

RebrandingFINAL

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Rebranding Ubud as a Healing Holy Village

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Abstract

As a center for dance and painting, Ubud village in Bali is a sought-after cultural destination for tourists. Cultural village destinations compete with other attraction centers in the global tourism market. In the 2000s, Ubud presented various healing activities, which have grown rapidly until 2022. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the rebranding of Ubud into a healing holy village. Cultural circuit and branding theories explain this based on qualitative research from 2016 to 2022. Data were collected through literature study, observation, and interviews. This has given Ubud its mythical status as a holy village for healing. Myths and meanings support the rebranding of a holy village. It was developed because of the therapeutic tourism actors that continue to investigate the uniqueness and diversity of Ubud. Furthermore, it has received support from various spiritual and healing activities. As a means of healing, Ubud's holy village becomes a powerful brand.

Keywords: Rebranding, Destination, Healing Holy Village

Introduction

Tourism in Ubud-Bali Village began to develop around the 1930s. In the beginning, it was introduced by the famous painter Walter Spies. This painter, who lived in Ubud, then guided European artists to explore the beauty. The publications of these artists introduce the natural and cultural beauty of Ubud. The earliest literature on Ubud depicted its natural and cultural splendors, including rice field views and dances (Picard, 2008).

This interest provoked tourists to explore various magical things, such as the leak, but tourists could not prove its existence. The spiritual appeal of Bali only appeared in "New Journey in Old Asia," written by Candee in 1927. Candee explained Tampak Siring as a place of holy water. After that, interest in Balinese spirituality emerged in the 1970s when hippie tourists visited Ubud-Bali because of the mystical world of Asia (Picard, 2008; Sutarya, 2016).

The 1970s hippy influx was deemed unrepresentative of cultural tourism due to their uncouth dress and conduct. In the 1980s, hippy tourists began to alter their behavior, creating prospects for Ubud's spiritual tourism. For example, I Ketut Arsana started practicing yoga for inbound tourists in 1981. The generation continued to Guru Made Sumantra, who started promoting Balinese yoga called Merkendya in 1995. I Made Gumarta took advantage of this opportunity by building a spiritual practice center called Yoga Barn in 2003 (Sutarya, 2016).

The development of spiritual tourism was promoted in the Novel Eat Pray Love publication. This novel expresses the writer Elizabeth Gilbert's search for love. After traveling in India, Gilbert found his love in Ubud and met I Ketut Liyer (Balinese Astrologer). This novel introduces Ubud as a spiritual tourism destination (Gilbert, 2006).

The promotion fosters various types of spiritual tourism after 2006, such as yoga, astrology, and retreat. Ubud tourism then changed from cultural to spiritual tourism. Spiritual activity is almost in every five-star hotel in Ubud. There is also a yoga practice area, such as I Made Suambara's homestay. However, this rapid growth in Ubud has been covered in fewer articles than its rebranding as a healing holy village.

Objectives, Theories, and Methods

This study reveals the representation, reality, and rebranding of Ubud as a healing holy village. Theoretically, this research helps expand the theory of pilgrimage tourism, which was previously limited to major faiths' holy sites, to minor religions with a purpose beyond religion. However, its practical benefit is to find new business loopholes in religious and spiritual tourism.

Cultural circuit and branding theories are used to explain the representation and reality of Ubud as a healing holy village. The research for writing this article was carried out from 2016 to 2022. Data were collected through literature study, observation, and interviews. Data were analyzed qualitatively.

2 Rebranding

Rebranding is a marketing strategy with a new name, symbol, design, concept, and combination to develop novelty. This novelty is expected to build value and differentiation in the minds of consumers, investors, competitors, and stakeholders (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). It is performed because of intense competition. For example, the cultural village brand has stiff competition because it is conducted in countries like Thailand (Ketsuwan et al., 2021).

Ubud village needs to have new value and differentiation in the competition from the world-famous potential. This capacity for healing stems from the *ubud* legend that Ubud means medicine (Picard, 2008, Cakapane, 2020). The myth has spawned several activities in Ubud, ranging from conferences to the development of health centers (Sutarya, 2016). These activities have slowly branded Ubud as a healing holy village because the process takes place there. Furthermore, the sacred village becomes strong because it has the relics of the Gunung Lebah Temple. This temple is related to the mythology of the arrival of Rsi Markendya to Bali. Therefore, the rebranding as a healing holy village is particularly effective due to the presence of myths, holy sites, and therapeutic activity centers.

Holy Village

Holy village and city are pilgrimage tourist destinations. These destinations occur based on information from religious scriptures and the history of certain religions. For example, the holy village of Nazareth in Palestine-Israel is a pilgrimage tourism destination for Christians and Jews. This brand holy village builds Israel as a Holyland for Christianity and Judaism (Rose, 2020). In Hinduism, Rsi, Haridvar, and Varanasi are holy cities that are Hindu pilgrimage destinations. These cities become pilgrimage tourism destinations because they are related to the Ganga River in the Vedas (Aggarwal et al., 2008).

Pilgrimage tourism destinations also occur in local religions that believe in ancestors. For example, Javanese and Sumatran (Indonesian) people visit ancestral graves to perform pilgrimages (Hellman, 2019; Muhajirin, 2019). Pilgrimage to ancestral graves has become a tradition for the

Javanese. This tradition is known as *mudik* (go back) to the hometown, and it is conducted once a year. The pilgrimage also happens to Indians who visit their *kula devata* (family deity) holy places, making the country a destination for the Indian diaspora (Chhabra, 2013).

This pilgrimage built holy cities and villages for tourist destinations every year. For example, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, becomes a pilgrimage destination every year (Moirra et al., 2019). An example of a sacred village in local ancestral religions is Sancang in West Java (Hellman, 2019). These illustrate that holy villages and cities have the potential to become pilgrimage destinations in major and local religions (ancestors).

The holy village can be defined as a pilgrimage tourist destination, referring to the construction. This pilgrimage in tourism studies is related to travel based on religious texts. However, in its development, it has grown outside religion. For instance, pilgrimage also has a non-religious function in the new age of Java, namely the search within (Wiltshier, 2018). Therefore, the definition of a holy village can be widened to become a pilgrimage destination in and outside the context of religion, including healing.

Literature Review

Studies on holy villages are concerned with certain religions' history, myths, and meanings. For example, the holy village of Nazareth has a history, myth, and meaning for Christians and Jews (Rose, 2020). Another study deals with the impact of religious sites on cities that are pilgrimage destinations, such as Karbala-Iraq (Farhan & Nasar, 2020; Obais et al., 2021). Java and Sumatra have also seen a rise in the study of culture due to the practice of honoring the ancestors (Hellman, 2019; Muhajirin, 2019). For example, pilgrimages to ancestral graves in Santapan Village, Sumatra, are associated with Eid al-Fitr. Therefore, the culture of respecting ancestors has become part of the Islamic tradition (Muhajirin, 2019).

Pilgrimages to these sacred villages also have other purposes, such as wealth (Hellman, 2019) and healing activities in Lourdes, France (Gesler, 1996; Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Studies on new-age groups found that pilgrimage is for self-actualization and self-awareness (Wiltshier, 2018). Studies on pilgrimages' purposes for healing are usually related to yoga (Bansal & Gangotia, 2010; Healy, 2016; Maddox, 2015). Bhavanani (2017) notes the cities that are the source of the spread of yoga in India. For example, Mysore became the initial source of the spread to various places in the world to honor their yoga teachers (Bhavanani, 2017; Maddox, 2015).

In particular, studies on healing holy villages were almost non-existent. Healing in Lourdes, France, for example, is only a complement to pilgrimages (Gesler, 1996). As a result, the healing holy village raised *topic* represents new territory for pilgrimage tourism. The Ubud-Bali Village is new in the study of the *holy village*. Previously, research on Ubud was about spiritual healing, yoga, and ashram (Sutarya, 2016).

Ubud as Healing Holy Village

Ubud village has a mythological connection with the arrival of Rsi Markendya, who came from India to Bali through Java. In mythology, Rsi Markendya is said to have come from Java, then meditated on the Campuhan River, Ubud. This Hindu priest's meditation place on the Campuhan River became the Gunung Lebah Temple. People from various walks of life visit the

temple to pray for good health and cleanse their lives of all harmful influences (Sutarya, 2020). The word *ubad*, which means medicine, began to refer to Ubud (Picard, 2008).

In the beginning, Ubud was a village that developed into a sub-district town in Gianyar Regency. Ubud appears to be a little city despite its 6.76-square-kilometer size and 11,971 residents. However, its tourism industry is determined to portray the village as a rural region (Pemprov Bali, 2020). Additionally, to promote the village as a destination for *Balian*, the novel *Eat Pray Love* suggests that Ubud is known for its reputation as a *ubad* (medicine). One of the famous *Balian* named I Ketut Liyer as in the novel *Eat Pray Love* (Gilbert, 2006).

The *Eat Pray Love* bestseller has inspired healers worldwide to settle in Ubud and set up shop. In 2016, there were around ten healing centers in Ubud, which consisted of hotels, ashrams, special places, and people's homes (Sutarya, 2016). Some of these places were developed by people from Ubud, such as Yoga Barn, Ambar Ashram, Munivara Ashram, Ketut Liyer-sons, and Ni Wayan Nuriasih. As a result, several hotels in Ubud in 2022 will have therapeutic spaces available through this therapist. For example, the Four Seasons resort in Bali offers a variety of holistic treatments (fourseason.com, 2022).

According to the following examples, Ubud has been provided the opportunity to become a healing holy village, and the first case is Guru Made Sumantra (52 years old). In the 1980s, Sumantra was a painter who sold his paintings to restaurants and hotels around Ubud. At the restaurant and hotel, he saw advertisements for yoga practices. This inspired him to develop Bali Yoga.

In 1995, Sumantra initiated the iconic Markendya Yoga as Bali Yoga, and the advertisement was spread to restaurants and hotels around Ubud. As a result, an inbound tourist from Japan named Yoko Watanabe visited his house. Since then (1995), Bali Yoga which was developed with the icon of Rsi Markendya and Ubud, has grown. In 2022, Markendya Yoga has become a college that raises yoga trainers in Banjar Lungsiakan, Ubud-Bali.

Saya dulu pelukis. Saya menjual lukisan di beberapa restoran di sekitar Ubud. Saya melihat peluang untuk mengembangkan yoga dari brosur-brosur yoga yang disebar di restoran. Saya berpikir kalau mengembangkan yoga khas Bali, pasti ada peminatnya. Dari ide itu, saya mengembangkan yoga sampai sekarang (Wawancara dengan Sumantra).

I used to be a painter. I sell paintings in several restaurants around Ubud. I saw an opportunity to develop yoga from yoga flyers distributed in restaurants. I think that if I develop Balinese yoga, there must be interested. From that idea, I developed yoga until now (Interview with Sumantra).

For the second case, I Ketut Arsana (62 years old) stated that the spirit of Ubud is *ubad*, increasing his understanding of Balinese medicine. This medical science is called *usada* combined with yoga and tantra. Furthermore, a specialty of yoga called *kundalini* yoga tantra was developed. *Kundalini* and yoga are common teachings in yoga, but tantra has a Balinese peculiarity. An example of *tantra* in Bali is the use of rituals that are usually practiced on every *kliwon* (a special day every five days) at the Munivara Ashram.

Arsana founded the Munivara Ashram in 2006, which has a meditation cave, a yoga practice area, a vegetable garden, and a shrine. It is a place for spiritual healing practices, such as yoga, diet, vegetarian and ritual practices. At this ashram, Arsana targets serious travelers in yoga. General tourists are offered Omham Retreat near the ashram, namely Banjar Junjungan Ubud (7 Km from Ubud center).

Arsana gave the name of his teaching *jnana shiva buddha*, which means knowledge of self-harmony. The *jnana shiva buddha* developed into a balance-based healing technique called *sanghyang boda kecapi*. Arsana developed this technique as healing for tourists. The three places used for practice in Ubud are Munivara Ashram, Omham Retreat, and Body Work and Massage.

Sebelumnya ada wisman yang melakukan latihan yoga di Ubud. Mereka ternyata memerlukan guru yoga lokal. Saya kemudian memanfaatkan peluang itu untuk melatih mereka. Kemudian saya mengembangkannya di rumah saya sendiri. Kemudian membangun ashram dan hotel Omham Retreat (Wawancara dengan Arsana).

Previously there were inbound tourists who did yoga in Ubud. They need a local yoga trainer. I then took the opportunity to train them. Then I developed it in my own house. Then build an ashram and hotel Omham Retreat (Interview with Arsana).

For the third case, I Made Gunarta (62 years old) founded Yoga Barn in 2007. Yoga Barn provides a place for Balinese and foreign healers to practice. It uses the unique atmosphere of Ubud Village as an advantage for healing and yoga, namely the environment, culture, and spirituality of Ubud. He stated that Ubud people perform rituals every day to provide spiritual vibrations for tourists who practice yoga.

This year (2022), Yoga Barn became a center for yoga practice and healing. It invites various branches of yoga and healing from all over the world. Furthermore, it displays healing values by differentiating food, place, atmosphere, and exercise materials. Therefore, Yoga Barn is the complete yoga and healing center in Ubud. Since 2010, it has hosted the Bali Spirit Festival (Bali Spirit, 2022). The Bali Spirit spreads the promotion of Ubud as a healing destination and holy village with its socio-religious life.

Saya melihat suasana social religious masyarakat Ubud mendukung untuk pengembangan pusat yoga dan spiritual. Saya mencobanya dengan satu gedung pada awalnya, kemudian mulai ramai sehingga memerlukan gedung-gedung yang lainnya (Wawancara dengan Gunarta).

I view that the social and religious atmosphere of the Ubud community supports the development of a yoga and spiritual center. I tried it with one building at first, then it started getting crowded so I needed other buildings (Interview with Gunarta).

These cases represent Ubud as a healing holy village. Sumantra represents the mythology of Rsi Markendya, who once lived in Ubud. This mythology became the icon of Bali Yoga later. Arsana represents Ubud as *ubud* by developing kundalini yoga tantra. Finally, Gunarta represents

the spiritual culture of the people to support the yoga and healing center. This representation describes Ubud as a healing holy village destination.

This representation has the support of influencers. For example, Nicola Turner-Butler (60 years old) from Australia invites other inbound tourists to do Bali Yoga activities in collaboration with Sumantra. “Namaste Bali” activities, namely yoga, have been promoted with Bali Yoga’s uniqueness and local Balinese teachers. Sumantra uses the yoga facilities in Ubud’s premium hotels and villas to offer Bali Yoga to visitors from other countries



Source : Nicole Turner-Butler (2022)

Figure 1 : Influencer Promote Bali Yoga and Healing

Arsana mentioned that he had pupils in different countries practicing yoga. These students became influencers in developing the kundalini yoga tantra. Yoga teachers worldwide are influencing their students to visit the Munivara-Ubud Ashram, which is located in Bali, Indonesia. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Arsana also did virtual yoga guidance with the students abroad. It is hoped that this virtual practice will help students better understand Ubud.



Source: Sutarya (2019)

Figure 2: I Ketut Arsana's Yoga Activities

Yoga Barn consists of healers with networks to increase awareness of the activities. In addition, it consists of yoga and healing enthusiasts around the world, and the third group is tourists who have been to Yoga Barn. These groups introduce Yoga Barn and Ubud to their respective groups. Gunarta stated that word of mouth was more effective in attracting inbound tourists because they spoke based on experience.

Ida Rsi Putra Manuaba (53 years old) is also an influencer who strengthens this representation. He held various events in Ubud, and in 2022, the Sanggam Festival, a gathering of yoga teachers, will be conducted. Anjasmara, an Indonesian actor, appear as a guest star in May 2022. This activity took place at Ubud Raya Resort to bring together local yoga teachers. The meeting aims to prepare them for international standards because they have worked as yoga instructors in international hotels.

Kita mengumpulkan pelatih-pelatih yoga di Bali untuk mengembangkan pariwisata spiritual di Ubud. Destinasi wisata ini memiliki suasana alam dan budaya yang mendukung untuk itu. Fasilitas hotel juga bagus untuk yoga dan healing (Wawancara dengan Manuaba).

We gather yoga trainers in Bali to develop spiritual tourism in Ubud. This tourist destination has a natural and cultural atmosphere that supports it. Hotel facilities are also good for yoga and healing (Interview with Manuaba).

Discussion

Cultural Circuit Theory explains that representation is related to identity. Meanwhile, identity has direct proportionality to production, which is related to consumption. Consumption is related to regulation, and representation builds identity, which is a social profile. This identity builds production for available consumers. The availability of regulations will lead to the

production of such representation (Champ, 2008). In the case of Ubud, the representation as *ubud* has become a product of a tourist destination with a healing holy city brand.

The *ubud* myth is supported by the socio-cultural life of the Ubud people. This life gives rise to healing activities, with Ubud centers such as the Yoga Barn and Ashram Munivara. In addition, it builds the identity of Ubud as a healing destination and sacred village. Healing and pilgrimage to this sacred village have evolved into goods whose quality is controlled by the government due to their increasing popularity as healing destinations for tourists. This creates Ubud as a healing holy village destination.



Source: Sumantra (2019)

Picture 3: Inbound Tourist Healing on the Statue of Rsi Markendya, the mythical figure of Ubud

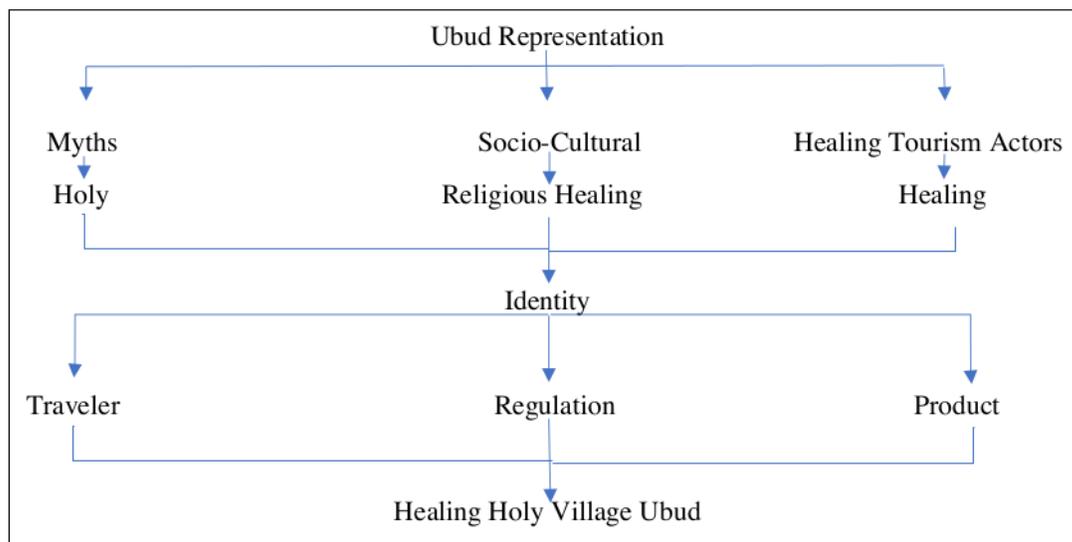


Figure 4: Ubud as Healing Holy Village in Cultural Circuit Theory

The healing holy city is a new brand of Ubud, which was previously a cultural village. This brand is built on the history of Ubud as a tourist destination, starting with the arrival of the painter

Walter Spies and other artists (Picard, 2008). The artists built the brand as a cultural village, and it is famous for its Legong art performances, castles, and cultural activities of the community. However, Ubud village as a healing destination was only established in 2003, when the quest for global healing conference was held (Kartajaya and Indro, 2009). In 2006, this was confirmed by publishing the novel *Eat Pray Love*. This novel later became a film in 2017, which helped brand Ubud as a healing holy village.

Brand as a cultural village is no longer a distinguishing feature in the global market for tourist attractions. For example, Thailand has developed several cultural villages (Ketsuwan et al., 2021). This example indicates that the brand is getting much competition in the tourism business. Therefore, rebranding needs to be conducted because the brand concerns the appearance of the value and uniqueness of a tourist destination.

Rebranding is a marketing strategy by developing novelty to face the competition. This is the value and differentiation of similar products (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). Therefore, the theory emphasizes value building and product differentiation (Bungin, 2015). The Ubud Village is built from the myths and daily life of the people. The myth of Ubud is that it is *ubad* (medicine), and its daily life is that of a society with a ritual culture. This myth and ritual life build healing value, such as Ubud as a sacred place that heals.

What differentiates Ubud from other holy villages are yoga and healing Bali. Sumantra, Arsana, and Gunarta build this differentiation with Bali Yoga, kundalini yoga tantra, and practice center during the ritualistic life of the Ubud community. The rebranding of the healing holy village was conducted after 2006 using the novel *Eat Pray Love*. In addition, it was strengthened by the publication of the film *Eat Pray Love* in 2017. Healing activities enlivened this rebranding. For example, Arsana started establishing the Munivara Ashram in 2006 and Bali Spirit, which took place every year from 2010 (Bali Spirit, 2022).

Ida Rsi Putra Manuaba also strengthens this rebranding by holding the Ubud Sanggam Festival in 2022 to strengthen the position of local teachers in the competition for yoga tourism in Bali (Interview, 18 May 2022). Various websites also promote Ubud as a healing center. For example, Book Yoga Retreat features around 127 healing and yoga places (Book Yoga Retreat, 2022), and Bali Spirit features around 12 healing and yoga places (Bali Spirit, 2022). These websites strengthen Ubud's rebranding as a healing holy village. The data indicate that rebranding is conducted through spiritual figures, tourism actors, novels, films, and websites specifically for healing.

Ubud's unique Balinese yoga and healing separates it from other spiritual and yoga resorts in India, such as Rikesh and Mysore (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Maddox, 2015). As a supplement to pilgrimage tourism, healing is still practiced. For instance, it is the primary goal in Lourdes, France, where healing is developed (Gesler, 1996). Santiago de Compostela, Spain, is also a destination for pilgrimages and healing. However, it is developed outside the context of Christianity, such as in Buddhist meditation (Moulin-Stożek, 2019).

Several tales and meanings are associated with Ubud's holy village status (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Gesler, 1996; Maddox, 2015; Moulin-Stoek, 2019). Rikesh and Mysore, India, have myths and place meanings compatible with yoga, but tourism facilities are less supportive (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Maddox, 2015). Places of pilgrimage in Europe such as Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela have good facilities but lack myths and meanings about healing. Therefore, healing is

only an additional activity at the pilgrimage site (Gesler, 1996; Moulin-Stožek, 2019). Tourists should be made aware of the healing properties of the holy village.

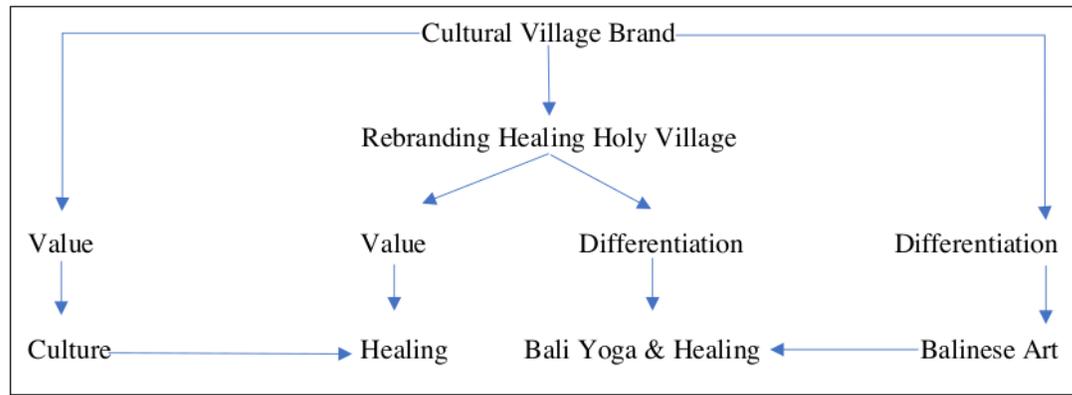


Figure 5: Rebranding Ubud as a Healing Holy Village

Conclusion

Ubud has many competitors in the competition for the world's tourist village destinations. As early as 2006, this tourist resort began promoting itself as a place where people could meditate. This promotion represents Ubud from the myth of *ubad* (medicine). The representation is supported by the social and religious community, as well as the activities of healing tourism actors. Tourist needs for healing and holy villages create this identity as a tourism product with standards that the government regulates.

Consequently, the healing holy village later became a tourist destination, and it was continuously rebranded through conferences, festivals, novels, films, and the promotion of healing activities. These efforts build the Ubud brand as a healing holy village destination. Ubud's value and distinction have been based on this brand's recognition. Currently (2022), almost all hotels, villas, and other tourism accommodations offer healing places in Ubud. Unique items developed by local healing school reinforce this approach. Therefore, the healing holy village is a very strong brand to be promoted for Ubud tourism.

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RebrandingFINAL

PAGE 1



Missing ",," You have a spelling or typing mistake that makes the sentence appear to have a comma error.



Article Error You may need to use an article before this word.



Sp. This word is misspelled. Use a dictionary or spellchecker when you proofread your work.



S/V This subject and verb may not agree. Proofread the sentence to make sure the subject agrees with the verb.



Sp. This word is misspelled. Use a dictionary or spellchecker when you proofread your work.



P/V You have used the passive voice in this sentence. Depending upon what you wish to emphasize in the sentence, you may want to revise it using the active voice.



Proofread This part of the sentence contains a grammatical error or misspelled word that makes your meaning unclear.

PAGE 2



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Article Error You may need to remove this article.



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Article Error You may need to use an article before this word. Consider using the article **the**.



Article Error You may need to remove this article.

PAGE 3



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Article Error You may need to use an article before this word.



Article Error You may need to use an article before this word.



Missing ", " You may need to place a comma after this word.

PAGE 4



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Confused You have a spelling mistake near the word **a** that makes **a** appear to be a confused-word error.



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Run-on This sentence may be a run-on sentence. Proofread it to see if it contains too many independent clauses or contains independent clauses that have been combined without conjunctions or punctuation. Look at the "Writer's Handbook" for advice about correcting run-on sentences.



Possessive You may need to use an apostrophe to show possession.



S/V This subject and verb may not agree. Proofread the sentence to make sure the subject agrees with the verb.



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Proper Noun If this word is a proper noun, you need to capitalize it.



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Prep. You may be using the wrong preposition.

PAGE 10



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