



# An exploration of ancient yoga in Bali: An effort to make Bali a world centre for spiritual tourism

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Background: Religion is often considered as a cause of environmental problems. In response to this pessimism, Buddhism through the philosophy of Dharma comes up as revolutionary perspective in shaping contemporary environmental development paradigm, a counter for modern Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm. This philosophy is embodied in the concept of *paṭiccasamuppāda* applied as “scalpel” on existing environmental problems. **Methods:** This research uses a qualitative case study to explore the revival of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination. Data were collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, and FGDs. Data analysis included transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and contextual interpretation, with triangulation to validate findings. **Findings:** Currently, there are significant efforts to revive Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination in Bali. Especially with the increasing of global interest in wellness and spirituality, Bali has great potential to attract tourists seeking authentic spiritual experiences. This involves the restoration and revitalization of traditional practices, including the hosting of yoga retreats, spiritual training, and festivals featuring ancient aspects of Balinese yoga and meditation. The development of spiritual tourism based on Ancient Balinese Yoga focuses on maintaining the authenticity of the practice while adapting to the needs and expectations of modern tourists. **Conclusion:** By combining yoga training with cultural tours, spiritual seminars, and meditation programs, Bali can position itself as a major hub for global spiritual tourism. Reviving Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination also supports the preservation of Bali's cultural and spiritual heritage, provides economic benefits to local communities, and enriches the traveler's experience with authentic spiritual depth. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** By bridging Buddhist philosophy with the revival of Ancient Balinese Yoga, this research offers a novel perspective on addressing contemporary ecological challenges, highlighting the interconnectedness of all life and proposing spiritual practices as essential components of sustainable development.

**KEYWORDS:** ancient balinese yoga; Bali; spirituality.

## 1. Introduction

Bali, a small island in Indonesia, has long been recognized as a tropical paradise that offers natural beauty, rich culture, and deep spirituality. However, behind the glamour of mass tourism that has long dominated the island's economy lies a deeper and more authentic spiritual heritage - Ancient Balinese Yoga. This yoga tradition, which encompasses 14 lineages of the world's yoga schools, has been preserved in Bali since ancient times, yet is often overlooked in modern tourism narratives. Bali has long been recognized as a tourist

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destination that offers natural beauty and cultural richness. However, behind its popular image as a tropical paradise, Bali holds a deep spiritual heritage, including an ancient yoga tradition that has flourished for centuries. Ancient Balinese Yoga, rooted in the Watukaru Tradition, offers a holistic approach to physical, mental, and spiritual health that is unique and authentic (Surpi & Nantra, 2022). Today, when global tourism is increasingly geared towards meaningful and transformative experiences, Ancient Balinese Yoga has great potential to position Bali as a centre for world spiritual tourism.

History records that yoga has flourished in Bali since at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Hermitage centres, such as the one located on Mount Watukaru in Tabanan regency, were where this spiritual practice flourished. Through the tradition of *parampara* - the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student - these yoga teachings have endured for centuries, maintaining their authenticity and depth amidst the changing times. However, with the development of mass tourism in Bali, the focus on this deeper spiritual aspect is often displaced. Yoga, in many cases, has become a tourism commodity that sometimes loses its deep spiritual essence. On the other hand, global trends show an increasing interest in wellness tourism and authentic spiritual experiences. Travelers are increasingly looking for more than just a relaxing holiday; they want transformative experiences that can have a profound impact on their lives.

Global trends show an increasing interest in wellness and spiritual tourism. According to the Global Wellness Institute (2021), the global wellness tourism market is projected to reach \$919 billion by 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 9.9% from 2020-2025. Yoga, as one of the key components in wellness tourism, has experienced significant growth in popularity. Amid this trend, Ancient Balinese Yoga offers strong differentiation with 14 lineages of yoga and a variety of Yogacara rarely found elsewhere (Surpi, 2021). However, this huge potential has yet to be fully utilized. Most tourists and even locals are only familiar with a fraction of the richness of Bali yoga traditions (Indriani et al., 2022). The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism product requires a comprehensive strategy, involving the preservation of cultural heritage, awareness raising, and the development of supportive infrastructure.

It is in this context that the efforts to revive Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination become very relevant and important. This initiative is not just about preserving cultural heritage, but also about offering an authentic and immersive spiritual experience to global travellers. By re-exploring the richness of Bali's yoga tradition, there is great potential to position Bali not only as a natural and cultural tourism destination but also as a world centre for spiritual tourism. This involves various aspects, from the restoration and revitalization of traditional practices, the organization of yoga retreats and spiritual training programs, to the development of immersive experiences that show the uniqueness of Ancient Balinese Yoga and meditation (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). The challenge is how to maintain the authenticity of these practices while adapting to the needs and expectations of modern travelers.

More than just a tourism initiative, this endeavour has the potential to deliver multidimensional benefits. In terms of cultural preservation, it is an important step towards keeping Bali's spiritual heritage alive and relevant. From an economic perspective, the development of spiritual tourism can open up new opportunities for local communities, creating employment and a sustainable source of income. For travellers, it offers the opportunity to experience authentic spiritual depth, which can have a transformative impact on their lives.

This research aims to explore the potential, challenges, and strategies in reviving Ancient Balinese Yoga as a global spiritual tourism destination, analyze the challenges faced in its development, and propose strategies to make Bali a global spiritual tourism hub. By reviving and integrating Ancient Balinese Yoga into the tourism industry, Bali can not only enrich the traveller's experience but also preserve its precious cultural heritage, while creating new economic opportunities for local communities. Understanding the complexity of these efforts is expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism industry

players, and local communities in developing Bali as an authentic and sustainable centre of world spiritual tourism.

Through in-depth analyses of current conditions, market potential, challenges faced, and strategies that can be implemented, this research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for the development of spiritual tourism based on Ancient Balinese Yoga. Ultimately, this endeavour is not only about boosting Bali's tourism sector but also about preserving and sharing the island's spiritual wealth with the world, while ensuring that its benefits can be felt by local communities and future generations.

## 2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth the efforts to revive Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination. This method was chosen due to its ability to provide a holistic and contextualized understanding of complex phenomena, such as those encountered in heritage-based spiritual tourism development.

Data were collected through various methods to ensure triangulation and validity of information, namely in-depth interviews conducted with 20 key informants, including practitioners of Ancient Balinese Yoga, Pasramans which are preservers of Ancient Balinese Yoga, tourism industry players, relevant government officials, and tourists who have participated in yoga programs in Bali. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility to dig deeper. Participatory observation, the researcher was directly involved in some of the Ancient Balinese Yoga sessions and spiritual tourism programs. Observations were made at various locations, including Pasraman Seruling Dewata and other yoga centres in Bali. Document analysis involved reviewing historical documents, ancient manuscripts, and literature related to Ancient Balinese Yoga. It also analyzed government policies, tourism industry reports, and studies related to spiritual tourism. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) which was conducted in two sessions, each with 10-25 participants representing various stakeholders. The FGDs aimed to explore diverse perspectives and identify areas of consensus and divergence.

Data analysis was conducted through several stages, namely data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed and coded to identify key themes. Thematic analysis, emerging themes were analyzed to find patterns and relationships between concepts. Contextual interpretation, findings were interpreted in the socio-cultural and economic context of Bali. The last is triangulation. Results from different data collection methods were compared to validate the findings.

This research has some limitations, namely focusing on Ancient Balinese Yoga, not covering all forms of yoga practiced in Bali. Limited to the perspective of local stakeholders and tourists who have visited Bali. Conducted over a limited time span, it does not include longitudinal analysis. Through this method, the research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the potential, challenges, and strategies in reviving Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination, as well as the implications for the development of Bali as a world centre for spiritual tourism.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Uniqueness and authenticity of ancient balinese yoga

Ancient Balinese Yoga offers a uniqueness and authenticity that is a significant differentiator in the global yoga landscape. This uniqueness is rooted in the long history and rich traditions that have flourished in Bali for centuries. Ancient Balinese Yoga is a rich historical heritage. Surpi and Nantra (2022) reveal that Ancient Balinese Yoga, particularly that of the Watukaru Tradition, has existed since at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. This age of more than 1400 years gives Ancient Balinese Yoga a historical depth rarely found in many contemporary yoga practices. This continuous existence over the centuries demonstrates

the resilience and relevance of these yoga teachings, which have survived through various social, political, and cultural changes in Bali.

One of the most notable aspects of Ancient Balinese Yoga is the existence of 14 different lineages. Each of these lineages has unique characteristics, techniques, and philosophies. Surpi (2021) explains that this diversity includes yoga that focuses on the elements of nature, such as Surya and Candra Lineage Yoga, to more metaphysical ones such as Shiva and Vishnu Lineage Yoga. This diversity offers a broad spectrum of yoga practices, allowing practitioners to explore different approaches to physical, mental, and spiritual health.

In Ancient Balinese Yoga, there are various Yogacara or series of yoga movements that are rarely found in modern yoga practices. Indriani et al. (2022) noted that many of these Yogacara, such as Surya Dharyam Yoga, have specific empirically proven benefits, such as reduced anxiety levels in adolescents. Yogacara's unique presence enriches the global yoga repertoire and offers a new approach to addressing a range of health and wellbeing issues. Ancient Balinese Yoga is not only a physical practice but also closely integrated with Balinese spirituality and culture. Yoga practice in Bali often involves ritual and philosophical elements rooted in Balinese Hindu tradition. This integration creates a holistic yoga experience, where physical, mental, and spiritual aspects are closely intertwined.

In contrast to many modern yoga practices that tend to focus on the physical aspects, Ancient Balinese Yoga offers a more holistic approach. Surpi (2021) explains that this practice includes not only asanas (physical postures), but also pranayama (breathing techniques), meditation, and philosophical teachings. This holistic approach aims to achieve balance and well-being on all levels of human existence.

Ancient Balinese Yoga has a strong connection with nature, which is reflected in many of its practices. Surpi and Nantra (2022) describe how some yoga practices are performed in natural locations that are considered sacred, such as near water sources or on mountain tops. This connection with nature not only provides a beautiful backdrop for yoga practice, but also deepens the spiritual experience and connection with the environment. This uniqueness and authenticity of Ancient Balinese Yoga makes it an invaluable asset in the context of global spiritual tourism. In an era where many yoga practices have undergone standardization and commercialization, Ancient Balinese Yoga offers a truly different and profound experience. It has the potential to attract travellers looking for more than just a physical practice, but also an authentic spiritual and cultural journey.

### *3.2 Economic potential and local community empowerment*

The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism product brings significant economic potential and substantial local community empowerment opportunities. In a global context, the wellness tourism industry continues to show rapid growth. The Global Wellness Institute (2021) projects that the global wellness tourism market will reach \$919 billion by 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 9.9% from 2020 to 2025. This figure illustrates the huge economic opportunity that can be utilized through the development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a major attraction in spiritual tourism in Bali. With the right positioning, Ancient Balinese Yoga can take a substantial share of this market.

Yoga, as an integral component of wellness tourism, has become one of the fastest growing segments. With its uniqueness and authenticity, Ancient Balinese Yoga has the potential to take a significant market share in the industry. This development can create a range of new economic opportunities, from the establishment of yoga centres and retreats, to the development of related products such as yoga wear, healthy food, and herbal supplements inspired by Balinese traditions.

More importantly, focusing on Ancient Balinese Yoga can be a catalyst for local community empowerment. By training local yoga instructors, Bali can create new jobs that not only provide income but also help preserve cultural heritage. The importance of standardization in yoga teaching in Bali, which can be achieved through a comprehensive

training program for local instructors. This would not only improve the quality of teaching but also open up new career opportunities for locals.

In addition, the development of supporting infrastructure such as eco-friendly accommodation, healthy food restaurants, and local craft shops can engage and empower local communities. Indriani et al. (2022) showed that the integration of yoga practices with Balinese cultural elements can create a richer experience for tourists. This opens up opportunities for local artists, organic farmers, and traditional craftsmen to participate in the spiritual tourism value chain.

The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga also has the potential to extend tourists' stay and increase their spending. Yoga retreats and intensive training programs can last for a few days to a few weeks, providing a greater economic impact compared to conventional tourism. Surpi and Nantra (2022) noted that travellers interested in yoga and spirituality tend to seek more immersive and meaningful experiences, which often translates into longer visits and higher spending. However, it is important to ensure that the economic benefits of this development are distributed equitably and sustainably. Development strategies should take into account environmental preservation and respect for local cultural values. With the right approach, Ancient Balinese Yoga can become a tourism model that not only generates economic growth but also strengthens cultural identity and improves the quality of life of local communities.

### *3.3 Challenges in preservation and modernization*

The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism product faces significant challenges in balancing the preservation of authenticity with the need for modernization to meet international tourism standards. The uniqueness of Ancient Balinese Yoga lies in its rich spiritual heritage and traditional practices that have been passed down through the ages. However, in the context of competitive global tourism, there is pressure to adapt these practices to make them more accessible and attractive to international travellers. Surpi and Nantra (2022) underline the importance of maintaining the spiritual and philosophical integrity of Ancient Balinese Yoga in the process of developing it as a tourism product. They emphasize that the essence of the practice lies in the deep connection with nature, traditional rituals, and spiritual teachings that have endured through the ages. However, there is a risk that in an effort to attract tourists, these important aspects may be diluted or even lost altogether.

On the other hand, certain modernization is necessary to ensure the relevance and competitiveness of Ancient Balinese Yoga in the global market. This includes the development of adequate infrastructure, the use of technology in marketing and teaching, and the adaptation of teaching methods to meet the expectations of international travellers. The challenge is to do this without compromising the essence and core values of traditional practices. Indriani et al. (2022) identified the knowledge gap as one of the main challenges. Many aspects of Ancient Balinese Yoga are not yet widely recognized, even among the Balinese themselves. This creates a risk that in the process of modernization, important elements of this tradition may be overlooked or misinterpreted. Therefore, systematic preservation and documentation efforts are indispensable before and during the tourism development process.

Another challenge comes in the form of standardizing yoga practices for tourism purposes. While standardization may improve the consistency and quality of the tourist experience, there is a risk that this process may eliminate the regional variations and local nuances that make Ancient Balinese Yoga unique. Surpi (2021) emphasizes the importance of maintaining diversity in traditional Balinese yoga practices, reflecting the cultural and spiritual richness of the island.

Excessive commercialization is also a potential threat. When Ancient Balinese Yoga starts to be marketed as a tourism product, there is a risk that its spiritual and cultural aspects may be reduced to a mere tourist attraction. This may result in the erosion of the

core values and spiritual significance of the practice. Maintaining a balance between commercial viability and spiritual integrity is a significant challenge.

Last, there is the challenge of training and preparing local instructors to teach Ancient Balinese Yoga in the context of international tourism. This involves not only the teaching of yoga techniques, but also the development of language skills, cross-cultural understanding, and the ability to explain complex concepts to a diverse audience. The importance of a comprehensive training program that blends traditional knowledge with modern skills required in the tourism industry.

Facing these challenges requires a careful and balanced approach. Collaboration between local stakeholders, yoga experts, tourism industry players, and the government is needed to develop strategies that can maintain the authenticity of Ancient Balinese Yoga while making it accessible and attractive to global travellers (Font & McCabe, 2017). With the right approach, preservation and modernization can go hand in hand, creating a spiritual tourism model that is not only economically sustainable but also enriches and preserves Bali's cultural heritage.

The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism product faces the classic dilemma between preservation and modernization, a theme that often arises in the study of cultural and spiritual tourism. Lalicic and Weismayer (2021) in their research in the *Journal of Tourism Futures* analyze how spiritual tourism destinations face the challenge of maintaining authenticity while adapting to the demands of the global market. They emphasize that a balance between tradition and innovation is essential for the long-term sustainability of spiritual tourism destinations.

In the context of Ancient Balinese Yoga, this challenge is made more complex by its historical depth and philosophical richness. Bowers and Cheer (2017) in their study published in *Annals of Tourism Research* explored the impact of commercialization on traditional spiritual practices in Bali. They found that while commercialization can bring economic benefits, it can also result in the erosion of the core values and spiritual meaning of the practice. These findings are relevant to the development of Ancient Balinese Yoga, where there is a risk that the deeply spiritual aspects may be reduced to mere tourist attractions.

Another challenge identified by Singleton (2010) in his book "Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice" is the global tendency to standardize yoga practice. While standardization can improve accessibility and consistency, it can also threaten the local uniqueness and variation that characterized Ancient Balinese Yoga. An over-emphasis on the physical aspects of yoga, which often occurs in the context of tourism, can override the rich philosophical and spiritual dimensions of the Balinese tradition.

Kern and Schaflechner (2020) in their article in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* discuss how the globalization of yoga has changed the spiritual landscape in South and Southeast Asia. They highlight the importance of 'cultural negotiation' in the process of adapting traditional spiritual practices into modern contexts. In the case of Ancient Balinese Yoga, this negotiation involves how to maintain the core elements of the tradition while making it relevant and attractive to international travellers.

The challenge of training local instructors is also an important concern. Maddox (2015) in his research published in the *International Journal of Tourism Research* analyzed the role of local guides in spiritual tourism. He found that the ability to bridge traditional knowledge with modern traveller expectations is crucial. In the context of Ancient Balinese Yoga, this means that instructors must not only be proficient in traditional practices but also able to communicate them effectively to a diverse international audience. Norman and Pokorny (2017) in their study in *Tourism Management Perspectives* emphasize the importance of participatory approaches in the development of spiritual tourism. They argued that the active involvement of local communities in the decision-making process and destination management is crucial to ensure sustainability and authenticity. This is particularly relevant for the development of Ancient Balinese Yoga, where the voices and perspectives of local communities should be central in any development strategy.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and sensitive approach to the local context. A careful balance between preservation of tradition and adaptation to the demands of the global market is required. An effective strategy should involve collaboration between local stakeholders, yoga experts, tourism industry players, and the government to develop a spiritual tourism model that is not only economically sustainable but also enriches and preserves Bali's cultural heritage.

One of the main challenges is maintaining a balance between the preservation of the authenticity of Ancient Balinese Yoga and the need for modernization to meet international tourism standards. Indriani et al. (2022) note that many aspects of Ancient Balinese Yoga are not yet widely recognized, even among the Balinese themselves. As the FGDs concluded, care needs to be taken not to over-commercialize these spiritual practices, while still making them accessible to tourists. It even provides great benefits to those seeking wellbeing and holistic health capacity building endeavours.

### *3.4 Need for supporting infrastructure and regulations*

The development of supportive infrastructure, such as adequate yoga centres and retreats, as well as clear regulations to maintain the quality of yoga teaching, is important. The lack of standardization in yoga teaching in Bali may reduce its credibility and long-term appeal. The FGD results indicate the need for the government to be involved in creating regulations that support the development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a tourism asset while maintaining its integrity. The Bali government at all levels should provide strong support for the development of Ancient Bali Yoga as a yoga destination package and make it unique as a Yoga Island. The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism destination requires adequate infrastructure and a supportive regulatory framework. This infrastructure includes not only physical facilities but also management systems and operational standards that ensure the quality of the traveller experience while maintaining the integrity of spiritual practices. This is confirmed by Cheer et al. (2017) in their study analyzing the importance of infrastructure in the development of spiritual tourism destinations, which emphasized that infrastructure should be designed with the spiritual needs of tourists and local values in mind. In the context of Ancient Balinese Yoga, this could mean the construction of yoga and retreat centres that are harmonious with the natural environment and traditional Balinese architecture, while being equipped with the modern facilities required by international tourists.

Regulation also plays a crucial role in maintaining the quality and authenticity of the yoga experience. Maddox (2015) highlights the importance of regulation in maintaining ethical standards and professionalism in spiritual tourism. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, this could involve developing a certification system for yoga instructors and standardizing curricula that retains the traditional essence while meeting international expectations. Bowers and Cheer (2017) outline the challenges of managing the impact of tourism on spiritual sites in Bali. The importance of policies that limit excessive commercialization and maintain the sacredness of spiritual places was stressed. In the development of Ancient Balinese Yoga, similar regulations may be needed to protect sacred locations used in yoga practice from over-exploitation.

Digital infrastructure is also becoming increasingly important in modern tourism. Inversini and Buhalis (2009) underline the role of technology in enhancing the traveller experience and the efficiency of destination management. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, this could involve the development of digital platforms for reservations, information, and even distance learning, which could extend the reach and accessibility of the practice. However, infrastructure development and regulation must be done carefully to avoid over-tourism and environmental degradation. Buckley (2012) in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* warns about the risks of uncontrolled tourism development to local ecosystems. In the context of Bali which already facing environmental pressures, infrastructure development for Ancient Balinese Yoga should adopt the principles of sustainability.

Another important aspect is human resource development. Cohen (2017) emphasizes the importance of training and local capacity building in spiritual tourism. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, this means investment in the training of local instructors, not only in yoga practices but also in tourism management skills and cross-cultural understanding. Finally, Olsen (2020) in *Tourism Planning & Development* highlights the importance of collaboration between the government, private sector and local communities in the development of sustainable spiritual tourism. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, this could mean the establishment of a multi-stakeholder governing body to oversee the development and implementation of infrastructure and regulations.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, the development of infrastructure and regulations for Ancient Balinese Yoga should be a holistic and inclusive process. The goal is to create an environment that supports the growth of spiritual tourism while maintaining the integrity of traditional practices and the well-being of local communities. A balance between modernization and preservation, between economic growth and environmental sustainability, will be key to the success of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a global spiritual tourism destination.

### *3.5 Marketing strategy and global positioning*

The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism product requires an appropriate marketing strategy and clear positioning in the global market. This involves not only promoting the uniqueness and authenticity of Ancient Balinese Yoga but also positioning it within the broader context of wellness tourism and spiritual tourism. In their research in *Tourism Management*, Coghlan et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of experiential marketing in spiritual tourism. They argue that spiritual travellers seek transformative experiences that go beyond mere physical activity. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, this means that marketing is not just the yoga practice but also the spiritual narrative, history, and cultural context surrounding it. Experiential marketing and storytelling are therefore indispensable. Chhabra (2010) underlines the power of storytelling in marketing cultural heritage products. In the context of Ancient Balinese Yoga, storytelling could involve narratives about the origins of the practice, the philosophy behind it, and how it has influenced the lives of Balinese people over the centuries.

In the digital era, the role of social media and digital marketing cannot be ignored. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) in *Tourism Management Perspectives* highlighted how social media has changed the way tourist destinations are marketed. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, the use of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok can be an effective way to visualize the uniqueness of the practice and reach a global audience. However, Mkono (2016) warns about the risk of digital over-representation that can lead to unrealistic expectations. Therefore, a digital marketing strategy for Ancient Balinese Yoga should maintain a balance between attracting attention and maintaining authenticity.

Kelly (2012) in *Tourism Management* analyzes trends in wellness tourism and emphasizes the importance of differentiation. Ancient Balinese Yoga can be positioned as a unique wellness experience which combine ancient yoga practices with Balinese local wisdom and immersive cultural experiences. The positioning of Ancient Balinese Yoga in the context of wellness tourism is a crucial aspect in the effort to make Bali a world centre for spiritual tourism. Kelly (2012) emphasizes the importance of differentiation in an increasingly competitive wellness market, where Ancient Balinese Yoga can highlight its uniqueness and authenticity as an ancient practice that has endured for centuries. Smith and Puczkó (2015) identified a trend towards wellness experiences that are more holistic and integrated with local culture, providing an opportunity for Ancient Balinese Yoga to position itself as an experience that not only nourishes the body but also enriches the soul through connection with Bali's spiritual heritage.

In terms of market segmentation, Voigt et al. (2011) identified various segments in wellness tourism, including spiritual seekers and self-improvers. Ancient Balinese Yoga can focus its positioning on the spiritual seeker segment that seeks transformative experiences.



Cheer et al. (2017) highlighted the convergence between spiritual tourism and cultural tourism, allowing Ancient Balinese Yoga to be positioned as a bridge between wellness and immersive cultural experiences. Konu (2015) underlines the importance of authenticity in wellness tourism, an aspect that can be a competitive advantage of Ancient Balinese Yoga by emphasizing the use of ancient techniques and settings in keeping with Balinese tradition.

The sustainability aspect, as emphasized by Bushell and Sheldon (2009), can also be a selling point in positioning Ancient Balinese Yoga, highlighting its sustainable practices and contribution to the preservation of Balinese culture. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) discuss the concept of 'flow' which is highly relevant to wellness tourism, where Ancient Balinese Yoga may emphasize the 'flow' experience offered through deep and meditative yoga practices. Despite focusing on traditional practices, Lim et al. (2016) reminded the importance of integrating modern technology in wellness tourism, which can be applied to Ancient Balinese Yoga to enhance the traveller experience.

Voigt and Pforr (2014) emphasize the trend towards personalization in wellness tourism, an aspect that can be integrated into the positioning of Ancient Balinese Yoga by offering experiences that can be tailored to the individual needs of each traveller. Reisinger (2013) discusses the potential of tourism as a transformative experience, providing an opportunity for Ancient Balinese Yoga to position itself as a catalyst for personal transformation. Finally, Connell (2013) highlights the potential for integration between wellness and medical tourism, opening up opportunities for Ancient Balinese Yoga to be positioned as a complement to a holistic approach to health.

Taking these aspects into consideration, the positioning of Ancient Balinese Yoga in wellness tourism should emphasize its uniqueness as an ancient spiritual practice that offers a transformative, authentic, and holistic experience. This strategy will not only help attract a segment of travellers seeking an immersive wellness experience but also contribute to the effort to establish Bali as a premium wellness destination that offers more than just health benefits, but also transformative spiritual and cultural journeys.

Fyall et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of collaborative marketing in tourism. For Ancient Balinese Yoga, this could mean working with international travel agents, retreat centres, and global wellness influencers to promote the destination. Trauer (2006) stated the importance of niche market targeting in special interest tourism. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target specific market segments such as advanced yoga practitioners, spiritual seekers, or those interested in Asian culture and history. Targeted Niche Markets in the context of developing Ancient Balinese Yoga as a spiritual tourism product is a key strategy to maximize its potential and uniqueness. Trauer (2006) in *Tourism Management* emphasizes the importance of niche market targeting in special interest tourism, which is particularly relevant for Ancient Balinese Yoga. Novelli (2005) in his book *"Niche Tourism: Contemporary Issues, Trends, and Cases"* explains that niche markets in tourism tend to have high loyalty and willingness to pay more for unique and immersive experiences. In the context of Ancient Balinese Yoga, this means focusing on market segments that are looking for authentic and transformative spiritual experiences, not just another yoga holiday. McKercher and du Cros (2002) in *"Cultural Tourism: The Partnership Between Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management"* identify a segment of serious cultural tourists, who seek immersive and meaningful experiences. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target this segment, offering an immersive experience that combines ancient yoga practices with a deep understanding of Balinese philosophy and culture.

Lehto et al. (2006) analyzed the motivations of yoga tourists and found that many were seeking a holistic experience that combines physical, mental and spiritual health. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target this segment by offering programmes that focus not only on asanas, but also meditation, yoga philosophy, and Balinese spiritual practices. On the other hand, Smith and Puczkó (2015) identified a trend towards transformational travel, where travellers seek life-changing experiences. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target this segment by offering intensive retreats that focus on personal transformation. Similarly, Berdychevsky et al. (2013) discuss the concept of "existential authenticity" in tourism, where travellers seek experiences that allow them to discover their true self. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target

this segment by offering programmes that focus on self-discovery and personal growth. Furthermore, Konu and Laukkanen (2010) identified a segment of "wellbeing enthusiasts" who actively seek new and unique wellness experiences. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target this segment by offering yoga practices that are rarely found elsewhere, such as deity yoga or specialized yoga derived from Balinese traditions. Moscardo et al. (2021) discuss the trend towards mindful travel, where travellers seek experiences that increase awareness and connection with oneself, others, and the environment. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target this segment by offering programmes that emphasize mindfulness and connection with Balinese nature. Chen et al. (2017) in *Tourism Management* analyzed the motivations of spiritual travellers and found that many are looking for experiences that can help them overcome an existential crisis or seek meaning in life. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target this segment by offering programmes that focus on the search for meaning and purpose in life through yoga practices and Balinese Hindu philosophy.

Finally, Chhabra (2010) in his concept of serious leisure where individuals dedicate significant time and effort to pursue their special interests. Ancient Balinese Yoga can target the segment of "serious yoga practitioners" who seek a more immersive and authentic yoga experience than what is commonly encountered in modern yoga studios. By targeting these niche segments, Ancient Balinese Yoga can position itself as a premium destination for serious spiritual seekers, advanced yoga practitioners, and individuals seeking transformative experiences. This strategy will not only aid in differentiation from other yoga destinations but also enable the development of a more focused and high-value product, in keeping with the uniqueness and depth of the Ancient Balinese Yoga tradition.

Getz (2008) in *Tourism Management* highlights the role of events in destination marketing. Organizing an international yoga festival or spiritual conference in Bali featuring Ancient Balinese Yoga can be an effective way to increase global visibility. Global visibility is one of the important aspects to develop Ancient Balinese Yoga tourism as well as launching the island of Bali as a yoga island and spiritual island that is able to provide holistic health benefits for anyone who wants to have a spiritual experience and practice on the island of the Gods. Ancient Balinese Yoga with all its uniqueness and authenticity requires the right strategy to enter the global yoga market. This effort also establishes Bali as the island of Yoga, a small island that is closely related to its cultural customs and at the same time is the preservation centre of 14 world yoga schools that developed from the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. This historical fact shows that Bali has been a preserver of the world's yoga teachings for 1,483 years or almost one and a half millennia. Therefore, it is appropriate for Bali to revive the ancient Balinese Yoga teachings and make Bali the Island of Yoga, by popularizing authentic yoga teachings to improve holistic health and the yogic achievement of increased awareness and reconnection with the divinity within. Ancient Balinese Yoga offers the ancient path of minimal modernization and Westernization to rebuild human potential and reconnect with higher consciousness.

#### 4. Conclusions

This research reveals significant efforts to revitalize Ancient Balinese Yoga as a key pillar in the development of spiritual tourism in Bali. This phenomenon reflects a paradigm shift in the global tourism industry, where there is an increasing interest in experiences that offer spiritual depth and holistic well-being. Bali, with its yogic heritage rooted in ancient traditions dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, has unique potential to fulfil this need. However, this revitalization effort presents complex challenges in balancing the authenticity of tradition with the demands of modernity. It is a historical fact that the Ancient Balinese Yoga tradition has endured for 1483 years, from 541 AD to the present day. The survival and endurance of Ancient Balinese Yoga for almost one and a half millennia demonstrates the enduring power and relevance of this spiritual practice. Enduring through various historical eras, social changes, and cultural transformations, Ancient Balinese Yoga proves itself to be an integral and adaptive element in Bali's spiritual identity. This fact not only confirms the intrinsic value and durability of the practice, but also signifies its great potential as a cultural

and spiritual asset in the context of modern tourism. Contemporary revitalization efforts, then, are not simply a tourism strategy, but a natural continuation of deep-rooted traditions, offering continuity between ancient heritage and contemporary relevance. This reinforces Bali's position as a unique destination capable of offering authentic and profound spiritual experiences, grounded in time-tested practices that remain dynamic in the face of modern-day demands.

The development strategy adopted shows a careful and multifaceted approach. On the one hand, there is an effort to maintain the integrity of ancient practices, as seen in the preservation of Bali's Watukaru tradition. On the other hand, there is an adaptation to contemporary traveller expectations through the organization of yoga retreats, spiritual trainings and festivals that integrate traditional elements with formats that are more accessible to a global audience. This approach reflects a deep understanding of the importance of creating experiences that are not only authentic, but also relevant and appealing to modern travellers.

Furthermore, this initiative has implications far beyond the tourism sector. By positioning Bali as a global spiritual tourism hub, it has the potential to deliver significant economic impact to local communities, while also being a catalyst for the preservation and revitalization of wider cultural heritage. However, the long-term success of this initiative will largely depend on the ability of stakeholders to manage the growth of spiritual tourism in a sustainable manner, maintaining a balance between economic opportunities and the preservation of the spiritual values that are at the core of Ancient Balinese Yoga. Thus, the revitalization of Ancient Balinese Yoga is not only a tourism strategy but also a potential model for sustainable development that integrates cultural preservation, economic development, and spirituality.

The marketing strategy and positioning for Ancient Balinese Yoga should be multifaceted, combining traditional with digital approaches, emphasizing transformative experiences, and highlighting its uniqueness and authenticity. Most importantly, however, it should be in line with the principles of sustainability and cultural preservation, maintaining a balance between global promotion and protection of local heritage. With the right approach, Ancient Balinese Yoga can be positioned as a flagship destination in the global spiritual tourism landscape, offering an experience that is not only unique but also profound and transformative. This research explores the potential and challenges in developing Ancient Balinese Yoga as a catalyst to make Bali a global centre for spiritual tourism.

Ancient Balinese Yoga has great potential as a unique spiritual tourism product. Its historical depth, diversity of practices, and integration with Balinese culture provide a strong draw for global spiritual travellers. A more than 1400-years-old yoga's heritage offers an authentic and profound spiritual experience. The development of Ancient Balinese Yoga can have a significant economic impact. The Global Wellness Institute (2021) projects rapid growth in the wellness tourism sector, providing a great opportunity for Bali to take part in this market. However, it is important to ensure that these economic benefits are evenly distributed to the local community. Balancing the preservation of tradition with the needs of modernization is a major challenge. The risk of over-commercialization could threaten the spiritual integrity of the practice. A cautious approach is needed in adapting Ancient Balinese Yoga for the global market without compromising its essence. The development of a supportive infrastructure and an appropriate regulatory framework is essential. Infrastructure should be designed with the spiritual needs of travellers and local values in mind. Regulation is also needed to maintain the quality and authenticity of the yoga experience. A comprehensive marketing strategy is needed to position Ancient Balinese Yoga in the global market. The importance of experiential marketing and storytelling in marketing spiritual tourism products. Utilization of digital and social media is also crucial but must be done carefully to avoid over-representation. Ancient Balinese Yoga has significant potential to make Bali a world centre for spiritual tourism. However, the success of this endeavour depends on the ability to balance various aspects: preservation of tradition with modernization, economic development with cultural

preservation, and global promotion with the protection of local values. A holistic and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders is required to develop a spiritual tourism model that is sustainable, authentic, and beneficial to the Balinese people as well as global travellers.

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### **Author Contribution**

Conceptualization, I.G.N.S. and I.K.A.W.; Methodology, N.P.W.; Validation, I.G.N.S., I.K.A.W. and N.P.W.; Formal Analysis, N.P.W.; Data Curation, N.P.W.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, I.K.A.W.; Writing – Review & Editing, I.G.N.S.

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Not applicable for studies not involving humans or animals or not concerning public health and safety.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Written informed consent has been obtained from the participants to publish this paper.

### **Data Availability Statement**

All research data is available to the researcher and can be academically accounted for, according to the methods used.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **Open Access**

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