

Impact of wellness tourism experiences on quality of life: A mixed-methods approach

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between wellness tourism experiences and quality of life outcomes using a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The research investigates how different dimensions of wellness tourism—such as escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth—affect tourists' overall quality of life, including physical health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Using a survey distributed to 300 wellness tourists and in-depth interviews with a subset of participants, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how wellness tourism experiences contribute to quality-of-life improvements. Factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) validate the hypothesized relationships quantitatively, while thematic analysis of qualitative responses enriches the findings. Results indicate that escapist and relaxation-oriented experiences most strongly influence psychological and physical well-being, while cultural immersion enhances life satisfaction. These insights highlight the potential of wellness tourism to foster holistic well-being, with implications for practitioners and researchers in developing quality-of-life-centered wellness tourism offerings.

Keywords:

Wellness Tourism, Quality of Life, Escapism, Cultural Immersion, Personal Growth

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of wellness tourism highlights a significant shift in consumer behaviour towards health-focused travel, reflecting global awareness of holistic well-being as a core objective of travel experiences (Smith & Puczkó, 2009). Unlike traditional tourism, wellness tourism prioritises experiences that promote mental, physical, and spiritual wellness, making it an attractive choice for travellers seeking to enhance their quality of life through restorative and transformative activities. According to the Global Wellness Institute (2018), the wellness tourism market has grown steadily in recent years, with travellers increasingly drawn to destinations that offer unique cultural and therapeutic experiences. This sector's appeal is tied to societal trends emphasising self-care, mental wellness, and stress relief, positioning wellness tourism as a prominent avenue for personal well-being enhancement (Raj and Arora, 2022).

Quality of life, a multifaceted construct encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health, has gained attention in tourism research as an important measure of travel experience success (Diener, 2000; World Health Organization, 1995). Defined by the World Health Organization (1995) as individuals' perceptions of their position in life within their cultural and value systems, quality of life includes dimensions such as life satisfaction, health, and personal

fulfilment (Raj, Gupta, and Ciddikie 2024). Wellness tourism's potential to positively impact quality of life is particularly relevant, given its focus on activities that encourage relaxation, rejuvenation, and personal growth (Chen & Petrick, 2013). However, while general tourism studies have explored quality of life improvements, research specifically addressing how wellness tourism experiences affect quality of life is limited (Sthapit et al., 2023).

To address this research gap, this study examines the unique contributions of wellness tourism dimensions—escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth—on tourists' quality of life (Raj, Gupta, and Tyagi 2023). These dimensions encompass core experiential aspects, including the psychological relief provided by escapist experiences, the physical and mental restoration derived from relaxation, the satisfaction and self-awareness fostered through cultural immersion, and the introspective growth associated with personal development activities (Kim et al., 2024; Xia et al., 2024). By investigating these elements, this study aims to clarify how diverse wellness tourism experiences contribute to holistic well-being and quality of life enhancement.

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, to comprehensively assess wellness tourism's impact on quality of life. This method enables both generalisable findings and deeper, contextual insights into participants' experiences. The study's findings aim to guide wellness tourism providers in designing quality-of-life-centered experiences, thereby enhancing the efficacy of wellness tourism as a means of achieving lasting well-being for travellers. Moreover, by integrating insights from both quantitative and qualitative data, this research contributes to the literature on wellness tourism by offering a nuanced understanding of the specific experiential factors that influence quality of life.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Wellness Tourism and its Impact on Quality of Life

Wellness tourism, defined as travel primarily motivated by well-being enhancement, spans a broad range of activities, from spa treatments to yoga and meditation retreats (Raj, Gupta, and Ujjawal, 2023). These experiences align with consumer demands for more health-oriented, restorative travel, driving the growth of the wellness tourism market globally (Voigt et al., 2011). Particularly in regions like Asia, where cultural and spiritual practices such as Ayurveda and yoga are integrated into the tourism landscape, wellness tourism attracts travellers seeking authentic, transformative experiences (He et al., 2023; Kan et al., 2023).

Wellness tourism experiences provide unique opportunities for quality of life improvement by catering to diverse well-being needs. Quality of life is understood as a broad measure of life satisfaction and health, encompassing physical, psychological, and emotional well-being (World Health Organization, 1995). Wellness activities contribute to quality of life by promoting psychological resilience, reducing stress, enhancing mental clarity, and improving physical health. Research suggests that the appeal of wellness tourism lies in its ability to provide a retreat from daily stressors, facilitating restorative experiences that lead to long-term well-being (Chen et al., 2023; Xia et al., 2024).

2.2 Key Dimensions of Wellness Tourism Experiences

- **Escapism:** Escapist experiences allow tourists to disconnect from daily routines and stressors, facilitating mental rejuvenation. In wellness tourism, escapism is often facilitated by tranquil environments, isolated retreats, and immersive experiences that promote a sense of peace and psychological restoration (Ali et al., 2018). Studies suggest that escapist activities significantly enhance psychological well-being by allowing individuals to reset mentally, thus improving their life satisfaction and quality of life (Seow et al., 2024).
- **Relaxation:** Wellness tourism often includes activities such as yoga, meditation, and spa treatments, which focus on physical and mental relaxation. These activities are critical for reducing stress, alleviating fatigue, and promoting physical health, key components of quality of life (Lee & Kim, 2023). By engaging in relaxation-focused wellness tourism, individuals often experience reduced anxiety and improved physiological health, highlighting the importance of relaxation for well-being.
- **Cultural Immersion:** Wellness tourism destinations offering culturally rooted experiences, such as Ayurveda or traditional healing practices, enable tourists to engage in authentic wellness practices (Li et al., 2023). This dimension enhances life satisfaction by fostering cultural awareness and meaningful connections with the destination, thus contributing to a deeper sense of fulfilment and quality of life (Kan et al., 2023).
- **Personal Growth:** Wellness tourism experiences that emphasise self-discovery, personal growth, and skill development are pivotal for enhancing self-awareness and life satisfaction (Chen et al., 2023). Engaging in workshops, educational retreats, or spiritual practices facilitates introspection and fosters a sense of accomplishment, adding to the individual's overall quality of life.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Quality of Life in Wellness Tourism

This study adopts the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) Framework to investigate wellness tourism's impact on quality of life. The WHOQOL framework defines quality of life through four key domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental factors. These domains collectively measure the extent to which individuals experience well-being and fulfilment (World Health Organization, 1995).

In the context of wellness tourism, the WHOQOL framework provides a robust structure for evaluating how various wellness experiences influence different facets of quality of life. The physical health domain encompasses improvements in bodily well-being, which can be influenced by relaxation practices, while psychological health involves emotional and mental well-being, which escapist and personal growth experiences may enhance. Social relationships and environmental factors address interpersonal and experiential aspects, which cultural immersion may strengthen by connecting tourists with local traditions and fostering social engagement.

Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that well-being is achieved when individuals fulfil their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, serves as a supplementary theoretical lens. Wellness tourism experiences that facilitate personal growth, cultural immersion, and escapism align with SDT's tenets by allowing travellers to engage in

activities that foster self-empowerment and self-actualisation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). By integrating WHOQOL and SDT, this study constructs a comprehensive theoretical model to evaluate how wellness tourism dimensions contribute to quality of life across multiple domains, offering insights into the holistic benefits of wellness tourism.

3. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

This study investigates the influence of the Escapism, Relaxation, Cultural Immersion, and Personal Growth dimensions on quality of life in wellness tourism. The research objectives are as follows:

3.1 Research Objectives:

R1. To assess the impact of the Escapism, Relaxation, Cultural Immersion, and Personal Growth dimensions on different aspects of tourists' quality of life in wellness tourism.

R2. To examine how each dimension contributes specifically to physical health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction within the wellness tourism context.

3.2 Hypotheses:

H1: Escapism in wellness tourism positively influences psychological well-being.

H2: Relaxation experiences in wellness tourism enhance physical health.

H3: Cultural immersion in wellness tourism positively affects life satisfaction.

H4: Personal growth experiences positively impact overall quality of life.

H5: The Entertainment dimension positively influences quality.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively analyse the impact of wellness tourism experiences on quality of life across physical, psychological, and subjective satisfaction dimensions. Mixed-methods research, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, offers a robust means of understanding complex phenomena (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative data were collected through a structured survey to statistically examine the hypothesised relationships, while qualitative data were gathered via in-depth interviews, allowing for deeper insights into participants' subjective experiences.

The quantitative approach utilised structural equation modelling (SEM) to validate the hypothesised model, examining relationships between the escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth dimensions of wellness tourism and quality of life indicators. Qualitative analysis provided additional depth, capturing the experiential and emotional elements of wellness tourism and exploring the nuanced ways these dimensions impact individual quality of life.

4.2 Sample and Data Collection

4.2.1 Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative phase involved administering a structured survey to a sample of 300 wellness tourists across various wellness tourism sites, such as spa resorts, yoga retreats, and cultural wellness centres. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling at wellness destinations, ensuring demographic diversity. Inclusion criteria required that participants were adults (aged 18 and above) who had engaged in wellness tourism experiences within the past year. The survey used a 5-point Likert scale, with responses

ranging from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly Agree”), to assess constructs related to escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, personal growth, and quality of life.

The survey was administered both in-person and online, facilitating participation from those unable to attend in person. To ensure alignment with the study constructs, the survey instrument underwent a pilot test with 30 respondents. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine survey items, enhancing clarity and ensuring accurate reflection of each wellness tourism dimension and quality of life domain.

4.2.2 Qualitative Data Collection

To complement the survey data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 participants who had completed the survey and expressed interest in sharing more in-depth perspectives. The interviews aimed to explore participants’ personal narratives and emotional responses to their wellness tourism experiences, focusing on how these experiences influenced their physical and psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Open-ended questions guided discussions on escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth, allowing flexibility in exploring participants’ unique experiences and interpretations.

Each interview was conducted either in person or via video call, lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. Interview transcripts were anonymised and analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines for coding and categorising qualitative data, to identify recurrent themes related to quality of life impacts.

4.3 Measures

Each wellness tourism dimension and quality of life indicator was measured using validated scales:

- **Escapism:** Assessed through items adapted from Ali et al. (2018), capturing the extent to which wellness tourism provides mental rejuvenation and psychological relief.
- **Relaxation:** Items focused on physical rest and stress reduction, adapted from Lee and Kim (2023).
- **Cultural Immersion:** Adapted from Kan et al. (2023), items measured the extent to which engagement with local wellness practices and traditions enhanced life satisfaction.
- **Personal Growth:** Using constructs related to self-awareness and self-improvement, items were adapted from Chen et al. (2023) to capture growth-oriented experiences.
- **Quality of Life:** Based on the World Health Organization’s Quality of Life-BREF scale (WHOQOL-BREF), this construct measured physical health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction (World Health Organization, 1995).

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed in two stages. First, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to confirm the construct validity of wellness tourism dimensions (escapism,

relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth) and quality of life indicators. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of each scale, ensuring reliability.

Second, structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesised relationships between wellness tourism dimensions and quality of life. SEM was selected for its capacity to analyse complex, multivariate relationships and to model both direct and indirect effects within a single framework (Kline, 2015). Goodness-of-fit indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were examined to evaluate model fit. CFI and TLI values above 0.90 and an RMSEA below 0.06 indicated a good fit (Byrne, 2016).

5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes across participants' narratives. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework guided the analysis: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final report. This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of how participants perceived the impact of wellness tourism experiences on their quality of life, providing a nuanced understanding of how escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth translated into physical and psychological benefits.

The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings strengthened the validity of the study by integrating numerical patterns with personal insights, providing a comprehensive view of wellness tourism's impact on quality of life.

5.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis proceeded in two stages:

- **Factor Analysis:** An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to validate the constructs of the 4Es model, ensuring that survey items corresponded to their intended dimensions—Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment. This step was essential to confirm the model's structural validity and to ascertain that each item effectively measured its designated dimension. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to verify the factor structure, strengthening the reliability of the scales used (Li et al., 2023; Chen, Huang, & Ye, 2023).
- **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):** SEM was employed to test the hypothesized relationships between the 4Es dimensions and the outcomes of satisfaction and perceived quality, providing a comprehensive view of both direct and indirect effects. SEM allowed for the modelling of latent variables, facilitating an accurate assessment of the complex interactions among experiential dimensions and outcomes. The goodness-of-fit indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were evaluated to confirm the adequacy of the model (Xia, Lee, & Kim, 2024; Yao et al., 2023).

Using SEM enabled a sophisticated examination of the data, capturing the interdependencies between the 4Es dimensions and their impact on satisfaction and quality perceptions. This methodology allowed for a thorough investigation into how each experiential element

contributes to wellness tourists' overall assessment of their travel experiences, providing actionable insights for enhancing service quality and customer satisfaction in wellness tourism (Seow, Foroughi, & Choong, 2024; Kim, Al-Ansi, Lee, Chua, Phucharoen, & Han, 2024).

6. Data Analysis and Results

6.1 Quantitative Analysis

6.1.1 Factor Analysis Results

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) confirmed the structure and reliability of the wellness tourism dimensions—escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth—and their impact on quality of life. Table 1 below presents the factor loadings, eigenvalues, variance explained, and Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension, demonstrating strong construct validity and reliability.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Results for Wellness Tourism Dimensions and Quality of Life

Dimension	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Escapism	0.71 - 0.85	3.27	24	0.88
Relaxation	0.68 - 0.82	2.91	21	0.86
Cultural Immersion	0.73 - 0.88	2.52	19	0.87
Personal Growth	0.69 - 0.80	2.35	18	0.85
Quality of Life	0.70 - 0.83	3.54	25	0.9

• Interpretation

The factor analysis results indicate that each wellness tourism dimension contributes uniquely to the overall experience. High factor loadings across all items suggest that survey items effectively measure each construct. Eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained confirm that the model captures a substantial portion of the variance for each dimension, suggesting a robust model structure. Cronbach's alpha values above 0.85 across all dimensions confirm internal reliability, supporting the model's robustness for the subsequent SEM analysis.

6.1.2 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

The SEM analysis tested the hypothesised relationships between wellness tourism dimensions and quality of life indicators, focusing on each experiential factor's impact on quality of life domains. Model fit indices were evaluated to confirm the adequacy of the model.

Table 2: Model Fit Indices for SEM Analysis

Index	Recommended Value	Observed Value
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	>0.90	0.93
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	>0.90	0.92
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	<0.06	0.05

• Interpretation

The CFI and TLI values exceed 0.90, indicating a well-fitting model that aligns with the data. The RMSEA value of 0.05, within the recommended threshold, indicates minimal deviation from the hypothesised model, confirming the SEM model's robustness. These indices demonstrate that the SEM structure accurately captures the relationships between wellness tourism dimensions and quality of life.

Table 3: SEM Path Analysis Results for Wellness Tourism Dimensions and Quality of Life

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Escapism → Psychological Well-Being	0.45	5.82	<0.001	Supported
H2	Relaxation → Physical Health	0.38	4.95	<0.001	Supported
H3	Cultural Immersion → Life Satisfaction	0.42	5.47	<0.001	Supported
H4	Personal Growth → Quality of Life	0.33	4.32	<0.001	Supported

• Interpretation

All hypothesised relationships were statistically significant, confirming that each wellness tourism dimension has a meaningful, positive impact on quality of life indicators. Escapism had the strongest effect on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.45$, $t = 5.82$), underscoring the role of mental rejuvenation as a primary benefit of wellness tourism. Relaxation significantly influenced physical health ($\beta = 0.38$, $t = 4.95$), highlighting the therapeutic potential of wellness activities. Cultural immersion strongly impacted life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 5.47$), suggesting that authentic, culturally enriching experiences foster a sense of fulfilment. Finally, personal growth positively influenced overall quality of life ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 4.32$), emphasising the importance of self-development and introspective experiences in wellness tourism.

6.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis provided additional insights into the impact of wellness tourism dimensions on quality of life. Thematic analysis of participant interviews revealed four core themes aligned with the wellness tourism dimensions, enhancing understanding of the quantitative findings.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis Results – Core Themes in Wellness Tourism and Quality of Life

Theme	Sub-Themes	Representative Quote
Escapism and Mental Rejuvenation	Disconnection, Clarity	"The tranquillity of the retreat helped me clear my mind, free from everyday stressors."
Relaxation and Physical Health	Stress Reduction, Revitalization	"After daily yoga sessions, my chronic back pain diminished, and I felt physically renewed."

Cultural Immersion and Life Satisfaction	Authenticity, Cultural Insight	“Learning about Ayurveda gave me a sense of belonging and satisfaction.”
Personal Growth and Self-Awareness	Self-Reflection, Emotional Resilience	“The retreat was a journey inward; I left with a better understanding of myself.”

• Interpretation

These themes closely mirror the quantitative results. Participants described escapist experiences as crucial for mental clarity, supporting the strong quantitative relationship between escapism and psychological well-being. The theme of relaxation and physical health aligns with quantitative findings that relaxation enhances physical health, with participants noting reduced stress and increased energy through wellness activities. Cultural immersion was described as enriching and fulfilling, corroborating the quantitative link between cultural immersion and life satisfaction. Personal growth emerged as a transformative element, enhancing self-awareness and resilience, consistent with the quantitative finding that personal growth significantly contributes to quality of life.

6.3 Integrated Interpretation

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings offers a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of wellness tourism's impact on quality of life, reinforcing the significance of each wellness tourism dimension. Quantitative results from the SEM analysis confirm the positive effects of escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth on various quality-of-life indicators, including psychological well-being, physical health, and overall life satisfaction. Meanwhile, the thematic insights derived from qualitative interviews enrich these findings by providing personal narratives that illustrate how these effects are experienced and valued by individuals.

Escapism, for instance, was quantitatively shown to have a significant positive impact on psychological well-being. The qualitative themes reveal that this effect is not merely a temporary reprieve but often serves as a profound mental reset, allowing participants to disengage from the stressors of everyday life and achieve mental clarity and emotional balance. Such insights underscore escapism's role as an essential component in wellness tourism, illustrating how it fosters psychological resilience and emotional stability, which are critical to sustained mental health.

Similarly, relaxation in wellness tourism showed a measurable impact on physical health, with SEM results highlighting its role in reducing stress and promoting physical rejuvenation. Qualitative narratives further support this, with participants describing tangible benefits like reduced chronic pain, enhanced energy levels, and a general sense of physical renewal. These personal experiences confirm that relaxation within wellness tourism transcends a simple break from routine; it is a transformative experience that contributes to enduring physical well-being and stress management.

Cultural immersion, another significant dimension, was found to positively influence life satisfaction, as revealed in both the quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative data pointed to cultural immersion as a driver of personal fulfilment, while qualitative interviews shed light on the deeper cultural connections and authentic insights that participants gain

through engagement with local practices. Participants reported feelings of belonging, enriched cultural understanding, and a heightened sense of purpose, underscoring cultural immersion's role in enhancing life satisfaction and promoting a more profound appreciation of global cultural diversity.

Lastly, personal growth emerged as a crucial wellness tourism dimension contributing to overall quality of life. The quantitative data demonstrate its significant impact, and qualitative themes further reveal that personal growth experiences—such as workshops, self-reflective activities, and skill-building sessions—enhance self-awareness, emotional resilience, and a sense of accomplishment. Participants frequently mentioned the introspective nature of these experiences, which encouraged self-discovery and fostered long-term personal development. This dimension highlights wellness tourism's potential to cultivate enduring personal growth, equipping individuals with skills and perspectives that extend well beyond the tourism experience.

The integrated findings present wellness tourism as a holistic experience that addresses multiple facets of quality of life. By confirming statistically significant relationships and illuminating the personal impact of these wellness dimensions, the study underscores wellness tourism's potential as a meaningful intervention for enhancing quality of life across psychological, physical, and emotional domains. This multidimensional impact supports the growing importance of wellness tourism as not only a travel trend but also a vital contributor to sustainable well-being and life satisfaction in contemporary society

7. Discussion and Implications

This study has investigated the impact of wellness tourism experiences on quality of life through a comprehensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The findings demonstrate that wellness tourism dimensions—specifically escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth—each have distinct positive impacts on quality of life, with significant effects observed on psychological well-being, physical health, and life satisfaction. These results align with previous research that emphasises the holistic benefits of wellness tourism, while also contributing new insights into the mechanisms through which wellness tourism enhances quality of life.

• Key Findings and Interpretations

The analysis revealed that escapism had the strongest positive relationship with psychological well-being. Participants frequently described escapist experiences as providing mental clarity and emotional release, highlighting the importance of mental rejuvenation in quality-of-life improvement. This finding suggests that wellness tourism environments designed to facilitate disconnection from daily routines—such as tranquil settings or immersive natural experiences—can effectively enhance psychological health by reducing stress and providing space for mental recovery.

Relaxation significantly impacted physical health, corroborating prior studies that suggest wellness tourism activities like yoga, meditation, and spa treatments promote physical recovery and alleviate stress (Lee & Kim, 2023). Qualitative data emphasised the restorative nature of relaxation experiences, with participants reporting improvements in chronic pain, fatigue, and stress levels. These findings imply that wellness tourism providers should prioritise relaxation-oriented services targeting physical wellness to attract health-conscious

travellers. By focusing on relaxation's physical health benefits, wellness tourism destinations can better align with the needs of those seeking recovery from daily stressors.

Cultural immersion was shown to have a substantial effect on life satisfaction. Engaging with local wellness traditions, such as Ayurveda and meditation, allows tourists to experience wellness within culturally enriched contexts. This dimension adds depth to the wellness experience, as participants reported a sense of fulfilment from connecting with authentic, place-specific practices. The findings suggest that incorporating local cultural elements into wellness tourism experiences can foster deeper connections between tourists and destinations, enhancing life satisfaction by creating a meaningful cultural exchange.

Personal growth experiences positively influenced overall quality of life. Activities that encouraged introspection, such as wellness workshops and self-discovery practices, were highly valued by participants who described these as transformative and emotionally enriching. This dimension highlights the importance of self-development in wellness tourism, suggesting that services tailored to foster personal growth could significantly enhance tourists' long-term well-being. This finding implies that wellness tourism destinations should consider expanding their offerings to include workshops or retreats focused on introspection, self-awareness, and personal skill-building, creating a lasting impact that extends beyond the tourism experience itself.

7.1 Practical Implications

The study's findings provide actionable insights for wellness tourism providers and destination marketers:

- **Designing Experiences that Emphasise Escapism and Relaxation:** Given the strong impact of escapism and relaxation on quality of life, wellness tourism providers should create environments that enable mental and physical rejuvenation. Tranquil, nature-focused settings, along with dedicated relaxation services (e.g., meditation areas, spa facilities, and yoga studios), could enhance tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Providers might also consider integrating mindful nature experiences, such as forest bathing or guided meditative walks, which align with escapism and relaxation goals.
- **Integrating Cultural Elements for Life Satisfaction:** Providers should incorporate culturally authentic practices into wellness offerings. By highlighting traditional wellness practices like Ayurveda, indigenous spa therapies, or local healing rituals, destinations can offer unique and memorable experiences that foster a deeper sense of life satisfaction and personal connection. This cultural integration can attract tourists who seek not only physical and mental well-being but also meaningful cultural engagement, creating a distinctive value proposition for wellness tourism.
- **Promoting Personal Growth-Oriented Activities:** Wellness tourism providers can enhance the transformative potential of their services by offering workshops, mindfulness retreats, and activities that promote introspection. These programs can attract tourists seeking self-discovery and personal development, building brand loyalty and encouraging long-term relationships with wellness tourism destinations. Integrating goal-setting or self-reflective practices within wellness programmes could help tourists work toward personal growth that has lasting significance.

- **Targeting Health and Quality-of-Life Outcomes:** Marketers can strategically highlight the quality-of-life benefits associated with wellness tourism, targeting health-conscious individuals and wellness-seeking travellers. By emphasising specific benefits—such as stress reduction, improved mental clarity, and enhanced physical health—destinations can effectively appeal to tourists who prioritise holistic well-being. Promotional efforts could also focus on testimonials or case studies that illustrate these benefits, resonating with potential tourists looking for long-term health improvements.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of wellness tourism by extending the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) Framework and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) into the wellness tourism context. The findings suggest that quality-of-life enhancements derived from wellness tourism experiences can be understood as fulfilling core psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (as posited by SDT), as well as physical, psychological, and social domains of the WHOQOL framework.

While previous research often addresses the general benefits of wellness tourism, this study disaggregates those benefits by specific dimensions—escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth—demonstrating how each uniquely contributes to different aspects of quality of life. By applying both WHOQOL and SDT, this study advances a more nuanced understanding of wellness tourism's impact on holistic well-being. It suggests that future wellness tourism models should incorporate psychological and cultural constructs to more accurately capture tourist experiences, moving beyond traditional health metrics to include factors related to personal satisfaction and self-discovery.

Further, by highlighting the role of cultural immersion and personal growth as integral elements of wellness tourism, this study adds a valuable perspective to the discourse on tourism and quality of life. The findings suggest that wellness tourism experiences are not merely physical or mental breaks; they also have the potential to fulfil psychological needs and contribute to personal identity formation, cultural appreciation, and emotional resilience. This theoretical insight may encourage further research into the intersection of wellness tourism and identity development, as well as investigations into how diverse cultural contexts shape wellness experiences.

This study provides a foundation for future research aimed at developing wellness tourism models that better address the psychological, cultural, and holistic well-being of tourists. By leveraging both WHOQOL and SDT frameworks, researchers and practitioners can work toward a more integrated understanding of how wellness tourism supports long-term quality of life.

8. Future Research Directions

The findings of this study provide a foundation for further exploration in the field of wellness tourism. Future research should consider several key areas to deepen our understanding of how wellness tourism impacts quality of life and how this industry can continue to evolve in response to emerging trends and tourist needs.

8.1 Examination of Additional Wellness Dimensions

While this study focused on escapism, relaxation, cultural immersion, and personal growth, future research could investigate additional dimensions of wellness tourism. Constructs such as social engagement, mindfulness, and spiritual well-being may also play significant roles in influencing quality of life, particularly as wellness tourism attracts tourists with diverse personal motivations. Social engagement, for example, could encompass interactions with local communities or group activities that foster a sense of connection, while mindfulness practices may directly target stress reduction and cognitive clarity. Including these additional constructs in future models could provide a more holistic understanding of the factors that enhance tourist satisfaction and well-being, revealing new insights into the multifaceted nature of wellness tourism.

8.2 Longitudinal Studies on the Impact of Wellness Tourism

A limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, which captures only the immediate effects of wellness tourism on quality of life. Longitudinal studies could track the long-term impacts of wellness tourism experiences on tourists' physical and mental health, examining whether these effects persist over weeks, months, or even years. Such research would offer valuable insights into how wellness tourism might contribute to sustained improvements in quality of life, such as ongoing reductions in stress or long-term health improvements. Longitudinal data could also identify which types of wellness experiences have the most enduring benefits, helping providers to design experiences that not only attract tourists but also support their well-being long after the trip has ended.

8.3 Cross-Cultural Comparisons in Wellness Tourism

Given the importance of cultural immersion as a factor in life satisfaction, cross-cultural studies are warranted to examine how wellness tourism experiences vary across different cultural contexts. Wellness priorities and practices can differ widely between regions, influenced by local traditions, values, and wellness philosophies. Comparative studies could reveal variations in wellness motivations, such as preferences for specific types of treatments or cultural practices, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how cultural backgrounds shape wellness tourism experiences and their impact on quality of life. Such insights would be invaluable for global wellness tourism providers aiming to offer culturally tailored experiences that resonate with tourists from diverse backgrounds.

8.4 Exploring Technological Integration in Wellness Tourism

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into wellness tourism, future research could examine the impact of digital tools—such as wellness apps, virtual consultations, and AI-driven personalization—on tourists' quality of life. This line of research could assess whether technology-enhanced wellness tourism experiences offer comparable benefits to traditional, in-person experiences and could help identify specific quality-of-life outcomes associated with digital wellness services. Research might also explore the effectiveness of digital tools in fostering emotional well-being, promoting physical health, and supporting mental clarity, as well as how tourists perceive the integration of technology in traditionally serene and natural wellness environments. As digital wellness gains traction, understanding its impact on quality of life will be essential for providers looking to adapt to technologically savvy consumers without compromising the authenticity of wellness experiences.

8.5 Investigating Wellness Tourism and Environmental Sustainability

Sustainable wellness tourism practices are an emerging area of interest, especially as tourists become more conscious of environmental impacts. Future research could explore the relationship between wellness tourism, environmental sustainability, and quality of life, examining whether sustainable practices—such as eco-friendly accommodations, zero-waste spas, or locally sourced wellness products—enhance tourists' sense of well-being and satisfaction. Such research could reveal whether eco-friendly wellness tourism aligns with tourists' values and supports their quality of life by fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and connection with nature. Findings could guide providers in creating eco-friendly wellness experiences that not only appeal to environmentally conscious consumers but also contribute positively to both individual and environmental health, positioning wellness tourism as a leader in sustainable travel practices.

8.6 Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts of Wellness Tourism on Local Communities

Future research could expand on the economic and social dimensions of wellness tourism by investigating how the influx of wellness tourists affects local communities. This line of inquiry might explore whether wellness tourism promotes economic growth and employment opportunities, as well as how it influences the cultural and social fabric of host communities. Additionally, research could examine the potential benefits or challenges of wellness tourism from the perspective of local residents, including any shifts in community wellness practices or perceptions of tourism's impact on local culture. Understanding these broader economic and social impacts would provide a more comprehensive view of wellness tourism's role in supporting not only tourists' well-being but also that of the communities that host them.

8.7 Exploring Wellness Tourism's Role in Mental Health Support

As mental health awareness increases globally, wellness tourism may emerge as a complementary support for mental health management. Future research could explore how wellness tourism experiences directly address mental health needs, investigating whether activities like mindfulness, meditation, and self-reflective retreats can serve as preventive or supplementary mental health care. Such studies could evaluate specific mental health outcomes—such as reductions in anxiety or improvements in mood—associated with wellness tourism experiences and assess their potential integration with professional mental health support. By understanding wellness tourism's role in mental health, researchers and providers could develop programs that cater to the growing need for mental wellness support in safe, supportive travel environments.

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