



Wellness tourism management: Critical insights of Thailand and Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Wellness tourism is a tourist activity that can increase the relaxation, physical, and mental well-being of humans. This study aims to review and compare wellness tourism management patterns in Thailand and Indonesia, which were captured from the study conducted in 2021-2023. **Methods:** The method used in this study is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). In the search process, this literature was used Publish or Perish, Mendeley, and VOS viewer with a publication period of 2021-2023. **Finding:** The findings show that in managing wellness tourism, the focus is not only on paying attention to the types of attractions or activities that will be provided to guests, but other elements need to be considered, such as elements of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural management. **Conclusion:** Thailand's wellness tourism management is very fast in following the development of the wellness tourism business, supported by human resources who have the same potential as Indonesia who potentially develop environmentally friendly services and product variations.

KEYWORDS: special interest tourism; sustainable; tourism; tourist destinations; wellness tourism.

1. Introduction

Wellness tourism is one of the leisure activities in urban areas so it needs to be one of the tourism activities that is prioritized for development in urban areas. The development and success of this industry still require paying attention to economic, social, and environmental issues (Erol et al., 2022). Therefore, there needs to be alignment between the environmental, economic, and social goals of society to achieve appropriate and sustainable tourism (Streimikiene et al., 2022).

According to data from the Global Wellness Institute 2022, the scale of the global wellness industry is expected to grow at an annual average of 21% from USD 435.7 billion in 2020 to USD 1127.6 billion in 2025 (Liu et al., 2023). Wellness tourism is currently gaining attention from tourists around the world due to increasing attention among travelers who are interested in improving or maintaining personal well-being. Asia has the fastest market growth in the world, experiencing the smallest level of pandemic-related shrinkage compared to other regions (GWI in Zhou et al., 2023). According to the Global Wellness Institute 2022, what is called wellness tourism is an effort to maintain or improve personal well-being. Therefore, wellness tourism services include a variety of tourism activities, such as visiting natural and cultural sites, learning local customs, and

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receiving health services in hotels or accommodations such as massages and SPA treatments (Praprom & Laipaporn, 2023). The development of wellness tourism does not only happen in Indonesia according to the Global Wellness Institute but also in many developing countries such as the UK, Thailand, Japan, Korea, the US, Brazil, and others.

Indonesia, with its natural and cultural riches and supported tourist areas with supporting natural quality, wellness hospitality can take advantage of the momentum of growth in the global tourism economy in a sustainable manner (Yuwono & Astuti, 2021). Based on the results of a previous study conducted by Koerniawaty & Sudjana (2022), Indonesia has the potential for wellness tourism which can be seen from several aspects, such as body, mind, and spirit. Sustainable development is the main concept of tourism which needs to have economic, environmental, and social impacts. Therefore, the development of this sector is linked to these three dimensions of sustainability (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Previous studies have examined wellness tourism business opportunities in Asian countries (Keadplang, 2019), the potential for wellness tourism in Bali (Utama & Nyandra, 2021), and others. The reason for choosing Thailand as a comparison is Thailand has similar wellness tourism characteristics to Indonesia. Based on the problems above, the question for this study is, what is the pattern of wellness tourism management in Thailand compared to Indonesia? Thus, the main aim of this study is to analyze the management pattern of wellness tourism in Thailand compared to Indonesia.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Material

2.1.1 Sustainable development

Meeting future needs must be conducted well and in the balance between social, economic, and environmental goals. Those three elements must develop simultaneously and in balance; otherwise, development will be trapped in a conventional development model that only focuses on economic growth but ignores social and environmental development (Suparmoko, 2020). The concept of sustainability in the context of tourism is considered to achieve a balance between the economic, environmental, and social needs of all stakeholders in considering the impacts of tourism (Rasoolimanesh, 2023). Sustainable development is not only an environmental issue but also a social and economic issue where the principles of sustainability are found in the three dimensions, as shown in Figure 1.

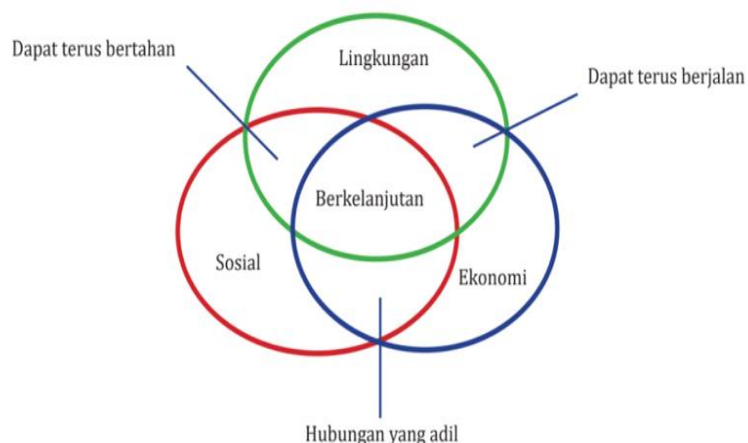


Fig. 1. Sustainability in the three dimensions of development (Supriatna, 2021)

2.1.2 Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism requires balancing economic development with social and environmental considerations (Viana-Lora et al., 2023). According to the UNWTO (in Ira & Muhammad, 2020), understanding sustainable tourism development as a process and not its conception as an idealized state, connecting the progress achieved in sustainability with the need to measure the evolution of destinations through indicators (Ivars-Baidal, 2023), there are five main stakeholders in the tourism context: tourists, residents, industry, government officials (policymakers), and NGOs (Lee & Hsieh, 2016). In tourism development activities, all activities and services that will be provided to tourists must be coordinated to meet tourist needs. There are tourism development components consisting of 6A: attraction, accommodation, amenities, accessibility, activities, and availability of tour packages buhalis (Soeswoyo et al., 2021). Sustainable tourism is not just nature conservation or socially responsible business. It should be remembered that the theoretical definition of sustainable tourism involves economic, social, and environmental protection dimensions (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

2.1.3 Wellness tourism

Wellness tourism has now become a trend for people around the world to achieve health and gain self-satisfaction. The development of health tourism reflects society's efforts to achieve a better life (Phuthong et al., 2021). The wellness tourism experience not only improves tourists' functional status but also plays an important role in improving relaxation, mental, and physical well-being (Liu et al., 2023), and improving psychological well-being (PWB) (Rahmani et al., 2023). Wellness tourism services include various tourism activities, such as traveling in nature and getting to know cultures, learning local customs, and receiving services at hotels or other accommodations such as massages and spa treatments (Praprom & Laipaporn, 2023). Wellness tourism can be developed based on the available assets at a destination or can be also organized based on tourist needs (Utama & Nyandra, 2021).

2.2 Methods

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative research. The method used in this study was the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The SLR process is a systematic observation and process for critically reviewing a research study (Snyder, 2019). The steps taken in this study include (1) identification and discovery of keywords, (2) literature search, and (3) analysis and synthesis processes. Identifying keywords is the first step toward the proposed topic, which is wellness tourism. Regarding environmentally friendly aspects, the word sustainable tourism is the second combination; then, several other keywords are displayed against the review location options, which here are Thailand and Indonesia.

Literature searches have a systematic, explicit, and reproducible design that identifies, evaluates, and interprets an existing collection of recorded documents (Kesim & Yildirim, 2017). The SLR process carried out in this research is based on the steps presented by Francis & Baldesari (in Watajdid et al., 2021). Next, the search is conducted using the Publish or Perish application by entering the Scopus source. The purpose of choosing this search engine is to obtain scientific literature that has a reputation indexed by Scopus.

In the literature search process, 331 pieces of literature were produced starting from 2021-2023. After the literature search process, a screening process and determining criteria were carried out using Mendeley, Publish or Perish, and VOS viewer. Publish or Perish is used to find out the abstracts and journal contents of the 331 pieces of literature, and VOS viewer to find out the relationship between the keywords found, the articles taken are focused on Scopus sources and have regional boundaries regarding studies

related to wellness tourism carried out in Indonesia and Thailand. The results of the search can be plotted spatially in Figure 2.

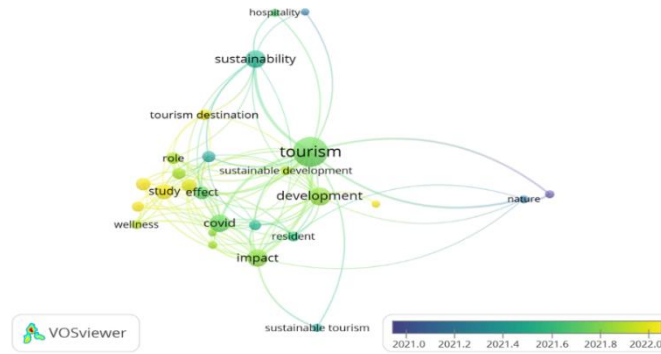


Fig. 2. Relation between keywords by VOS Viewer

Based on the screening carried out with the VOS viewer, the relationship between sustainable wellness tourism, sustainable tourism, and wellness tourism resulted in 26 items, 6 clusters, and 109 links. Then the researcher read the abstract and filtered the literature. From the screening process, the researcher obtained 55 selected pieces of literature that were relevant to the study topic. Literature that meets the criteria is abstracted and synthesized according to the study topic so that a classification of sustainable wellness tourism can be formed.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

At the time the review was carried out, there were 55 pieces of literature indexed by Scopus that were selected to analyze the management of sustainable tourism, but especially in the regions of Indonesia and Thailand. The analysis of sustainable wellness tourism management in this research is a modification of the sustainable tourism indicators developed by Lee & Jan (2017) which in previous research had produced 89 indicators that were classified into six categories: environmental management, economics, social culture, science, and technology, human resources, and government policy.

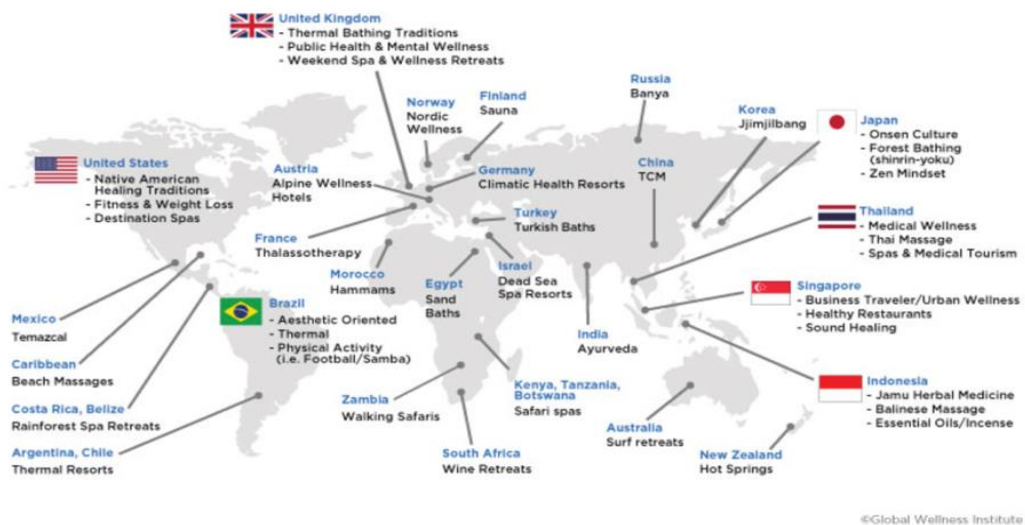


Fig. 3. Map of wellness tourism tradition in the world (globalwellnessinstitute.org, 2023)

Based on Figure 3, the trend of wellness tourism activities is increasing significantly, many people travel to countries in Asia to carry out this activity, so thorough preparation is needed to meet tourist needs (Keadplang, 2019). Each country has a wellness tourism tradition that has been developed and become a unique characteristic for each country.

Participation or involvement of the government, community, and entrepreneurs runs according to their respective functions, both in regulations/policies, and in providing CHSE-certified facilities for cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability. More comprehensively, the importance of community participation in realizing sustainable tourism (Susanti, 2022). Wellness tourism actors need to prioritize providing services based on local wisdom, therapists and business actors need to understand and increase knowledge about the authenticity of local product information, the government needs to identify and ensure that all treatment materials used are original so that they have special characteristics for wellness tourism activities in Indonesia (Darmawijaya et al., 2019). Apart from paying attention to the sustainability elements of wellness tourism activities in Indonesia, efforts to provide experiences to tourists can include things that Thailand has done, such as aspects of the physical condition of tourist destinations, including activities provided, quality of food, service, amenities supporting wellness tourism activities, rules for implementing cleanliness. Second: mental aspect: feeling like getting new experiences, feeling part of the local community, attention from staff. Third: spiritual aspect: spirit/soul uplifted; high level of involvement or interest in activities or destination environment; knowledge, memory, perception, emotions, and self-identity. Fourth: environmental aspect: determining the appropriate landscape for the development and establishment of a resort so that you feel an authentic place, cool air, and a connection between prosperity and tourism (see Table 1).

Table 1. Pattern of wellness tourism management in Thailand and Indonesia

Sustainable tourism indicators	Management of wellness tourism in Indonesia	Management of wellness tourism in Thailand
Environment management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay attention to natural and environmental conditions, such as not building in protected areas. 2. Availability of support from the government and associations, as long as they do not violate regulations. 3. Involving experts in architectural design. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an environmental management in order to promoting the wellness tourism business. 2. Pay attention to security and safety; health and environmental cleanliness. 3. Environmental activities are optimized by human resources who are experts in their fields.
Economic management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indonesia has extensive potential to develop sustainable tourism and natural resources. 2. International standard service quality so that Bali received the "World's Best Spa Destination" award. 3. Wellness tourism in Indonesia has a large global market. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thailand pays attention to the quality of the provided services and is recognized internationally. 2. Providing various kinds of services related to wellness tourism. 3. Thailand is fast in developing new products and services as well as wellness tourism components.
Sociocultural management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The availability of active community involvement and improving the quality of local human resources can be done through outreach and socialization. 2. Activities are conducted based on 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activities are based on natural resources. 2. Based on cultural resources and wisdom.

	human resource potential and local wisdom.	
Science and technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quickly adapt product development according to customer needs. 2. Utilize technology in carrying out promotions. 3. Involve various experts in tourism development. (Utama & Nyandra, 2021; Yuwono & Astuti, 2021)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Always develop new products and services. 2. Technology utilization. 3. Involving community resources. (Phuthong et al., 2021)

3.2 Discussion

At the time the review was carried out, there were 55 pieces of literature indexed by Scopus that were selected to analyze the management of sustainable tourism, but especially in the regions of Indonesia and Thailand. The analysis of sustainable wellness tourism management in this research is a modification of the sustainable tourism indicators developed by Lee & Jan (2017) which in previous research had produced 89 indicators that were classified into six categories: environmental management, economics, social culture, science, and technology, human resources, and government policy.

Wellness tourism activities can increase the competitiveness of tourism activities in Indonesia, but in managing these activities we cannot ignore the elements of sustainability that must be applied to each tourist attraction. Various aspects can be implemented by stakeholders who manage wellness tourism so that it can be sustainable as seen from the management of Thailand and Indonesia, including the following aspects.

1. Environment management

Thailand has a natural landscape that supports the general management and development of wellness tourism activities, managing the environment well by maintaining security, health, and safety to support wellness tourism activities.

The pattern of managing wellness tourism in Indonesia pays great attention to natural and environmental conditions, such as avoiding tourism development in protected areas, involving environmental experts in regional management, and getting support from the government and associations in developing this activity if it does not violate regulations.

2. Economic management

Thailand and Indonesia both have extensive potential to promote wellness tourism activities to the international market. Considering that the quality of service provided to guests is at an international standard, Thailand is fast in developing new products and services as well as wellness tourism components that are faster, cheaper, or more responsive to customer needs.

3. Sociocultural management

Thailand packages its wellness tourism products very much in line with the country's cultural diversity, customs, traditions, and hospitality provided by the native Thai people, namely "Thainess". The management of wellness activities in Indonesia is also based on the diversity of traditional riches, culture, wisdom, and local agricultural products. Human resources managing wellness tourism activities have certification to provide the best service to customers. In developing this activity, the active role of local communities is involved.

4. Science and technology management

Thailand always strives to develop new products and services, as well as devise new methods to solve problems quickly to keep up with rapid business developments. Indonesia also always follows adaptations to developments in the wellness tourism business and utilizes technology in conducting promotions. Indonesia has many opportunities to develop environmentally friendly products. For further research, it is possible to analyze the challenges of sustainable wellness tourism in Asia.

4. Conclusion

Wellness tourism is a new activity in the global tourism industry which is currently a growing trend and has many opportunities for the development of this product. The management pattern of wellness tourism in Thailand and Indonesia has paid attention to environmental, economic, socio-cultural, and scientific aspects, knowledge, and technology. In general, these two countries have a competitive rivalry, Thailand needs to develop product forms to beat the competition, apart from that, Indonesia has the potential for natural and cultural wealth, has a CHSE certificate that can be added value, and develops wellness tourism products that are more environmentally friendly and following local wisdom, such as Yoga, Indonesian culinary delights, trekking and so on. Suggestions for Thailand and Indonesia are that they need to pay attention to the competency of human resources managing wellness tourism activities by providing training or competency certification.

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The authors contributed to writing this article.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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