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ABSTRACT

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alliancies strategy, wellness tourism, putri kedaton

The growing demand for health tourism presents significant opportunities for tourism players around the world. This paper examines business ethics in the implementation of strategic alliances as an important response to capitalize on the current emerging trend of Health Tourism. Based on case studies and relevant literature, this research employs a qualitative approach using descriptive analysis to investigate the benefits and challenges associated with forming alliances in the health tourism landscape as a form of corporate responsibility towards ethical business. Data is collected through literature reviews, case study analysis, and in-depth stakeholders, interviews with including providers, tourism operators, and alliance managers. Key focus areas include the co-creation of healthcare products and services and how companies conduct their business with strategic alliances. In addition, we also analyze the critical factors for successful alliance formation and management, emphasizing collaborative governance, transparent communication, and risk-sharing mechanisms by applying ethics in business. Through this exploration, the authors provide valuable insights for stakeholders looking to utilize strategic alliances in navigating the dynamic and profitable world of wellness tourism with business ethics in mind.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on various industrial sectors, including the health industry. According to Global Wellness Industry (2023), the global healthcare industry experienced a decline of 9.5% in 2020, with a transaction value of US\$4,463.5 billion. This decline was caused by various factors, including travel restrictions, closure of health facilities, and changes in consumer behavior (Li, 2023; Roman et al., 2022).

One of the health industries most affected by the pandemic is the spa sector. GWI 2023 defines the industry as a place that promotes health through the provision of therapeutic services and other professional services that aim to renew the body, mind, and

soul. The Global Wellness Economy Monitor (2023) reported that there was a decrease of up to 38.60% in the 2019-2020 period. This figure is about four times greater than the decline in the wellness industry globally of around -9.50%. However, in the 2021-2022 period, there was a reversal where this industry experienced an increase of 22.30 or to US\$ 104.5 (GWI, 2023). One of the wellness industries most affected by the pandemic is the Spa sector. GWI (2023) defines the industry as a place that promotes health through the provision of therapeutic and other professional services aimed at renewing the body, mind, and spirit. The Global Wellness Economy Monitor (2023) reported that there was a decline of up to 38.60% in 2019-2020. This number is about 4 times larger than the number of declines in the wellness industry globally around 9.50%. However, in 2021-2022, there was a turning point where the industry increased by 22.30% or to US\$ 104.5 (GWI, 2023).

The reason why the wellness industry can recover faster compared to other tourism industries is due to the high demand for health and wellness services in the midst of the pandemic). This is driven by a long-term trend in the form of increasing consumer interest and need for health, which has been increasing since the pandemic. In the tourism constellation, the presence of COVID-19 has made tourists prioritize the health aspect of tourist destinations more than in recent years. This is due to increasing public awareness of the importance of health and safety, as well as the desire to avoid the risk of disease transmission while traveling (Adi Wijaya et al., 2023; Luo & Lam, 2020; Piatto Clerici et al., 2023; Ramkissoon & Majeed, 2020).

In line with that, service providers must certainly respond quickly to these opportunities by carrying out various maneuvers, one of which is by carrying out an alliancies strategy (He et al., 2024). An alliancies strategy is an agreement between two or more partners to share knowledge or resources, which can be beneficial to all parties involved (Trott, 2012). Explain that in strategic alliances, companies work together because they need each other and share risks to achieve common goals. Strategic alliances provide access to greater resources than any company can afford. This can greatly improve its ability to create new products, present new technologies, penetrate other markets, and achieve the scale necessary to survive in the world market. Almost all companies have a supplier network, and in some cases, this can be part of a company's competitive advantage. Therefore, the implementation of this strategy is vital for actors engaged in the wellness industry. One of the wellness companies engaged in the wellness industry in Yogyakarta, is Putri Kedaton. This company has been around since 2009 and has strong connections with various parties such as the government, the community, and also with other business people related to the wellness industry. Therefore, it is important to know how the company implements strategic alliances as a benchmark for business people in the field of wellness tourism.

On Wellness Tourism

The challenges and trends of wellness tourism are very high and many empirical studies that have discussed the development of wellness tourism will show a positive trend in the next few years. They found that the progress of this trend is due to the increasing awareness of tourists to improve their quality of life, reduce stress, restore energy, improve physical and mental health, and achieve balance in daily life. Wellness tourism not only focuses on the physical aspect, but also appreciates the psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of human well-being. Travelers who engage in wellness tourism are generally looking for experiences that are soothing, refreshing, and provide long-term benefits to their well-being (Adi Wijaya et al., 2023;

Kazandzhieva, 2014; Luo & Lam, 2020; Piatto Clerici et al., 2023; Ramkissoon & Majeed, 2020).

The Global Wellness Institute (2023) defines Wellness as an active effort to carry out various activities and choices as well as lifestyles that lead to a holistic (multi-dimensional) healthy condition. The dimensions of Wellness Tourism are:

- **1. Physical.** This dimension is obtained through exercise, getting enough sleep, eating healthy, paying attention to symptoms or signs of illness and getting the right medical attention.
- **2. Mental.** Holistic development of body and mind aspects (mindbody) with body relaxation, respiratory exercises, activation of body energy, and strengthening concentration.
- **3. Spiritual**. The search for meaning and purpose in life, as well as overcoming life's problems through relaxation, contemplation and prayer.
- **4. Emotions**. Understand feelings and cope with stress effectively, pay attention to self-care, relaxation, stress reduction, and learn from experiences.
- **5. Social.** Helps to carry out social roles effectively and comfortably and creates a support network, developing encouraging relationships with friends, partners and family.
- **6. Environment**. Living a lifestyle that respects and is in harmony with the environment, and promotes interaction between humans and nature and the environment in a sustainable manner.

Mueller & Kaufmann (2001) explained that there are 4 scopes of wellness tourism products:

1. Mind Mental Activity or Education

Activities carried out to be able to train the mind and learn to control the mind well.

2. Health Nutrition or Diet

Activities for physical health range from education about nutrition and a healthy lifestyle or diet to get the ideal weight.

3. Body Physical Fitness or Beauty Care

Activities to train physical fitness through fitness and beauty sports such as spas and other pampering activities.

4. Relaxation Rest or Meditation

Activities in the form of relaxation of the mind and body by doing yoga and meditation activities.

Based on these 4 (four) scopes, in relation to the wellness tourism dimension, it is known that mental acitivity or education is included in the spiritual and emotional dimensions. Then, health nutrition or diet is included in the physical dimension, and body physical fitness or beauty care is included in the social, environmental, and physical dimensions. Finally, relaxation rest or meditation is included in the mental dimension.

Table 1. Wellness Economy by Sector, 2023

Wellness Economy by	Ma	rket Size	(US\$ billi	ions)	0	Annual h Rate	Global GDP	Global GDP
Sector201 9-2022	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019- 2020	2020- 2022	2019- 2020	2020- 2022
Personal	USD		USD	USD				
Care &	1,066	USD	1,048.	1,088.			-2.70%	8.70%
Beauty	.3	924.2	2	7	-13.30%	8.50%		

Healthy Eating, Nutrition, & Weight Loss	USD 911.3	USD 948.7	USD 1,046. 2	USD 1,079. 3	4.10%	6.70%	
Physical Activity	USD 875.9	USD 746.8	USD 927.1	USD 976.3	-14.70%	14.30%	
Wellness Tourism	USD 720.4	USD 350.6	USD 466.8	USD 650.7	-51.30%	36.20%	
Public Health, Preventio n, & Personaliz ed Medicine	USD 358.2	USD 537.2	USD 600.9	USD 610.9	50%	6.60%	
Traditiona 1 & Complem entary Medicine	USD 486.6	USD 449.6	USD 502.4	USD 518.6	-7.60%	7.40%	
Wellness Real	USD	USD	USD	USD			
Estate	225.2	274.0	341.2	397.7	21.60%	20.50%	
Mental Wellness	USD 130.2	USD 142.6	USD 165.5	USD 180.5	9.50%	12.50%	
Spas	USD 113.8	USD 69.9	USD 82.1	USD 104.5	-38.60%	22.30%	
Workplac e Wellness	USD 52.2	USD 47.9	USD 49.6	USD 50.6	-8.20%	2.80%	
Thermal/ Mineral Springs	USD 65.7	USD 39.9	USD 45.4	USD 46.3	-39.20%	7.70%	
Wellness Economy	USD 4,931	USD 4,463. 5	USD 5,193.	USD 5,611.	-9.50%	12.10%	

Data Source: Global Wellness Institute (GWI), 2023

Health tourism, spas, and hot/mineral springs are the health sectors most adversely affected by COVID-19, due to travel restrictions and business closures. Virtual offers are a poor substitute for physical presence and full experience in this experience. All three sectors have grown rapidly in 2021-2022, but have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels (spas and wellness tourism are still in the range of 90% of levels in 2019, while springs are at 71%). Key factors in the recovery and growth of these sectors are the ongoing recovery of the global tourism market in 2022, international travel is still at 62% of pre-pandemic levels, and domestic travel is at 73% (according to Euromonitor data). In addition, the Asia-Pacific region in particular has experienced a slowdown in the post-pandemic recovery, due to prolonged pandemic restrictions and border closures in China, a lack of Chinese tourists across the region, weakening economic conditions in China and Japan, currency depreciation, and other factors. Springs, spas, and tourism businesses in Europe have also been negatively impacted by the Ukraine war, energy prices, and staff shortages.

In line with that, it is known that Spas are also part of wellness activities (GWI, 2023). It has been proven that the Spa is strongly related to wellness, where all the facilities and services provided serve to serve wellness, and are not limited to traditional baths, but also relaxation, refreshment, healing of guests, and balance between mental and physical. According to GWI (2023), Indonesia is among the top 20 countries with markets in 2022 ranked 14th. This indicates that Indonesia has a good opportunity to seize the opportunity in the development of this tourism trend (Csirmaz & Pető, 2015).

Alliance Strategy

In the last 30 years, the alliance strategy has attracted attention from various industries as well as academics (He et al., 2024). This is due to the rapid dynamics of the global situation which is influenced by various things such as the Ukraine war, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trade War between the United States and China, and also Brexit, coupled with the emergence of social challenges and poverty. These things require companies to study, analyze, and innovate against global uncertainty and dynamics. In addition, the need for strategic alliances is triggered by the increasing scarcity of resources and the difficulties companies face in securing and maintaining access to those resources, both in terms of raw materials and production needs, as well as in quality human resources and incorporation of expertise (A A AL Gharrawi, 2018; Hübel et al., 2022; Kohtamäki et al., 2023).

So far, there are many experts who have formulated a definition of strategic alliances. Trott (2008) provides a definition that a strategic alliance is a form of cooperation between two or more companies to share knowledge and resources, so that they can be mutually beneficial. Then, it is argued that (A A AL Gharrawi, 2018) strategic alliances are a form of cooperation that is useful to replace competition and conflict, and usually alliance strategy means joint efforts in order to control existing risks and threats as well as participation to obtain mutual benefits and benefits. Another definition of strategic alliance is a form of cooperation that can provide opportunities for partners to achieve common strategic goals and at the same time learn from each other (Tavallaei et al., 2015).

According to, there are 8 forms of alliance strategies, namely:

- 1. Licensing. Licensing is one of the strategies commonly carried out by business actors. In this case, the company that grants a license (licensor) to the company that needs (licensee) to be able to use its intellectual property, such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, or industrial designs. In this case, the purpose of licensing is to accelerate the global market, enter difficult markets, take advantage of local advantages. In strategic alliances, licensing is usually part of a broad cooperation agreement. This agreement will regulate various aspects of the relationship between the licensor and the licensee such as the rights and obligations of each party, the sharing of profits, and the settlement of disputes.
- **2. Supplier Relation.** Supplier relationships in strategic alliances focus on collaboration and mutual friction between alliance members and suppliers. In this way, it can increase competitive advantage, support increased innovation, and increase the resilience of alliances in facing market challenges.
- **3. Outsourcing**. An alliance strategy in which a company hands over part or all of its business activities to a third party (outsourcing provider). In this context, the goal of outsourcing is to increase synergy and efficiency, expand market coverage, and increase competitiveness.

- **4. Joint Venture**. A Joint Venture is an agreement between two or more companies to form a new, independent and legal company. In this commitment, each company shares resources and capabilities with each other to develop competitive advantage. The presence of this form can accelerate penetration or expansion into new markets, enter markets that are difficult for a single company to achieve, improve competence, and diversify products.
- **5. Collaboration**. Collaboration or cooperation is a very broad form of agreement, which can be in the form of product development cooperation, marketing cooperation, research and development cooperation, and product distribution cooperation. In the form of this strategy, various cooperation agreements are regulated that cover duties and obligations, profit sharing, and other agreement needs needed for the parties.
- **6. R&D Consortia**. This form of alliance strategy is carried out by the parties to conduct joint research and development. It is generally done with the intention of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of research and development, increasing the chances of research and development success, and increasing the competitiveness of the company.
- **7. Industry Cluster**. Industry clusters in strategic alliances can be an effective strategy to increase the competitiveness of industrial clusters. With strategic alliances, companies in industry clusters can collaborate to share resources, information, and knowledge. This can help companies in industrial clusters to improve production efficiency and effectiveness, product and service competitiveness, access to markets and resources, innovation, and investment attractiveness.

Innovation Network. An innovation network in a strategic alliance is a formal relationship between two or more companies to develop a new product, process, or technology. This alliance can be between companies from the same industry or from different industries. Innovation networks in strategic alliances can provide various benefits for companies, including increasing the speed and efficiency of innovation development, increasing the chances of successful innovation development, and increasing access to new markets.

While numerous studies have explored wellness tourism trends and the significance of strategic alliances in general, there remains a lack of research focusing on the implementation of alliance strategies within the wellness tourism sector in developing countries, particularly in Indonesia. Existing literature tends to focus on developed markets, leaving a gap in understanding how local businesses, such as spas and wellness centers, leverage alliances to enhance competitive advantages amid global wellness tourism trends. Furthermore, limited studies provide insights into how strategic alliances can address post-pandemic challenges and opportunities for community empowerment and sustainability in Indonesia's wellness tourism industry.

his study contributes to the growing field of wellness tourism by analyzing the strategic alliance implementation at Putri Kedaton Spa in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as a case study to understand the unique practices of collaboration, supplier relations, and innovation networks. Unlike prior research, this study emphasizes the role of community empowerment and local wisdom in building sustainable wellness tourism products, such as eco-spa tourism and herbal product innovations. The findings highlight how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the wellness sector can strategically respond to emerging trends while aligning their practices with global ethical principles of responsible tourism.

The objective of this research is to examine the implementation of strategic alliance strategies at Putri Kedaton Spa, including the benefits, challenges, and critical success

factors in the development of wellness tourism. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how strategic partnerships contribute to innovation, business sustainability, and community empowerment. The findings will benefit tourism stakeholders, policymakers, and wellness industry players by offering practical insights into forming effective alliances, enhancing competitive advantages, and driving sustainable development in the wellness tourism sector. Additionally, this research underscores the importance of ethical business practices to ensure long-term growth and inclusivity in the industry.

Research Methods

In this study, a descriptive research method was used with a case study approach on Putri Kedaton Spa in Yogyakarta. Qualitative research is descriptive analytical. In this study, all findings obtained during the field are not in the form of statistics or figures, but in the form of presentations in the form of narratives. The sampling of this study uses purposive sampling and those who are used as participants are influential company stakeholders such as the company's top management or company owners. The data collection technique in this study uses interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Data collection tools are in the form of field notes, interview guidelines, and checklists. After the data is collected, data presentation, data reduction, and data verification will be carried out. Then, the data will be tested for validity using Source Triangulation.

Results and Discussions

The implementation of the alliance strategy based on the results of data collection, it is known that Putri Kedaton implements three forms of alliance strategy from the form stated by, namely (Trott, 2008) supplier relations, collaboration and innovation network. Then, there are 2 (two) forms of alliance strategies that will be implemented in the period from 2009-2024, namely licensing and outsourcing. The joint venture, R&D consortium and industry cluster have not been implemented because currently the urgency for this has not been implemented as a form of strategy. First, the company collaborates with certain raw material providers for several beauty products, such as aroma diffusers, aroma therapy candles, spice salts, aromatherapy, and others. The reason for the alliance with the supplier of the material is due to the company's limitations in creating the tar material, so it has to partner with other companies. Another reason for the booster is because there is a market demand that wants a certain fragrance that is comfortable for each consumer. In this case, the company realizes that each consumer has a different favorite scent preference, so the provision of diverse essence oils becomes an alternative to increase customer satisfaction when enjoying spa product services (Smith, 2021).

Collaboration is also carried out in order to establish alliances with various parties such as with influencers or with other business actors. This form is carried out in an effort to increase the number of visits through promotions and also discount vouchers to partners. Influencers are given discounts or free services in return for promoting or introducing the company's products and brands to the public. Meanwhile, the provision of discount vouchers is given to other companies such as grocery stores and also accessory stores that generally have female consumers. In addition, collaboration is also carried out with various agencies such as with the central/regional government (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Industry, DIY Manpower and Transmigration Office, DIY Tourism Office), various universities and

also vocational schools, PT. Temple Tourism Park, as well as various hotels such as Tentrem Hotel and Kimaya Hotel.

Next is the innovation network, this form of strategy is carried out in a unique way, namely community empowerment in Nglanggeran Village and also Moyudan Village. The forms of empowerment carried out in Nglanggeran Village such as training in making herbal cosmetic products, assistance in the management of tourist villages, training of spa therapists, workshops on licensing and intellectual property, assistance in spa business administration, assistance in spa workforce certification, assistance in Ecospa tourism. This form of strategy is carried out with companies engaged in the same field, namely Griya Spa Nglanggeran with the community. In addition, an innovation network is also carried out in Moyudan Village in an effort to produce herbal drinks made from organic ingredients. The result of this product is Seroja drinks (lemongrass, orange, thin, and ginger) which are generally served to consumers as an added value to create added value for consumers. Innovation in collaboration and partnership is manifested in the marketing linkage of Putri Kedaton based on community empowerment which is formed from the upstream-downstream system as a dimension of relationship-based partnership (relationship marketing) in the marketing of Putri Kedaton spa product suppliers. Related to (Forlani et al., 2022) the empowerment dimension is the Purba Ayu spa group that has received education and training as spa therapists in the form of partnerships from modern spas to traditional spas, in this case the Purba Ayu spa group. The results of the partnership are in the form of massage skills for spa therapists and the manufacture of spa care support products such as scrubs and chocolate masks. Ecospa tourism as a development of the wellness tourism trend can develop in Nglanggeran Ecotourism Village by utilizing the environment or natural resources by raising local wisdom. The use of local wisdom materials such as scrubs and brown masks is a supporting material for spa treatments. Tourists can travel by gaining knowledge about how to make scrubs and chocolate masks as well as being able to experience the spa treatment firsthand.

Partnerships in ecospa tourism marketing are established between the community, the government and the spa industry as well as other stakeholders, especially in developing ecospa tourism can be done well. Synergy occurs by doing useful networking, which means that it can network in marketing (suppliers) that is useful for this ecospa tourism. The marketing partnership is well carried out so that there is trust of tourists and high commitment from ecospa tourism actors in Nglanggeran Tourism Village so that it can provide results for the development of ecospa wellness tourism. The following is a picture of the community empowerment model and partnership for the development of ecospa wellness tourism marketing which is a form of alliance strategy in partnership (collaboration) from Putri Kedaton by applying the principles of global code ethics as the basic framework of responsible and sustainable tourism which includes the principles of economic, social, cultural, and environmental components related to travel and tourism. Here's a picture of collaboration in the alliance strategy

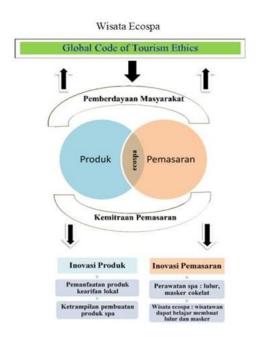


Figure 2. Community Empowerment Model and Marketing Partnership

Source; Strategic Alliance Collaboration Model

Conclusion

The construction of the virtual influencer model is influenced by the desire to promote brands or products to digital-native generations. The interaction between influencers and consumers through social media is increasingly seen as an effective marketing strategy. The role of virtual influencers, which are digital characters designed to have human-like traits and interact with followers, has shifted from a novelty to an important marketing tool. These influencers can be programmed to match brand identity and target audience, making them more versatile than human influencers in terms of customization and messaging consistency. Moreover, virtual influencers can be more cost-effective for companies because they eliminate issues related to human limitations, such as time constraints, errors, and potential scandals. However, this innovation raises questions about the ethics and authenticity of virtual influencers, as well as the implications for consumer behavior and the regulation of digital personalities. The idea of integrating virtual influencers into sustainable development goals (SDG) like SDG 9, which focuses on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, is gaining attention. This approach promotes innovation in marketing strategies and highlights the importance of integrating advanced technologies into business processes. Although the rise of virtual influencers might pose challenges to traditional influencer roles, their potential contribution to the marketing landscape, particularly in promoting sustainable innovations, presents a unique opportunity to explore.

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