



## Creating Value through Entrepreneurship in Wellness Gastro Tourism: The Role of Innovation and Experiential Wellness

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**Abstract**

**Background:** This research addresses the gap in creating value in wellness gastro tourism through innovation and wellness experiences rooted in Indonesia's culinary heritage.

**Objective:** This study aims to examine the role of entrepreneurship in creating value through innovation and experiential wellness in the context of wellness gastro tourism.

**Methods:** The study employed a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)—selected for its suitability in handling complex latent variable models with non-normal data—applied to 312 respondents identified through purposive sampling, representing tourists with direct experience in wellness-based gastronomic tourism in Indonesia.

**Results:** The analysis results show that the  $R^2$  value for experiential wellness is 0.514, indicating that innovation explains 51.4% of the variation in experiential wellness. Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value for value creation is 0.638, indicating that innovation and experiential wellness together explain 63.8% of the variation in value creation. The findings demonstrate that innovation has a positive and significant effect on experiential wellness and, both directly and indirectly, affects value creation. Experiential wellness is proven to act as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between innovation and value creation. These findings confirm that value creation in wellness gastro tourism is not only determined by product innovation but also by the quality of holistic experiences perceived by tourists, including physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

**Conclusion:** This study contributes an integrative empirical model linking entrepreneurship, innovation, and experiential wellness, strengthening the role of local wisdom in sustainable tourism innovation. Business actors are recommended to adopt experience-driven and innovation-based strategies to enhance competitiveness in the wellness gastro tourism sector.

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### INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry in recent years has undergone a significant transformation from the mass tourism model Wulandari (2024) to more personalized, meaningful, and health-oriented tourism. One of the fastest-growing segments is wellness tourism, which has become an important part of the global economy, as reported by the Global Wellness Institute. Increased public awareness of physical, mental, and life balance encourages tourists to seek tourism experiences that are not only recreational but also provide holistic benefits for their well-being

(Álvarez-Sánchez et al., 2023; Voigt et al., 2011).

In recent years, the concept of wellness tourism has experienced significant growth as global awareness of holistic health increases. This development has encouraged the emergence of new subsectors such as wellness gastro tourism, which integrates immersive experiences while enjoying traditional and local cuisine (Turgarini, 2020). This field goes beyond dining activity, positioning gastronomy as an art and science that examines the relationship between culture and food, as well as health practices oriented toward the physical, mental, and spiritual balance of tourists.

The potential of wellness gastro tourism in Indonesia is substantial due to the richness of local wisdom, such as herbal medicine, traditional spices, and food philosophies based on bodily balance (Kurniawan, 2025). However, value creation in this sector is still not optimal. Many culinary and tourism business actors have not been able to integrate innovation with a holistic wellness experience; as a result, the products offered tend to be functional and have not yet delivered a transformational tourist experience. This indicates that the integration of innovation and experience remains underdeveloped in Indonesia.

Value creation from an entrepreneurship perspective refers to the ability of business actors to combine resources, innovation, and customer experience (Pinelli et al., 2022; Sjödin et al., 2020). Innovation is a key factor in creating product differentiation, while experiential wellness plays a crucial role in building emotional engagement and immersive experiences for travelers (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Previous research has shown that innovation not only affects product quality but also contributes to more meaningful tourism experiences (Liu et al., 2019). However, the relationship between innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation in the context of wellness gastro tourism remains limited and has not been extensively studied empirically, particularly in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of innovation on experiential wellness, examine the effect of innovation on value creation, and test the mediating role of experiential wellness in the relationship between innovation and value creation. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of an integrative model linking entrepreneurship, innovation, and experiential wellness, as well as provide practical implications for business actors in enhancing competitiveness through wellness-based tourism experiences.

In line with these developments, gastronomy tourism has also evolved from a mere food consumption activity into a cultural experience rich in meaning and local identity (Richards, 2021). Gastronomy is now understood as a medium for building emotional and social connections between tourists and destinations (Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018). In this context, tourists are not only seeking taste, but also authentic, sustainable experiences with health-related value.

The integration of wellness tourism and gastronomy tourism has given rise to a new concept known as wellness gastro tourism, which combines the consumption of healthy food made from traditional culinary ingredients and local raw materials with a holistic wellness experience. This concept emphasizes the use of natural, organic, and locally sourced ingredients, as well as activities such as mindful eating, herbal workshops, detoxification, and cultural rituals that support the balance of body, mind, and soul (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014; Smith & Puczkó, 2014).

Indonesia has strong potential in developing wellness gastro tourism, particularly through its rich local wisdom such as herbal medicine, traditional spices, and culture-based healthy eating philosophies. These practices possess not only health value but also significant cultural and spiritual significance. However, this potential has not been fully optimized. Many tourism and culinary business actors remain product-oriented rather than experience-oriented, so the resulting value creation has not been maximized. This highlights the need for innovation rooted in ethnic cuisine with strong storytelling elements. Innovation should not only focus on menus but also on preserving traditional values adapted to modern contexts.

Entrepreneurship in this context plays a strategic role in transforming local potential into high-value tourism products. Entrepreneurship is not only about creating new businesses but also about the ability to innovate, identify opportunities, and create experiences aligned with market needs (Kuratko et al., 2021). In the experience-based tourism industry, innovation is a key determinant of differentiation and competitive advantage (Hjalager, 2020).

However, previous studies reveal several limitations. First, research on wellness tourism is still dominated by spa and physical health perspectives, with limited integration of gastronomy as a core component of the wellness experience (Smith & Puczkó, 2014). Second, gastronomy tourism studies tend to focus on cultural and sensory dimensions without sufficiently linking them to health and wellness aspects (Okumus et al., 2018). Third, the role of entrepreneurship in value creation through the integration of innovation and experience remains underexplored empirically.

In addition, the concept of experiential wellness as a mechanism of value creation has not been widely tested quantitatively. Experiential wellness refers to a holistic experience encompassing physical (body health), emotional (relaxation), and spiritual (meaning of life) dimensions. Previous studies indicate that experience plays an important role in shaping tourist satisfaction and loyalty Pine (2019), yet the causal relationships among innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation have not been extensively examined using structural modeling approaches such as Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Based on this background, this study aims to develop and test an empirical model of value creation in gastro tourism entrepreneurship, focusing on the role of innovation and experiential wellness. Specifically, this study examines: (1) the influence of innovation on experiential wellness, (2) the influence of experiential wellness on value creation, (3) the direct influence of innovation on value creation, and (4) the mediating role of experiential wellness.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on the integration of entrepreneurship, innovation, and experience in wellness-based tourism. Practically, it may serve as a reference for business actors and policymakers in designing tourism strategies that are experience-based, sustainable, and grounded in local wisdom. This study is motivated by the suboptimal value creation in wellness gastro tourism due to low innovation and limited integration of experiential wellness in gastronomic services. Moreover, empirical studies examining the relationship between innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation remain limited, indicating a clear research gap. Ultimately, this study positions wellness gastro tourism not only as a tourism experience but also as an entrepreneurial strategy based on innovation and experiential wellness capable of generating economic, social, and cultural value in a sustainable manner.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### Wellness Gastro Tourism

Wellness gastro tourism is the result of an integration between wellness tourism and gastronomy tourism that emphasizes the experience of consuming healthy food as part of holistic well-being. In this perspective, food serves not only as a physiological need but also as a means to achieve physical, emotional, and spiritual balance (Smith & Puczkó, 2014).

Recent research shows that modern travelers are increasingly interested in culinary experiences that are not only authentic but also reflect health and sustainability values (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). Therefore, wellness gastro tourism is a strategic approach to creating high-value tourism experiences, especially in destinations rich in local wisdom such as Indonesia.

### Entrepreneurship and Value Creation in Tourism

Entrepreneurship in the context of tourism plays an important role in creating value through innovation and product differentiation. The concept of value creation refers to the ability of business actors to generate benefits perceived by tourists, both functionally, emotionally, and symbolically (Kuratko et al., 2021).

Value in an experience-based industry comes not only from the product itself but also from how the experience is designed and delivered to tourists. Therefore, business actors need to develop an experience-driven approach to increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Value creation in the tourism industry cannot rely solely on physical gastronomic products; traditional or local foods that support experiential wellness play a “bridging role” in shaping tourist experiences.

### **Innovation in Wellness Gastro Tourism**

Innovation is a key factor in enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism industry. In the context of wellness gastro tourism, innovation can include:

- a) Product innovation: the development of healthy menus based on herbs and local ingredients
- b) Process innovation: the use of organic ingredients and the farm-to-table concept
- c) Service innovation: interactive experiences such as cooking classes or wellness rituals

Research shows that innovation has a significant influence on the quality of travelers' experiences, especially in experience-based industries (Hjalager, 2020). Effective innovations, such as unique food menus based on local ingredients and farm-to-table concepts, are able to create unique, authentic, and memorable experiences.

### **Experiential Wellness**

The concept of experiential wellness refers to the holistic experience that tourists perceive during tourism activities, which includes: a) Physical wellness. b) Emotional wellness (relaxation and comfort). c) Spiritual wellness (meaning and life balance)

According to Acharya (2023), travel experiences that positively impact individual well-being have a strong influence on satisfaction and intention to revisit. This shows that experiential wellness is an important element in value creation by addressing physical (health), emotional (relaxation), and spiritual (meaning of life) dimensions in the tourism industry (Wulandari, 2025).

### **The relationship between Innovation and Experiential Wellness**

Innovation in products and services can improve the quality of experiences perceived by tourists. In the context of wellness gastro tourism, innovations such as healthy food presentation, interactive experiences, and the integration of local culture can enrich experiential wellness.

Previous research has shown that innovation has a positive effect on the tourist experience (Hjalager, 2020). Therefore, the higher the level of innovation implemented by business actors, the higher the quality of experiential wellness perceived by tourists.

H1: Innovation has a positive effect on experiential wellness.

### **The Relationship Between Experiential Wellness and Value Creation**

Experiential wellness plays an important role in creating value for tourists. Experiences that provide physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits increase tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty.

A study by Asan (2024) shows that well-being-based experiences have a significant relationship with improved well-being and tourist satisfaction. This indicates that experiential wellness is a major determinant of value creation.

H2: Experiential wellness has a positive effect on value creation.

### **The Relationship Between Innovation and Value Creation**

In addition to experience, innovation can also directly create value for tourists. Innovative products and unique services can enhance attractiveness and perceived value.

However, in experience-based industries, the effect of innovation on value is often mediated by the quality of experience perceived by tourists. Nonetheless, some studies show that innovation still has a direct influence on value creation (Kuratko et al., 2021).

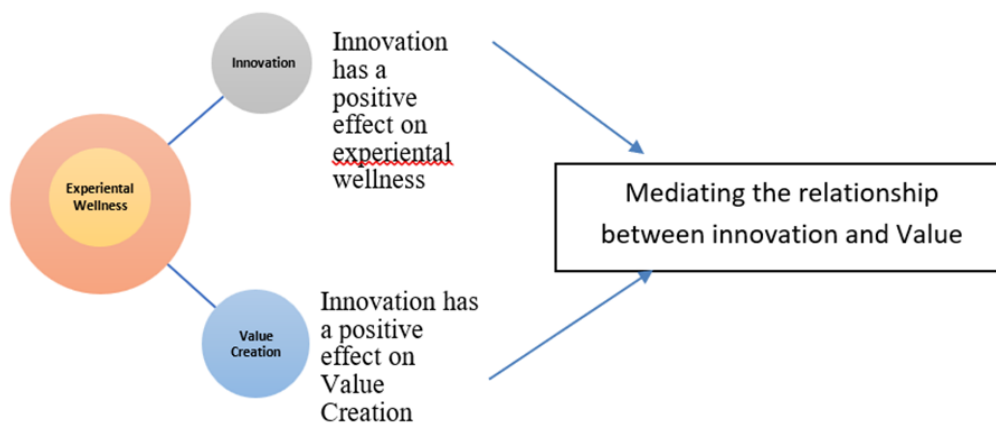
H3: Innovation has a positive effect on value creation.

### **The Role of Experiential Wellness Mediation**

Experiential wellness in the context of wellness gastro tourism acts as a mechanism that bridges innovation and value creation. Innovations implemented by business actors do not automatically generate value; they must be translated into meaningful experiences for tourists.

This is consistent with the experience economy theory, which states that value is created through experiences perceived by consumers (Pine II & Gilmore, 2019). Thus, experiential wellness functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between innovation and value creation.

H4: Experiential wellness mediates the relationship between innovation and value creation.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model (source: researcher)

Based on theoretical studies and hypothesis development, this study proposes the following conceptual model: 1) Innovation has a positive effect on experiential wellness. 2) Experiential wellness has a positive effect on value creation. 3) Innovation has a positive effect on value creation. 4) Experiential wellness mediates the relationship between innovation and value creation (Experiential Wellness as a mediating variable).

This model places experiential wellness as key in the value creation process, thereby strengthening the experience-driven entrepreneurship approach in wellness gastro tourism.

### METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method. This method was chosen because it was able to analyze the relationships between latent variables simultaneously and was suitable for predictive and complex research models. This research was explanatory in nature, aiming to test the causal relationships between variables: Innovation (X), Experiential Wellness (M), and Value Creation (Y).

The study population consisted of tourists who had experienced wellness gastro tourism in Indonesia. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the criteria of having participated in wellness-based culinary activities and being at least 17 years old. The total sample comprised 312 respondents, which was considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis.

The research instrument and data collection were carried out through a questionnaire using a Likert scale of 1–5. The variable indicators included Innovation, namely product innovation, process innovation, and experiential innovation; Experiential Wellness, which covered physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences; and Value Creation, which included satisfaction, perceived benefits, and intention to revisit.

The analysis technique was conducted using SmartPLS software through several stages, namely the outer model test (validity and reliability), inner model test (relationships between variables), and mediation test (indirect effects), with the following evaluation criteria:

a. Outer loading > 0.7; VIF < 3.3 (collinearity);  $f^2$  based on Cohen (1988);  $Q^2 > 0$  (predictive relevance); bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples for significance testing. Common method bias was assessed using Harman’s single-factor test, where the largest factor explained less than 50% of the variance, confirming acceptable levels. The sample of 312 respondents satisfied the “10× rule” for minimum sample adequacy in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019). All participants provided written informed consent, and all data were anonymized.

- b. Composite Reliability > 0.7
- c. AVE > 0.5
- d. Path coefficients were significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

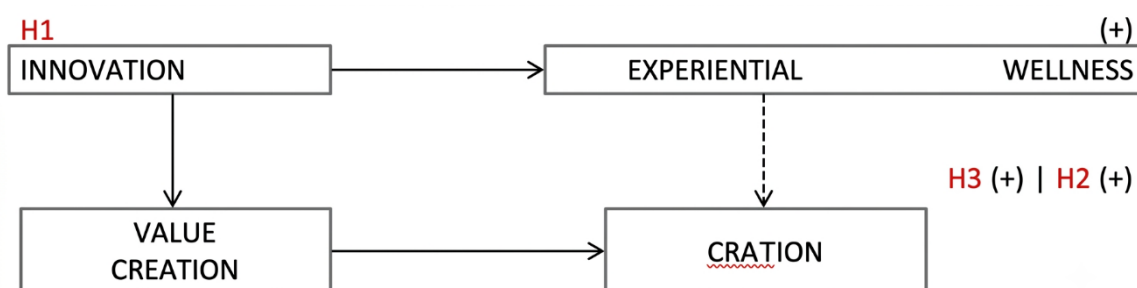
## Results

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability. All indicators achieved outer loading values above 0.70, Composite Reliability values exceeded 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50 for all constructs. These results confirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid for further structural analysis.

The structural model results are presented below, covering (a) direct effects, (b) indirect effects, and (c) mediation effects.

1. Innovation → Experiential Wellness  
The results show a positive and significant effect of innovation on experiential wellness. This indicates that the higher the level of innovation implemented by tourism business actors, the stronger the wellness experiences perceived by tourists. Innovative products, services, and tourism activities contribute to enhancing tourists' holistic wellness experiences.
2. Innovation → Value Creation  
Innovation was found to have a positive and significant direct effect on value creation. This finding suggests that innovation enhances tourists' perceptions of the value obtained from their tourism experiences. Through innovative offerings, businesses are able to generate greater benefits and satisfaction for visitors.
3. Experiential Wellness → Value Creation  
Experiential wellness demonstrates a positive and significant influence on value creation. This result highlights the importance of providing holistic wellness experiences, as tourists who experience higher levels of physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being tend to perceive greater value from their tourism activities.
4. The Mediating Role of Experiential Wellness  
Experiential wellness was found to significantly mediate the relationship between innovation and value creation. This finding indicates that innovation not only contributes directly to value creation but also enhances value creation indirectly by strengthening tourists' wellness experiences. Therefore, experiential wellness serves as an important mechanism through which innovation generates greater value in wellness gastro tourism.

A structural model of research on the influence of innovation on value creation through experiential wellness entrepreneurship can be described as follows. Wellness tourism has been validated as a multidimensional experience. Recent wellness tourism research also emphasizes the importance of experience in relation to satisfaction and revisit intention, while PLS-SEM reporting is commonly applied using outer loadings, AVE, composite reliability, HTMT, and structural path analysis.



**H4:** Experiential Wellness mediates the relationship between Innovation and Value Creation

**Figure 2.** SEM diagram (SMARTPLS (source: researcher))

A structural model of research on the influence of innovation on value creation through experiential wellness in the context of wellness gastro tourism entrepreneurship is presented in this study. The following indicators are compiled based on the research logic of innovation, wellness experience, and value creation in tourism and hospitality and are suitable for a reflective PLS-SEM model. The study of wellness tourism emphasizes the physical, mental and emotional, spiritual, and environmental dimensions as the core of the wellness experience Wulandari (2024),

which can be described as follows.

**Table 1.** Operational definitions and variable indicators

| <b>Variable</b>        | <b>Operational Definition</b>   | <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator</b>   |
|------------------------|---|-------------|--|
| Innovation             | The ability of business actors to create updates on products, processes, services, and experiences in wellness gastro tourism   | IN1         | The healthy menu offered is unique compared to other places                |
|                        |   | IN2         | Products make creative use of local/herbal ingredients                     |
|                        |   | IN3         | Service delivery provides a new experience for travelers                   |
|                        |   | IN4         | Efforts to actively develop culinary-based wellness concepts               |
| Experientia l Wellness | A holistic traveler experience that includes physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits while enjoying wellness gastro tourism | EW1         | I feel that the food/drink choices at this place support my body health    |
|                        |   | EW2         | I felt more relaxed after participating in this tour experience            |
|                        |   | EW3         | This experience provides emotional comfort                                 |
|                        |   | EW4         | This experience gave meaning or inspiration to me                          |
|                        |   | EW5         | I feel a balance between body, mind, and mood                              |
|                        |   | EW6         | This culinary experience feels integrated with the value of healthy living |
| Value Creation         | The value felt by tourists from the wellness experience of gastro tourism, both functionally, emotionally, and behaviorally     | VC1         | This experience was valuable for me overall                                |
|                        |   | VC2         | The experience was worth the time and expense I spent                      |
|                        |   | VC3         | I feel satisfied with this gastro tourism wellness experience              |
|                        |   | VC4         | I am interested in revisiting or recommending it                           |

The results of the questionnaire from 312 respondents who participated in this study showed that most respondents were in the age range of 21–30 years (46.8%), followed by 31–40 years old (28.5%). Most of the respondents are employees and entrepreneurs, and have had experience in enjoying healthy culinary tourism, herbs, or wellness dining activities.

These findings show that wellness gastro tourism has a strong appeal in productive age groups who tend to be more aware of healthy lifestyles, authentic experiences, and value-based consumption.

### **Evaluation of Measurement Models (Outer Model)**

#### ***Convergent Validity***

The results of the analysis showed that all indicators had an outer loading > 0.70, thus meeting the requirements for convergent validity. In addition, the entire construct had an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.50, which indicates that the latent variable is able to explain more

than 50% of the indicator's variance. This criterion is in line with commonly used PLS-SEM reporting practices.

**Table 2.** Outer loading, AVE, and Composite Reliability

| <b>Variable</b>              | <b>Indicator</b> | <b>Outer Loading</b> | <b>AVE</b>   | <b>Composite Reliability</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Innovation</b>            | <b>IN1</b>       | <b>0.812</b>         | <b>0.668</b> | <b>0.889</b>                 |
|                              | <b>IN2</b>       | <b>0.845</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>IN3</b>       | <b>0.793</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>IN4</b>       | <b>0.818</b>         |              |                              |
| <b>Experiential Wellness</b> | <b>EW1</b>       | <b>0.801</b>         | <b>0.642</b> | <b>0.915</b>                 |
|                              | <b>EW2</b>       | <b>0.823</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>EW3</b>       | <b>0.844</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>EW4</b>       | <b>0.781</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>EW5</b>       | <b>0.796</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>EW6</b>       | <b>0.790</b>         |              |                              |
| <b>Value Creation</b>        | <b>VC1</b>       | <b>0.836</b>         | <b>0.702</b> | <b>0.904</b>                 |
|                              | <b>VC2</b>       | <b>0.852</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>VC3</b>       | <b>0.818</b>         |              |                              |
|                              | <b>VC4</b>       | <b>0.844</b>         |              |                              |

Based on Table 2, all indicators are declared valid and reliable. Construct Experiential Wellness has the highest reliability, which shows good internal consistency in explaining the wellness experience of tourists.

### Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity test using HTMT shows that all values are below 0.90, so that each construct has sufficient differentiation. This HTMT guideline is commonly used to ensure that constructs do not overlap excessively.

**Table 3.** HTMT Results

| <b>Construct</b>           | <b>IN</b> | <b>EW</b> | <b>VC</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Innovation (IN)            | —         | 0.781     | 0.698     |
| Experiential Wellness (EW) | —         | —         | 0.826     |
| Value Creation (VC)        | —         | —         | —         |

The above results show that *innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation* are interrelated constructs, but still conceptually different.

### Evaluation of Structural Models (Inner Model)

#### R-Square Value

The results of the analysis showed that the R<sup>2</sup> value of experiential wellness = 0.514, which means that innovation was able to explain 51.4% of the variation in experiential wellness. Meanwhile, the value of R<sup>2</sup> value creation = 0.638, which shows that innovation and experiential wellness together were able to explain 63.8% of the variation in value creation.

**Table 4.** R-Square Value

| <b>Endogenous Variable</b> | <b>R-Square</b> | <b>Interpretation</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Experiential Wellness      | 0.514           | Moderate              |
| Value Creation             | 0.638           | Moderate-strong       |

These values show that the model has good explanatory skills in the context of experiential tourism research.

### Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing was carried out through a bootstrapping procedure. The results

showed that the entire relationship between variables was significant at a confidence level of 95%.

**Table 5.** Hypothesis Test Results

| Hypothesis | Relationships                                       | Path Coefficient | t-statistic | p-value | Verdict  |
|------------|---|------------------|-------------|---------|----------|
| H1         | Innovation → Experiential Wellness                  | 0.717            | 13.284      | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H2         | Experiential Wellness → Value Creation              | 0.563            | 8.941       | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H3         | Innovation → Value Creation                         | 0.271            | 4.118       | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H4         | Innovation → Experiential Wellness → Value Creation | 0.404            | 7.226       | 0.000   | Accepted |

These results show that innovation has a positive and significant effect on experiential wellness, experiential wellness has a positive effect on value creation, and innovation also has a direct effect on value creation. In addition, the indirect effect of innovation on value creation through experiential wellness is also significant, so that experiential wellness is proven to act as a partial mediator, where innovation does not automatically become value, which is perceived as a real experience by tourists to create satisfaction and intention to visit again.

**Discussion**

The following discussion situates findings within prior theoretical and empirical literature on innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation in tourism. Product and service innovation has a significant positive influence on improving the quality of tourists' health experiences. The role of experience mediation, namely experiential wellness, can function as the main mediator. Tourists have holistic experiences that touch on various dimensions of wellness. Value creation in travel experiences can effectively increase tourist perception, satisfaction, and loyalty through an experience-driven approach to wellness gastro tourism.

**Creating Value through Entrepreneurship in Wellness Gastro Tourism: The Role of Innovation and Experiential Wellness**

The Influence of Innovation on Experiential Wellness Research findings show that innovation has a positive and significant influence on experiential wellness. This means that the higher the ability of business actors to present innovative products, services, and experience designs, the higher the wellness experience felt by tourists. This finding is consistent with tourism and hospitality literature, which shows that innovation not only creates novelty but also improves the quality of customer experience and strengthens destination differentiation.

Innovation is therefore an important theme in tourism and hospitality management, while wellness tourism research in Thailand also validates wellness experience as a multidimensional construct that can be systematically developed. In the context of wellness gastro tourism, innovation can be realized through healthy herbal-based menus, mindful food presentation, herbal medicine blending classes, and storytelling about local health philosophies. These innovations not only enrich culinary consumption but also transform it into a more immersive wellness experience.

**The Influence of Experiential Wellness on Value Creation**

The results of the study also show that experiential wellness has a positive and significant effect on value creation. This means that the value felt by tourists does not solely arise from product quality but is primarily shaped by a holistic experience that includes physical benefits, emotional relaxation, and personal meaning. These findings are consistent with wellness tourism research, which confirms that wellness travel experiences significantly contribute to satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention (Voigt et al., 2011; Wulandari, 2025). The 2024 study on wellness tourism also identifies experience as an important determinant of revisit intention. Thus, business

actors need to view healthy food not merely as a consumer product but as part of a wellness journey that creates high-value experiences Wulandari (2024), so that value creation becomes broader—encompassing not only economic value but also emotional and symbolic value.

### **The Influence of Innovation on Value Creation**

The direct influence of innovation on value creation in this study is also significant, although smaller than its indirect influence through experiential wellness. These results indicate that innovation is capable of directly enhancing perceived value, for example through menu quality, conceptual uniqueness, and business differentiation. However, the stronger indirect effect suggests that in experience-based industries, innovation is more effective when translated into experiences that are truly perceived by tourists. Studies on value co-creation in tourism and hospitality also emphasize that value emerges through engagement, interaction, and meaningful experiences (Okumus et al., 2018). This implies that innovation that remains limited to technical product aspects is insufficient. It must be designed as an experience that connects tourists with their physical well-being, emotions, and the cultural identity of the destination.

### **The Role of Experiential Wellness Mediation**

The most important finding of this study is the evidence that experiential wellness acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between innovation and value creation. This confirms that innovation does not automatically generate value; instead, it must first be translated into a wellness experience that is perceived in real life by tourists. Theoretically, this reinforces the logic of experience-centered value creation in tourism. In wellness gastro tourism, tourists do not only purchase healthy food but also seek comfort, balance, cultural connection, and a more meaningful healthy lifestyle experience. Research on gastronomy and value co-creation in tourism further supports that authentic experiences and tourist engagement are primary sources of value creation.

### **Contextual Implications for Indonesia**

In the Indonesian context, the findings of this study are highly relevant because Indonesia possesses strong cultural resources for developing wellness gastro tourism, such as herbs, spices, traditional healthy foods, and philosophies of living in harmony with nature. Gastronomy tourism has developed as an important domain in hospitality and destination experience studies, and the shift toward more resilient models is closely associated with local experiences and innovation. Therefore, wellness gastro tourism actors in Indonesia can develop strategies such as: a) designing signature healthy menus based on local ingredients. b) packaging interactive herbal journey experiences. c) integrating mindful dining with cultural narratives. d) highlighting local wisdom as a source of differentiation. This approach enables businesses not only to sell food or services but also to create sustainable experiential value.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, this study confirms that innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation are significantly interconnected. Innovation positively influences experiential wellness and contributes both directly and indirectly to value creation, while experiential wellness acts as a partial mediating variable in this relationship. These findings indicate that value creation in wellness gastro tourism is not solely generated through product or service innovation but also through the ability of entrepreneurs to transform innovation into meaningful wellness experiences, encompassing physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating entrepreneurship, innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation into a unified empirical framework, thereby extending the experience-driven value creation perspective within wellness gastro tourism. Furthermore, the findings highlight that economic value is increasingly created not only through what tourists consume but also through how innovations are perceived as transformative and holistic experiences. Practically, the results suggest that business actors and destination managers should prioritize experience-based innovation, integrate local wisdom such as traditional herbs and healthy living philosophies into tourism offerings, develop integrated wellness gastro tourism

packages that combine healthy dining, mindfulness activities, and cultural storytelling, and establish branding strategies that emphasize authentic local experiences, sustainability, and wellness-oriented lifestyles.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. First, the research was conducted exclusively within the Indonesian context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and geographical settings. Future studies are therefore encouraged to replicate the proposed model in other developing and developed tourism destinations. Second, the cross-sectional quantitative design restricts the ability to capture changes in tourist experiences over time and may be affected by social desirability bias associated with self-reported questionnaire data. Longitudinal and mixed-method approaches are recommended to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of experiential wellness. Third, the model focuses only on innovation, experiential wellness, and value creation, leaving room for future studies to incorporate additional variables such as destination image, cultural identity, tourist engagement, sustainability orientation, and digital innovation platforms. These limitations reveal an important research gap and reinforce the novelty of this study, which lies in the development and empirical validation of an integrative model positioning experiential wellness as a mediator between innovation and value creation in Indonesian wellness gastro tourism.

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#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Lastiani Warih Wulandari, Dewi Turgarini, and Meitolo conceptualized and designed the study, conducted data collection and analysis, and wrote the manuscript. The author also reviewed and finalized the manuscript. Author contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, literature review, and provided critical feedback on the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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