination. The absence of motor vehicle pollution, the stunning gradient hues of the beaches, and the positive energy felt by tourists leave a strong impression that Gili Trawangan meets the essential criteria for wellness tourism. One tourist from Yogyakarta remarked, "As soon as I arrived in Gili Trawangan, it felt like stepping into another world. The fresh air, the absence of motorized vehicles, and the breathtaking scenery create a very positive energy—perfect for recharging."

An interview with the General Manager of a hotel in Gili Trawangan revealed that the hotel

offers various wellness-related activities. These include spa services, yoga sessions upon guest request, therapeutic massages, healthy meals for breakfast and in-room dining, as well as recreational activities such as snorkeling, diving, and cycling. "At Hotel X in Gili Trawangan, we are committed to delivering a holistic wellness experience. Beyond spa facilities and nutritious food, we also assist guests in securing convenient transportation to the island," he explained. This aligns with Smith and Puczkó's (2009) study, which highlights the importance of providing facilities that promote relaxation, physical activity, and a healthy lifestyle.

Interviews with tourists also reflect a highly positive perception of Lombok as a wellness tourism destination. An international visitor from Australia stated, "This place is magical. The energy here is unlike anywhere else I've been. The combination of natural beauty and peacefulness makes it perfect for wellness activities." Similarly, a domestic tourist from Jakarta shared, "This place is completely different from anywhere else. I feel healthier both physically and mentally—the atmosphere truly supports that." The research team also acknowledged that upon arriving in Lombok and Gili Trawangan, the ambiance was undeniably positive and deeply relaxing.



Figure 1. Tranquil Atmosphere in Gili Trawangan
(Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2024)



Figure 2. Scenery in Gili Trawangan
(Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2024)

The researchers believe that Lombok's potential as a wellness tourism destination can be further optimized through more strategic and focused management, particularly by increasing the availability of dedicated facilities for yoga, meditation, and well-organized retreat programs. This perspective aligns with the findings of Voigt et al. (2011), which emphasize that wellness tourism is not solely dependent on natural surroundings, but also on the availability of facilities that enable tourists to fully experience the benefits of such environments. Accordingly, Lombok possesses all the essential elements to emerge as a leading global wellness destination—provided that promotion efforts and sustainable management practices are continually enhanced. The researchers also



Figure 3. Spa Facility at a Hotel near Senggigi

(Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2024)

In addition, during field observations around Senggigi Beach in Lombok, the research team found that many local residents also offer traditional health massage services along the beachfront. These services are not only

observed that wellness experiences in Lombok generate profound physical and emotional benefits, which are consistent with the core principles of wellness tourism as outlined by the Global Wellness Institute (2021).

Wellness Tourism Activities in Lombok

Observations and interviews reveal that Lombok—particularly Gili Trawangan—already offers a range of activities that support wellness tourism. These activities emphasize not only relaxation and health but also provide unique experiences that are rarely found in other destinations. One of the most popular offerings is spa treatments with direct views of the beach. These spas do not merely deliver massage and body treatments, but also immerse visitors in a natural setting that greatly enhances relaxation.



Figure 4. Spa Facility at a Hotel near Senggigi

affordable but often negotiable in price. The following image documents a local resident providing massage services on the beach in Senggigi, Lombok:



Figure 5. Local Resident

Gili Trawangan, which is free from motorized vehicles, offers a distinct experience for visitors. Fuel-powered transportation is prohibited on the island, resulting in an environment free from air pollution. Tourists can



Figure 6. No Motorized Vehicles Allowed explore the island by bicycle or **cidomo**, a traditional horse-drawn carriage. This natural atmosphere allows visitors to fully enjoy the fresh air and the island's pristine surroundings.



Figure 7. Tourists Cycling Around Gili Trawangan

(Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2024)

Another wellness activity that is highly favored by tourists includes various water sports such as snorkeling, diving, and scuba diving. These activities not only serve as entertainment

but also offer significant relaxation benefits. A General Manager of a hotel in Gili Trawangan explained, "Activities like snorkeling and diving are very popular here because they help guests

unwind after their busy work routines. Additionally, they get to experience the stunning beauty of the underwater scenery.”

In Gili Trawangan, numerous restaurants offer healthy meals or real food options that support a wellness-oriented lifestyle. Dishes such as fresh salads, organic fruit juices, and

plant-based meals are widely available to cater to the needs of health-conscious travelers. A previous study by Smith and Puczkó (2009) emphasizes the importance of healthy cuisine in creating an authentic wellness experience—an approach that has been effectively implemented by many restaurants on the island.



Figure 8. Beachfront Restaurant Ambience in Gili Trawangan, Lombok
(Source: Researcher’s Documentation, 2024)

Another significant potential lies in the development of meditation and yoga activities on the island. The clean air, stunning natural landscapes, and tranquil atmosphere make Gili Trawangan an ideal setting for such practices. Many tourists are drawn to the idea of engaging in yoga or meditation in open-air spaces, surrounded by beaches or lush coconut trees. One visitor from Surabaya interviewed by the researchers shared, “I imagine doing yoga here must be wonderful. With such a natural setting, it definitely enhances the sense of peace and helps calm the mind.”

Observations also revealed that the wellness tourism experience in Gili Trawangan is supported by the warm hospitality of local residents and service providers. This collaboration creates a holistic experience that encompasses physical, mental, and emotional well-being for visitors. The range of wellness tourism activities available in Lombok—particularly in Gili Trawangan—demonstrates that the destination possesses all the essential elements to attract tourists seeking health and

relaxation experiences. These findings are in line with Voigt et al. (2011), who argue that an ideal wellness destination must offer a combination of physical activities, relaxation experiences, and an atmosphere conducive to mental balance. Nonetheless, more targeted promotion and the development of additional facilities, such as dedicated yoga studios or meditation centers, could further enhance Gili Trawangan’s appeal as a premier wellness tourism destination.

Challenges in Developing Wellness Tourism in Lombok

Despite its substantial potential, this study also identifies several challenges that must be addressed to optimize the development of wellness tourism in Lombok. One of the primary challenges is the relatively high cost of airfare to Lombok, particularly for domestic travelers. A tourist from Jakarta interviewed by the researchers remarked, “I actually want to visit Lombok more often, but the airfare is more expensive than flying to Bali.” This issue highlights the need for greater attention to accessibility strategies, such as reevaluating

airfare pricing through collaboration between government policymakers and airline companies. The researchers believe that addressing this challenge could open up greater opportunities for Lombok to compete as a more affordable and inclusive wellness destination.

In addition, promotion of wellness tourism in Lombok remains limited. Several tourists interviewed admitted that they only became aware of Lombok's wellness tourism potential through recommendations from friends or family. A visitor from Yogyakarta expressed, "There should be more promotion about wellness tourism in Lombok. Many people don't know that Lombok offers much more than just beaches." The findings of this study indicate that Lombok has a competitive advantage as a wellness tourism destination, particularly with its natural beauty and an atmosphere that supports health and well-being. However, challenges such as high airfare and lack of effective promotion still need to be overcome in order for Lombok to compete with other wellness destinations, such as Bali. A strategic approach that includes intensive promotional efforts, collaboration with airlines for subsidized fares, and the enhancement of wellness facilities and activities could significantly strengthen Lombok's appeal. With proper tourism management, Lombok holds great potential to become a leading destination that offers meaningful wellness experiences while supporting local economic and environmental sustainability.

The Contribution of Wellness Tourism to Sustainable Tourism

The concept of wellness tourism naturally aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism, as it emphasizes the balance between humans and the environment. In the context of Lombok, the development of this sector has contributed to environmental conservation, the empowerment of local communities through services such as massage therapy, traditional transportation rentals, and the consumption of local products such as naturally sourced healthy foods.

Moreover, nature-based wellness experiences help extend tourists' length of stay, enhance the overall quality of their experience, and foster emotional connections between

visitors and the destination—factors that are key indicators of tourism sustainability (Smith & Puczko, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that Lombok—particularly the areas of Senggigi and Gili Trawangan—holds significant potential for the development of wellness tourism, supported by its natural beauty, serene atmosphere, and tourism facilities that promote relaxation. Activities such as spa treatments, yoga, traditional massage, water sports, and healthy food consumption are already available and reflect a holistic approach to wellness. Local communities also play an active role in supporting these activities, both as service providers and cultural practitioners. However, the development of wellness tourism in Lombok still faces key challenges, such as the high cost of airfare and limited promotional efforts. These issues require greater attention from stakeholders in order to fully optimize Lombok's potential as a sustainable tourism destination.

Based on the findings of this research, it is suggested that the development of wellness tourism in Lombok should focus on strengthening destination promotion through digital channels and collaborative efforts with tourism industry players and social media influencers. Additionally, partnerships among local government, tourism stakeholders, and airlines are essential to reduce accessibility barriers, particularly with regard to high airfare prices. Enhancing specialized wellness facilities—such as dedicated spaces for yoga, meditation, and wellness retreats—should also be prioritized to elevate the overall visitor experience. Equally important is the training of local communities to improve their capacity in delivering health-based tourism services, ensuring their active involvement and direct economic benefit. Further research using a broader approach and incorporating quantitative data is recommended to assess the long-term impact of wellness tourism development on Lombok's sustainable tourism practices.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research was confined to two locations—Senggigi and Gili

Trawangan—which means it does not represent the full scope of Lombok’s wellness tourism potential. Moreover, the number of informants was limited to seven tourists and one hotel manager, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study did not

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