

## Analysis of Wellness Experiences in a Tourist Destination

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### **Abstract**

*Wellness tourism has experienced rapid growth in recent years. This has attracted the interest of both researchers and industry representatives. However, experiential tourism has not been investigated in depth through user generated content (UGC) dimensions to create the tourism destination image.*

*The aim of this paper is to analyse UGC published on Airbnb Experiences in eight Spanish tourist destinations (Barcelona, Islas Canarias, Granada, Madrid, Málaga, Mallorca, Seville and Valencia) to identify the dimensions of Wellness and their relationship with the tourism destination image.*

**Keywords:** *Wellness tourism; UGC (User Generated Content); Tourism Destination Image; consumer behaviour; eWOM; Social media*

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## **1. Introduction**

Wellness tourism is considered one of the ten key sectors of the wellness economy, empowering tourists to incorporate wellness behaviours, activities, and life habits into their lives (Global Wellness Institute [GWI], 2018). A new kind of tourism experience is emerging, in which the host/hostess is an essential part of the wellness perceived by the tourist. The image of the tourism destination can be investigated through User Generated Content (UGC) on the tourism of experience.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the UGC published on Airbnb Experiences to identify the dimensions of wellness and their relationship with the image of the tourist destination.

## **2. Review of the literature**

Destination image has been one of the most researched constructs in the tourism literature since the first studies were published in the early 1970s. The use of social media has become so important that the image reflected in the UGC by tourists who share their experiences can influence the perceived image of potential ones, being a good basis for analysing the image of a destination from a demand perspective (Rodríguez-Rangel & Sánchez-Rivero, 2021).

Dunn (1959) originally introduced the concept of "holistic wellness" that included the physical, the mind, the spirit, and the environment dimensions. Wellness tourism is a subset of health tourism (GWI, 2018). However, the mechanisms by which a wellness tourism experience provides avenues to support overall wellness are unclear (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Exploring this gap is important to better understand the mechanisms through which different types of wellness are achieved while traveling. Thus, in our research, we try to identify the elements of the dimensions of holistic wellness through the UGCs of tourism experiences.

## **3. Research Methodology**

The qualitative thematic classification of travel reviews provides a significant and in-depth understanding of the experience of wellness tourism through the use of netnography analysis in combination with framework analysis. Netnography is defined as 'a qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications' (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62). Framework analysis utilizes a well-defined process where collected data are selected, listed, and organised in line with key issues and emergent themes discovered through the data. Figure 1 illustrates the general outline of the methodology used in this study, which is detailed in the following subsections.

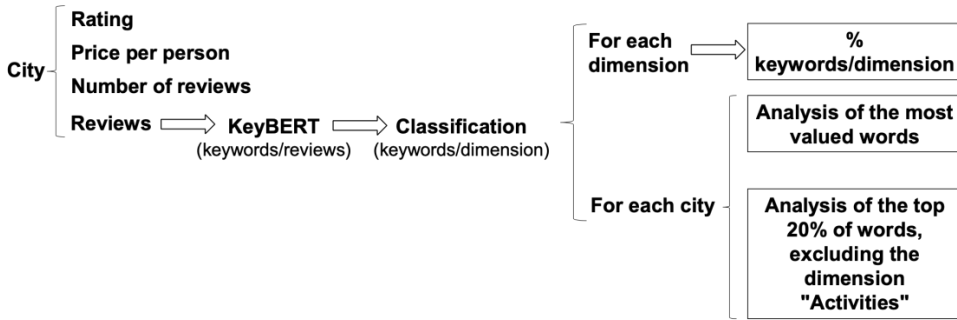


Figure 1. General scheme of the methodology

### 2.1. Dataset

The data have been extracted from the experiences shared by Airbnb users in the main tourist destinations in Spain: Barcelona, Granada, Islas Canarias, Madrid, Málaga, Mallorca, Sevilla, and Valencia. For each city, the 18 most relevant experiences according to Airbnb have been selected and, for each one of them, not only all the reviews shared by users have been extracted, but also their rating, number of reviews, and price. All reviews were written in English.

Table 1. Number of reviews collected per city

City	Reviews	City	Reviews	City	Reviews
Madrid	8.254	Málaga	1.992	Valencia	3.529
Barcelona	10.774	Gran Canaria	3.013	Granada	2.793
Seville	6.353	Palma de Mallorca	2.452		

All reviews captured for each city have been merged into a single document for further processing.

### 2.2. Keyword extraction

Keyword extraction relies on the publicly available keyword extraction approach keyBERT (Grootendorst, 2020), which is a deep learning model used to extract keywords from statements or documents. The main idea of keyBERT is that it uses BERT embeddings and cosine similarity to find the words in a document that are most similar to the document itself (Yoo et al., 2021).

### 2.3. Data Analysis

#### 2.3.1. Classification

To address the dimensions of wellness tourism, the 500 keywords with the highest value according to keyBERT were taken from each destination. These keywords were first classified by two of the researchers and then given to the other members of the research team to identify and discuss any differences or disagreements to ensure the reliability standards.

The dimensions of the experience of wellness tourism were taken according to Dunn's (1959) holistic concept: *Spirit*, *Environment*, *Mind* and *Body*. Within each dimension, different elements can be distinguished. Spiritual wellness is the birth place of emotions (*Spirit*), and they are not located in any physical location. It is related to a spiritual connection with the host and immersion in the community. Likewise, *Environment* is related to the physical space where the experience is taken place. On the other hand, *Mind* and mindfulness are an essential part of the holistic concept of wellness (Dunn, 1959), and they refer to experiences that enable a tourist to be aware and conscious of his/her thoughts (Dilette, Douglas and Andrzejewski, 2021), looking for experiencing a profound effect of relaxation and rejuvenation (Voigt, Brown and Howat, 2011). Finally, *Body* is related to the physical reality in contrast to the spirit, and so includes interpretative elements such as activities and services.

#### 2.3.2. Vertical Analysis

A vertical analysis was carried out to see what percentage of each element that makes up each of the dimensions was present in the cities analysed. It was calculated according to the following formula:

$$\frac{\sum Keywords_{ij}}{\sum keywords_i}$$

where  $\sum Keywords_{ij}$  is the sum of the keywords referring to the element  $i$  in the city  $j$  and  $\sum keywords_i$  is the sum of the keywords referring to the element  $i$ .

#### 2.3.3. Horizontal analysis

Taking each of the cities separately, a qualitative analysis was made of the keywords for which keyBERT had the highest value for each city. Having captured data that in most cases were about activities, a second analysis was also carried out with the 20% of the highest value words for each city, but without taking into account those words which previously had been classified as "Activities".

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Experiences features

Information has been collected about three characteristics of the experiences: rating, number of reviews, and price. The rating goes from 1 to 5 stars, with the average of the punctuation of the reviews of the activities of 4.93, with many of them rated 5 stars. Only Sevilla has no activity rated 5 stars, although one of them has a rating of 4.99. The rating of the activities is very high, being the lowest of the experiences analyzed, the 'Pub Crawl Madrid Experience' in Madrid, with 'only' a rating of 4.5 stars.

The number of reviews varies from place to place. The city with more reviews is Barcelona with more than 10.000 of them, while the one with less is Mallorca with 1,727.

The price of experiences varies between cities and within them. The highest price experience is 'Journey into the heart of Gran Canaria' with a cost of 315€, while several of them cost just 1€ such as 'Free tour of Madrid on foot' or 'Sagrada Familia-Symbolism, Architecture, and Gaudi's vision'. The average price ranges from 65.56€ for Islas Canarias to 35.44€ for Granada.

#### 3.2. Dimensions of the Wellness Tourism Experience

Related to the four dimensions, 15 interpretative elements have been attached to them, 3 to *Spirit*, 6 to *Environment*, 2 to *Mind*, and 4 to *Body* (Figure 2). These are based on Dilette et al. (2021). These authors identify and describe 14 of them. Most of them are used in this paper. However, 2 of them have been combined, as well as 2 new ones have been stated: *landscape* and *reception*, both related to *Environment*. Another main change is the interpretative element *Host/Hostess*. It is similar to the one stated by Dilette et al. (2021) as *Staff*. In 'Airbnb experiences', the features of the hosts are essential, since this person is the basic in the selection of the experience by the tourist, as opposed to the staff in the case of a typical tourist company. He/she is who designs the activities, which are specifically aimed at going one step beyond the activity itself, with the intention of providing a 'Memorable Tourism Experience' (MTE).

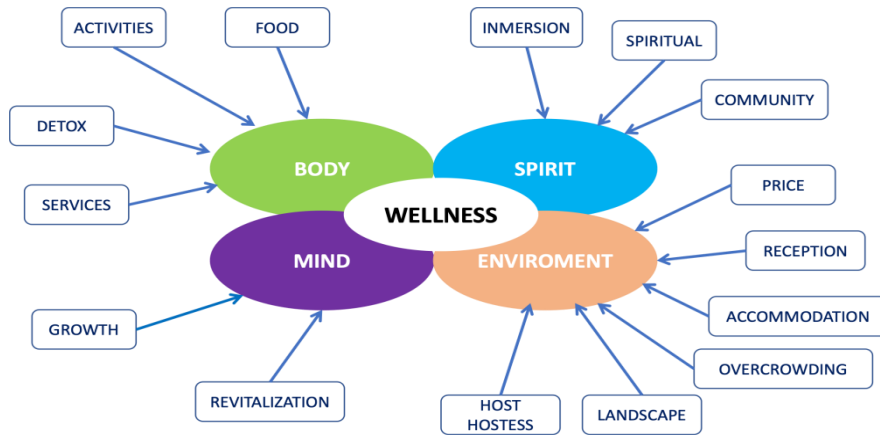


Figure 2. Dimensions and elements of the Experience of Wellness Tourism

The connection of interpretative elements with the feeling of wellness by tourists can be seen as well as pathways as barriers to wellness. In most cases, the reviews analysed show a positive sentiment towards wellness, while several of them can show a clear barrier to its successful achievement.

### 3.3. Tourism destination image according to wellness experiences

A first approximation to the image of tourist destinations can be found by relating the dimensions of wellness with their key words (Figure 3). Looking at each of the dimensions, we can see how each destination stands out in the different elements that make up each dimension. Among other things, it stands out how the *Mind* dimension is more present in destinations such as Mallorca and Valencia, *Spirit* in Granada, Málaga, Valencia, and Barcelona, *Body* in both islands, as well as in Málaga and Granada, and *Environment* in all destinations except Mallorca.

A second analysis takes into account how each keyword is related to its tourist destination. It can be seen that in all of them except Mallorca, the “Activities” element of the *Body* dimension predominates. As mentioned above, this is logical because Airbnb experiences tells stories about activities. Going deeper, we can see the different activities that stand out in each destination. For example, Barcelona has sea activities (‘sailing’); Islas Canarias with visits to ‘vineyards’; Granada, Seville and Valencia with excursions (‘hike’, ‘tourguide’, ‘gotovalenciadaytour’); Madrid and Málaga with activities related to the idiosyncrasy of the country (‘flamenco’, ‘carnival’). Finally, for Mallorca, the element “Food”, also included in the dimension *Body*, stands out.

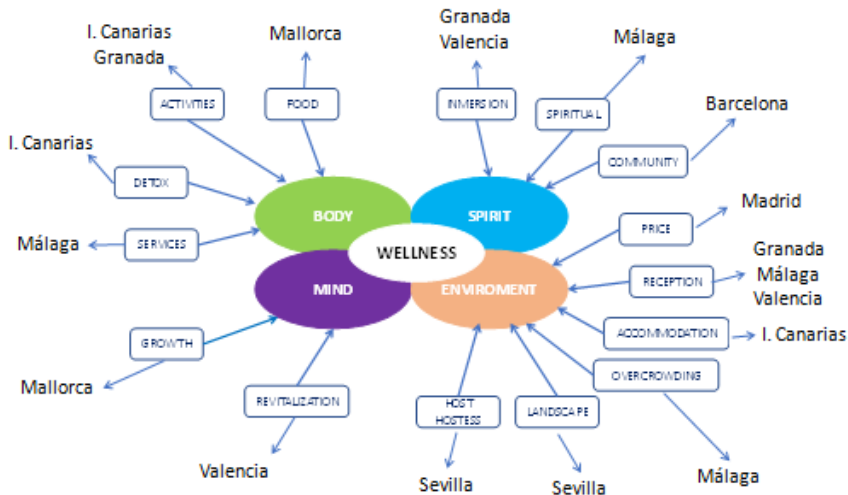


Figure 3. Wellness experiences in a tourist destination

Finally, if we take into account the 20% of the keywords most related to each destination without taking into account those corresponding to “Activities”, we can see that in the islands the experience of well being is obtained through “Food”, in the inland cities this is more related to a “Spiritual” sensation, and in the coastal cities there is not so much unanimity, as Barcelona and Málaga would be more “Spiritual” and Valencia “Food”.

#### 4. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the dimensions of wellness and their relationship with the image of the tourism destination. These dimensions have been analysed according to the Dunn holistic concept in 8 Spanish tourist cities. Some elements of these dimensions have been adjusted with respect to those proposed by Dilette et al. (2021).

In all the tourist destinations analysed, the wellness experience is achieved through the dimension of *Body*, being the predominant element of this dimension “Activities” in all cities except Mallorca, which was “Food”. Without taking into account the wellness generated through “Activities”, this study first supports Dilette et al. (2021) in uncovering the importance of culinary experiences (interpretative element “Food”) to achieve holistic wellness, as can be seen in Valencia, the Islas Canarias and Mallorca, and second, identifies the importance of those experiences that provide a sense of spirituality, as can be seen in the other cities analysed and refer to the dimension *Spirit*.

Some limitations to this study are, first, the data collected for this study are limited to only those wellness travelers who choose to review their experience online and through Airbnb

experiences, assuming that all provided reviews are honest; second, the study focuses on the 18 better experiences appointed to Airbnb of each destiny analysed, which cannot necessarily be considered representative of the entire population of experiences.

To strengthen the findings of this study, future research on wellness tourism experiences should incorporate other methods of qualitative analysis (e.g. in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies, etc.) as well as quantitative techniques.

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