

ETHNOMEDICINE AS CULTURAL HERITAGE : SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POTENTIAL IN SEBELAT VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the potential of ethnomedicine as cultural heritage and its contribution to sustainable tourism development in Sebelat Village, Midai Island. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involved eight participants consisting of traditional healers, patients, community members, and local stakeholders selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and literature review, and analyzed descriptively using SWOT analysis supported by IFAS and EFAS matrices. The findings reveal that the Midai community continues to practice various forms of ethnomedicine, including *betetas*, *betangas*, traditional massage, *luluran*, *bekasai*, *param*, *bajong*, *kecundoi*, *jamu*, *sekapur sirih*, and *aek tawa*, reflecting local knowledge related to health, spirituality, and the relationship between humans and the environment. These practices possess cultural, symbolic, and experiential values that support their potential development as cultural, educational, and wellness tourism attractions. The recommended development strategies include strengthening community participation, establishing healer communities, developing ethnomedicine-based tourism packages, and integrating cultural values into village tourism planning. This study concludes that ethnomedicine represents an important cultural resource that may support sustainable tourism development while contributing to cultural preservation and local economic diversification. Future research is recommended to adopt broader interdisciplinary approaches to further examine ethnomedicine within tourism and cultural heritage contexts.

Keywords: ethnomedicine; sustainable tourism; cultural tourism; wellness tourism; intangible cultural heritage

ETNOMEDISIN SEBAGAI WARISAN BUDAYA: POTENSI PARIWISATA BERKELANJUTAN DI DESA SEBELAT

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji potensi etnomedisin sebagai warisan budaya serta kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan di Desa Sebelat, Pulau Midai. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan delapan informan yang terdiri atas tabib tradisional, pasien, anggota masyarakat, dan pemangku kepentingan lokal yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dokumentasi, dan studi literatur, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif menggunakan analisis SWOT yang didukung oleh matriks IFAS dan EFAS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat Midai masih mempraktikkan berbagai bentuk etnomedisin, termasuk *betetas*, *betangas*, pijat tradisional, *luluran*, *bekasai*, *param*, *bajong*, *kecundoi*, *jamu*, *sekapur sirih*, dan *aek tawa*, yang mencerminkan pengetahuan lokal terkait kesehatan, spiritualitas, serta hubungan antara manusia dan lingkungan. Praktik-praktik tersebut memiliki nilai budaya, simbolik, dan pengalaman yang mendukung potensinya untuk dikembangkan sebagai daya tarik wisata budaya, edukasi, dan wellness. Strategi pengembangan yang direkomendasikan meliputi penguatan partisipasi masyarakat, pembentukan komunitas tabib, pengembangan paket wisata berbasis etnomedisin, serta integrasi nilai-nilai budaya ke dalam perencanaan pariwisata desa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa etnomedisin merupakan sumber daya budaya yang penting dan berpotensi mendukung pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan sekaligus berkontribusi terhadap pelestarian budaya serta diversifikasi ekonomi lokal. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk mengadopsi pendekatan interdisipliner yang lebih luas guna mengkaji etnomedisin secara lebih mendalam dalam konteks pariwisata dan warisan budaya.

Kata kunci: etnomedisin; pariwisata berkelanjutan; pariwisata budaya; pariwisata wellness; warisan budaya tak benda

INTRODUCTION

Tourism development in coastal and island regions increasingly emphasizes sustainability principles to ensure long-term social, ecological, cultural, and economic well-being (Butler, 1999; Xia et al., 2025; Martín et al., 2025). Beyond its economic contribution, tourism also functions as a medium for preserving local culture and strengthening com-

munity identity. In many regions, tourism has contributed to community welfare by stimulating economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and encouraging the utilization of local cultural resources (Khoirudin & Silvizariza, 2025). One emerging sector with significant potential is health and wellness tourism, which integrates local cultural practices and traditional knowledge as distinctive tourism assets (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Ethnomedicine represents an important form of cultural heritage developed through generations of lived experience and local knowledge related to health, healing, and the relationship between humans and the environment. Traditional healing practices commonly involve the use of herbal materials, spiritual beliefs, and community-based therapeutic knowledge that have been maintained for centuries within particular communities and ethnic groups years (Doğan et al., 2026; Odonne & Zank, 2026; Abdullah et al., 2021; Bhattacharjya et al., 2023; Kristiyanto et al., 2020; Ukratalo, 2025). As a form of intangible cultural heritage, ethnomedicine reflects not only practical approaches to health treatment but also cultural values, collective identity, and local worldviews embedded in everyday social life.

In Sebelat Village, Midai Island, ethnomedicine practices continue to be maintained and transmitted through generations as part of the community's cultural identity. These practices persist largely because of strong cultural attachment and community trust in traditional healing systems (Mokodompit et al., 2022). However, ethnomedicine also faces increasing challenges in the context of social change and modernization.

In recent years, global tourism trends have demonstrated increasing interest in wellness tourism, which emphasizes holistic well-being, relaxation, and preventive health practices (Abbas et al., 2026; Jaiyesimi et al., 2025; Theocharis & Leligou, 2025). The rapid growth of wellness tourism reflects changing tourist preferences toward authentic and experience-based activities that integrate physical, mental, and cultural dimensions of well-being (Arar & Dirik, 2025; Guo et al., 2025). In this context, traditional healing practices, including ethnomedicine, have gained increasing attention as cultural resources that may contribute to distinctive and sustainable tourism experiences. Beyond their therapeutic functions, these practices offer opportunities for visitors to engage with local knowledge systems, cultural values, and community-based traditions that shape everyday understandings of health and well-being.

Additional pressures such as modernization, increased reliance on formal healthcare services, limited documentation, and the absence of preservation institutions further weaken the sustainability of ethnomedicine (Pieroni et al., 2025; Maitra, 2025). Nevertheless, traditional healing practices continue to play an important role in communities that strongly uphold local cultural values (Maswiyati, 2025). Intangible cultural heritage refers to traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors

and transmitted to future generations (Wu et al., 2025). As many of these traditions face increasing threats and vulnerability, intangible cultural heritage that was once often overlooked has gained growing global attention from organizations such as UNESCO (Smith & Akagawa, 2009), which emphasize the importance of social action and community engagement to prevent cultural extinction (Jaelani et al., 2025; Hasanah, 2022).

In the tourism sector, sustainable tourism has been identified as an effective instrument for preserving cultural traditions while simultaneously generating economic value (Fattah et al., 2025; Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021). The integration of traditional knowledge into tourism products can also function as a strong protection mechanism (Jakes, 2024). However, studies examining the relationship between sustainable tourism and ethnomedicine remain limited, particularly in small island contexts such as Desa Sebelat. Desa Sebelat possesses characteristics of a small island community with strong maritime cultural ties and authentic traditional practices (Ratnasari et al., 2024). Its social and cultural authenticity, including fishing and agricultural activities as well as traditional heritage constitutes a solid foundation for rural tourism development (Zahra et al., 2025). However, ethnomedicine in Desa Sebelat faces real threats, weakened knowledge transmission, declining numbers of practicing healers, and decreasing confidence among younger generations. These issues highlight a clear gap between the cultural value embedded in ethnomedicine and its long-term sustainability within the community.

In recent years, tourism studies have increasingly emphasized the importance of integrating local knowledge systems into destination development as a way to enhance tourism authenticity and sustainability (Mazlan et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with the view that tourism is not merely an economic activity, but also a social process that shapes how communities negotiate identity, transmit knowledge, and manage their resources (Rahman et al., 2025). When understood beyond its therapeutic function, ethnomedicine represents a form of experiential knowledge that reflects how communities interpret health, balance, and harmony in everyday life (Sinuraya & Hasairin, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). In the context of tourism, ethnomedicine does not serve as a substitute for modern healthcare, but rather as a cultural asset that carries symbolic meaning, experiential value, and opportunities for meaningful interaction between visitors and local communities (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Andriani et al., 2024). Several studies have

suggested that integrating traditional healing practices into tourism products can strengthen destination differentiation while simultaneously fostering local pride and cultural sustainability (M. Smith & Puczkó, 2013; Parashar & Indolia, 2024). However, such integration requires careful planning to avoid the marginalization of local actors or oversimplifying complex cultural practices. Desa Sebelat faces several challenges, including limited economic diversification, the migration of younger generations for education and employment, and the weakening of intergenerational knowledge transmission, all of which place traditional practices, particularly ethnomedicine, in a vulnerable position.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between culturally based traditional healing practices and various forms of tourism. For instance, Kurniawan et al. (2025) explored the integration of traditional healing practices into the development of halal health tourism in Bayan, Lombok, demonstrating that tradition-based health practices can become part of tourism experiences rooted in local cultural values. Another study by Zhou et al. (2025) examined the development of Zen meditation traditions as a form of spiritual tourism that offers mental well-being experiences through traditional cultural practices. Furthermore, Hubner et al. (2025) investigated the potential of community-based wellness tourism in Ubud, Bali, emphasizing the importance of local community involvement and the integration of healing traditions such as *Usada Bali* and the *Melukat* ritual, both categorized as forms of ethnomedicine in strengthening the authenticity of wellness tourism destinations.

Although various studies have shown that traditional health practices and local cultural traditions have potential for tourism development, studies that specifically examine local ethnomedicine as cultural heritage while formulating development strategies within a sustainable tourism framework remain limited, particularly in the context of Desa Sebelat. Based on this gap, the present study positions ethnomedicine as a local cultural resource with the potential to support sustainable tourism development (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018). This research examines the current condition of ethnomedicine practices in Desa Sebelat and analyzes the internal and external factors influencing their potential utilization in village-level tourism development.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to position ethnomedicine not merely as a traditional healing practice but also as cultural heritage that

can be integrated into sustainable tourism development to support the preservation of local culture. This perspective aligns with the concept of *ethno-tourism* proposed by Yang (2011), which views local culture as a primary attraction that strengthens community identity while supporting long-term cultural preservation, and emphasizes the importance of conserving traditional knowledge through the involvement of traditional healers in scientific research (Ts & Yephthomi, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the potential of ethnomedicine practices in Desa Sebelat and to formulate sustainable tourism development strategies that support the preservation of ethnomedicine as cultural heritage.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore ethnomedicine practices and their potential role in tourism development in Desa Sebelat. The qualitative approach was selected to capture cultural meanings, symbolic elements, and community interpretations embedded in traditional healing practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018), supported by an ethnographic perspective to provide contextual understanding of local cultural practices, without adopting a full ethnographic research design. The research was conducted in Desa Sebelat, Pulau Midai, Natuna Regency, between July and October 2025, allowing direct engagement with the daily socio-cultural context of the community. A total of eight participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in ethnomedicine practices. These participants included traditional healers, patients who had received treatment, community members familiar with the practices, and local stakeholders. The inclusion of patients was intended to capture experiential perspectives on ethnomedicine practices, while healers and stakeholders provided knowledge related to practice, transmission, and development potential. This selection emphasizes depth of understanding rather than statistical generalization, which is consistent with qualitative research principles, although it may not fully represent all community perspectives. Most traditional healers involved in the study were aged over 50 years, while patient informants ranged from 18 to 30 years old.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations, documentation, and literature review (Firdaus et al., 2025; Aswita et al., 2018). Interviews lasted between 15 and 50 minutes, were conducted in participants' everyday environments, audio-recorded with consent,

and transcribed. The use of the local Malay language of Pulau Midai ensured clarity and authenticity of responses. Field observations documented ethnomedicine practices such as *betetas*, *cabut bigik angin*, traditional body treatments, and massage, supported by field notes and visual documentation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of interviews, observations, and literature. Data analysis followed a descriptive qualitative approach by identifying recurring themes related to ethnomedicine practices and their cultural significance. To formulate development strategies, SWOT analysis was applied to identify internal and external factors influencing ethnomedicine-based tourism development (Mohezar et al., 2017; Putra et al., 2019). The use of SWOT, supported by IFAS and EFAS matrices, was intended to translate qualitative findings into structured strategic directions within a sustainability framework. In this study, the analysis is guided by community-based tourism and cultural sustainability perspectives, emphasizing local participation, cultural preservation, and long-term socio-cultural viability.

The IFAS matrix was used to analyze internal factors such as cultural strength, human resources, community support, and internal limitations, while the EFAS matrix examined external factors including institutional support, tourism trends, development opportunities, and external challenges (Azzahra et al., 2025). The results of IFAS and EFAS were then used to determine the strategic position within SWOT quadrants, which informed the formulation of development strategies. The weights (0.0-1.0) and ratings (1-4) in the IFAS and EFAS matrices were derived from qualitative interpretation of interview data, observations, and supporting literature. The weights represent the relative importance of each factor, while the ratings indicate the

condition of each factor, where 1 represents a major weakness or threat, 2 a minor weakness or threat, 3 a moderate strength or opportunity, and 4 a major strength or opportunity. These values were assigned through systematic interpretation of recurring themes, frequency of responses, and the perceived significance of each factor based on triangulated data. This approach allows qualitative insights to be translated into analytical categories while maintaining consistency and reducing subjectivity. Although the researcher’s familiarity with the local socio-cultural context informed the interpretation, the analysis remained grounded in systematically collected qualitative data to ensure analytical rigor and objectivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Description of Desa Sebelat

In recent years, Natuna has attracted increasing attention from both the public and the government due to its strategic position as an outer island region and its growing potential for marine and cultural tourism (Novansyah & Dwiastuti, 2025). Desa Sebelat is located on Pulau Midai in Midai District, Natuna Regency, (Inagurasi & Sarjiyanto 2023; Kartubi et al., 2025) and is characterized by diverse topographical features, including hillside slopes, lowlands, and hilly terrains that shape the island’s physical landscape. Based on the 2024 Village Development Index (IDM) issued by the Ministry of Village, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration, Desa Sebelat is classified as a developing village, indicating that it is in a transitional phase toward strengthening its social, economic, and environmental development capacity.



Figure 1. Sebelat Village Status

Source : idm.kemendesa.go.id, 2024

Despite this status, the tourism potential of Desa Sebelat has not yet been optimally developed, especially the various cultural resources in the form of ethnomedicine practices and traditional knowledge that are still actively practiced by the community across Pulau Midai.

As a small island surrounded by open seas, Pulau Midai requires the application of sustainable

tourism principles to maintain a balance between tourism development and the preservation of natural and cultural resources. Therefore, tourism development in Desa Sebelat needs to consider environmental capacity and local cultural assets, particularly ethnomedicine traditions that hold potential as educational and culturally meaningful tourism attractions.



Figure 2. Sebelat Village Area Map

Source : Google Maps, 2025

Ethnomedicine Practices in Pulau Midai

Pulau Midai has a variety of ethnomedicine practices that continue to be actively performed by the local community. Based on field interviews, three traditional healers were identified in Desa Sebelat, all of whom are over 50 years old. Two healers, identified as T and M, obtained their ethnomedicine knowledge through family lineage, while another healer, D, reported receiving healing knowledge through dreams. These healers play an important role in maintaining traditional healing practices that remain widely trusted by the community. Healers T and D commonly perform several healing practices such as *betetas*, *kecundoi*, *param*, *bajong*, and *ae k tawa*, which are used to treat various conditions including fever, vomiting, body weakness, and illnesses believed to be caused by environmental or spiritual disturbances.

Before conducting treatment, traditional healers usually begin with a consultation session by asking patients about the symptoms they experience. Based on the explanation provided by the patient, the healer determines the appropriate treatment method. According to local beliefs, illnesses may

occur due to several factors such as sudden weather changes (for example hot rain), physical exhaustion, violation of local taboos, or spiritual disturbances. These conditions can affect individuals of all ages.

One of the most well-known healing techniques is *betetas*, which is commonly used to treat a condition locally referred to as *cacok* or *jaring*, characterized by symptoms such as fever and vomiting. The healing process involves several ritual stages, including burning incense, the symbolic use of scissors, and the *cabut bigik angin* technique. This technique involves pressing certain points on the fingers or toes using objects such as white pepper, wood, turmeric, or the healer's fingers to remove negative elements believed to cause the illness.

One of the key stages in the *betetas* healing process is the *cabut bigik angin* technique. This stage represents an important part of the healing ritual in which the healer removes what is believed to be the source of illness from the patient's body. The practice of *cabut bigik angin* performed by a traditional healer during the healing process is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The practice of cabut bigik angin performed by a traditional healer

Source: Research documentation, 2025

In addition to healing practices, the Midai community also maintains traditional body treatment practices that are commonly performed by female healers. A female healer identified as M is known for preparing traditional body care treatments such as *betangas* (herbal steam bathing), *luluran* (body scrub), traditional massage, and *bekasai*, which are typically conducted as a sequence of treatments. These treatments are commonly performed for body care and relaxation, particularly for women preparing for marriage.

As explained by healer M:

“Die seharus de pakai mandi uap dulok heem betangas lok keluar peloh kan abis tok baru kite lulurkan sambil ngurut tok kite lulurkan isok pagi baru kite bersihkan dengan kasai tadek.” (Traditional healer, M)

This statement indicates that these treatments are usually performed as a package with a specific sequence starting from *betangas* to produce sweat, followed by body scrubbing and massage, and finally cleaning the body using *bekasai*. The interview process with one of the traditional healers during the fieldwork is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Interview with a traditional healer in Desa Sebelat

Source: Research documentation, 2025

Besides these practices, the Midai community also recognizes several other ethnomedicine traditions such as *sekapur sirih* and *tepong tawa*, which function as cultural rituals used to welcome guests as a form of respect between the host and visitors. These traditions reflect the strong relationship be-

tween traditional healing knowledge, cultural practices, and community identity.

To provide a clearer ethnographic representation, the identified ethnomedicine practices are categorized based on their functions, cultural meanings, and potential integration into tourism, as presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Classification of Ethnomedicine Practices and Their Tourism Potential

Category	Practices	Cultural Meaning	Tourism Potential
Healing	<i>Betetas, Kecundoi, Bajong, Param</i>	Spiritual-based healing and local belief system	Educational tourism
Healing	<i>Aek tawa, Jamu-jamu</i>	Use of natural elements and traditional remedies	Educational & wellness tourism
Healing	<i>Cabut bigik angin</i>	Removal of negative elements and spiritual imbalance	Wellness tourism (observation)
Body Care	<i>Betangas, Luluran, Bekasai</i>	Body purification and traditional beauty practices	Wellness tourism
Ritual	<i>Sekapur sirih, Tepong tawa</i>	Respect, hospitality, and cultural identity	Cultural tourism

Source : Researcher, 2025

These findings demonstrate that ethnomedicine practices are not only related to health treatment but also reflect local knowledge systems and cultural values. This aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism, particularly in supporting cultural continuity and community-based development, where local traditions are maintained while providing meaningful experiences for visitors. From a tourism perspective, several ethnomedicine practices have the potential to be integrated into tourism activities. Practices related to relaxation and body care such as *betangas*, traditional massage, *luluran*, and *bekasai* have strong potential to be developed as wellness tourism experiences, particularly because wellness tourism is typically pursued by individuals who are already healthy and seek to maintain and improve their well-being in a holistic manner (GWI, 2018; Tripathi & Said, 2023). Meanwhile, healing practices such as *betetas*, *param*, *bajong*, *kecundoi*, and *cabut bigik angin* may serve as educational tourism attractions, allowing visitors to learn about local healing knowledge, rituals, and cultural meanings behind these practices. Rituals such as *sekapur sirih* and *tepong tawa* may also function as cultural tourism attractions that intro-

duce visitors to the traditions and hospitality practices of the Midai community.

However, the integration of ethnomedicine into tourism development also requires critical consideration. The transformation of traditional healing practices into tourism experiences may lead to cultural commodification, where complex symbolic meanings risk being simplified for commercial purposes. In addition, tensions may arise between traditional healing systems and modern healthcare, particularly in terms of legitimacy and public trust. Therefore, the development of ethnomedicine-based tourism must be carefully managed to ensure that cultural integrity and community values are preserved.

Internal and External Factor Analysis

Strengths

Ethnomedicine practices in Sebelat Village represent an important component of local cultural heritage that continues to be preserved by the community. These practices are deeply rooted in traditional beliefs that have been passed down through generations. One of the most common traditional healing

practices is *betetas*, which is used to treat a condition locally referred to as *jaring*.

A traditional healer explained that various types of illnesses are commonly treated through traditional healing practices.

“Segale-gale de misal de ape keluh pasien kite cube bantu... jaring, param, bigik angin, masuk angin.” (Traditional healer, T)

This statement indicates that traditional healers play a significant role in the local healthcare system. The wide range of illnesses treated through traditional healing reflects the strong level of trust that the community places in ethnomedicine practices.

In some situations, traditional healing practices also coexist with modern healthcare services. One healer explained that he occasionally assists medical personnel at the local health center when patients experience conditions that are believed to fall outside biomedical explanations.

“Atok bantu di puskesmas kan.” (Traditional healer, T)

“Misal kalau urang puskesmas tok dak bisa menangani die panggil atok... bearti de penyakit kampung kate de” (Traditional healer, T)

These statements suggest that traditional healing practices and modern healthcare services do not always operate in opposition. Instead, they sometimes complement each other in addressing community health concerns. This reflects a pluralistic healthcare system in which traditional knowledge continues to coexist alongside biomedical services.

In addition, traditional healing knowledge is commonly transmitted through family lineage.

“Keturunan... keturunan dari keturunan atok.” (Traditional healer, T)

This intergenerational transmission strengthens the cultural legitimacy of ethnomedicine as an important part of the community's heritage.

Another informant explained that traditional healing practices remain widely practiced because they have long been embedded in local cultural traditions.

“Karena pengobatan tradisional itu udah tradisi dari kampung saya... dari turun-temurun.” (Patient informant, S)

The strong cultural attachment to ethnomedicine practices represents a major strength in maintaining the continuity of traditional knowledge. From a tourism perspective, such cultural authenticity also provides potential for development as cultural tourism, educational tourism, and wellness-oriented tourism experiences rooted in local traditions.

Weaknesses

Despite their cultural significance, ethnomedicine practices in Sebelat Village face several challenges, particularly due to the increasing influence of modern healthcare systems.

One of the main challenges is the declining interest among younger generations in learning and continuing traditional healing knowledge.

“Anak-anak mudok lah dok maok nuntut agek ilmu ni... kadong lah umah sakit lah beso medis lah.” (Traditional healer, DS)

This statement indicates that younger generations tend to rely more on modern healthcare services rather than traditional healing practices.

Another challenge arises from the tension between traditional healing practices and biomedical approaches. Local government officials acknowledged that community members sometimes prioritize traditional treatment before seeking modern medical care.

“Kalau demam langsung bawa puskesmas aje... sedangkan kite di masyarakat midai ni demam bukan cari obat dulu pasti tetas dulu.” (Sub-district government informant)

This situation illustrates the coexistence of two healthcare systems within the community: traditional healing and modern medicine. While both systems continue to function, differences in perspectives regarding treatment approaches may create challenges in integrating traditional practices within broader healthcare frameworks.

In addition, limited tourism infrastructure also presents a weakness in the development of ethnomedicine-based tourism.

“Penginapan kite kadang terbatas... transportasi kite menggunakan pompong kurang lebih 6 jam.” (Village head)

Limited accommodation facilities and relatively difficult transportation access may restrict the ability of tourists to visit the area.

Opportunities

Despite these challenges, several opportunities exist for developing ethnomedicine-based tourism in Sebelat Village.

Some traditional healing practices, such as *betangas*, traditional massage, and herbal treatments, provide relaxation and wellness experiences valued by the community. A traditional healer described the *betangas* process, which involves a traditional herbal steam bath using boiled leaves.

“Betangas tok pakai ramu daun daun... direbus, abis tadek kite sungkup pakai tikar... ngelua peloh kite yang kuto.” (Traditional healer, T)

This practice resembles modern spa treatments that aim to detoxify the body through sweating. Therefore, *betangas* has potential to be developed as part of wellness tourism activities.

Another traditional healer also explained the positive effects experienced after undergoing *betangas* and traditional body scrubs.

“Setelah betangas dan luluran ase de nyaman, kulit lebeh halus, lebih percaya diri gok.” (Traditional healer, M)

This statement indicates that traditional treatments provide not only physical relaxation but also psychological comfort and improved self-confidence. These characteristics align closely with the concept of wellness tourism, which emphasizes holistic well-being.

In addition, traditional body treatments such as herbal scrubs are also practiced within the community.

“Ade luluran batang lange tok, ade bekasai untuk buang daki dekat kulit... abis tok baru luluran untuk ngalus kulit.” (Community informant, M)

Such treatments can be integrated into cultural wellness tourism experiences that highlight local herbal knowledge and traditional self-care practices.

Support for developing ethnomedicine as a tourism attraction also comes from community members and traditional healers. One community informant expressed that the tradition deserves to be introduced to tourists.

“Layak dong pasti... biar orang luar tau kalau dikampung saya tu ada tradisi ini.” (Patient informant, S)

A similar view was expressed by a traditional healer who stated that introducing traditional healing practices to wider audiences would not be problematic.

“Dak jadi masalah ape lah salah de mengenalkan pengobatan tradisional kite ni ke masyarakat umum.” (Traditional healer, T)

Support also comes from the local government. The subdistrict head emphasized that traditional healing practices could be developed through community empowerment and the formation of healer groups.

“Peluang de yang penting kite sumber daya de kite support lah kan Tabib Tabib tadi... buat komunitas, buat kelompok mungkin setiap bulan de perlu ade pelatihan de” (Subdistrict government informant)

These statements indicate that both community members and local authorities recognize the potential of ethnomedicine to be developed as part of cultural and wellness tourism.

Threats

Despite the potential opportunities, several threats may affect the sustainability of ethnomedicine practices in Sebelat Village. These threats can be classified into internal and external factors that influence the continuity of traditional healing knowledge.

Internal threats

One of the most significant internal threats is the decreasing number of traditional healers and the limited regeneration among younger generations. As explained by one traditional healer:

“Anak-anak mudok lah dok maok nuntut agek ilmu ni... kadong lah umah sakit lah beso medis lah.” (Traditional healer, DS)

This statement reflects the shifting attitudes of younger generations who increasingly rely on modern healthcare services rather than traditional healing knowledge. In addition, several community members explained that certain traditional treat-

ments are now rarely practiced by younger generations and are often associated with older people.

“*Tok biase urang urang tue dulok betangas dan luluran tok, de kan bau de identik same orang tua, jadi anak anak kini tok lah jarang pakai cam tok tok.*” (Community informant, MKP)

These findings indicate a generational shift in cultural practices, where younger community members are less familiar with traditional treatments that were once commonly practiced.

External threats

External threats mainly arise from the growing dominance of modern healthcare systems and institutional influences. A government informant explained that the number of traditional healers is gradually declining as community members increasingly prefer biomedical treatment.

“*Tabib-tabib kite makin hari makin berkurang karena generasi kite sekarang tu tak mau de pakai tetas-tetas lagi.*” (Subdistrict government informant)

Another challenge arises from the increasing influence of modern healthcare services. Many people now prefer seeking treatment at hospitals or health centers before considering *traditional healing*.

“*Kadang orang puskesmas ni komplenn dengan adenye tetas-tetas itu... kalau dapat bawak ke rumah sakit dulu.*” (Subdistrict government informant)

If this trend continues without efforts to preserve and document traditional knowledge, ethnomedicine practices in Sebelat Village may gradually decline in the future.

Community Perspectives on Ethnomedicine and Its Integration into Tourism

The findings indicate that ethnomedicine practices in Desa Sebelat hold potential not only as traditional healing methods but also as educational cultural tourism attractions. Practices such as *bete-tas*, *param*, *bajong*, *kecundoi*, *herbal drinks (jamu)*, and *aek tawa* are commonly used by community members when seeking treatment for certain health conditions. In addition, the community practices several traditional body treatments, in-

cluding *betangas*, body scrubs (*luluran*), traditional massage, and *bekasai*, which are associated with relaxation and body care. The community also maintains the cultural tradition of *sekapur sirih*, a welcoming ritual in which betel leaves are presented to guests and typically accompanied by the persembahan dance as a symbol of respect between hosts and visitors. These practices have been passed down through generations and remain widely recognized across Pulau Midai, forming an important part of local cultural identity.

From the perspective of community members and traditional healers, introducing these practices to visitors is generally considered acceptable as long as their cultural meaning and authenticity are respected. As one traditional healer explained:

“*Dak jadi masalah ape lah salah de mengenalkan pengobatan tradisional kite ni ke masyarakat umum.*” (Traditional healer, T)

In this context, education-based cultural tourism refers to tourism activities that allow visitors to learn about local knowledge systems related to traditional healing practices, the use of natural ingredients, and the cultural meanings embedded within these traditions. Cultural traditions such as *sekapur sirih*, accompanied by the persembahan dance, may also be integrated into cultural tourism that introduces the values of hospitality and respect within the Midai community. This perspective aligns with the concept of ethnotourism proposed by Yang, (2011), which positions local cultural expressions as central elements of tourist experiences while supporting the preservation of traditional knowledge within the community.

IFAS and EFAS Matrix Analysis

Table 2. IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary)

Strengths	Weight	Rating	Score
Patient and community trust in ethnomedicine remains strong	0,125	4	0,5
A tradition passed down from parents through generations	0,125	4	0,5
Experienced healer	0,125	3	0,375
Support from healers for tourism development	0,125	3	0,375

Weakness	Weight	Rating	Score
Healer regeneration crisis (younger generations are reluctant to continue the tradition)	0,125	2	0,25
Limited number of healers	0,125	2	0,25
The village does not yet have a specific program	0,125	2	0,25
Community acceptance is still divided (50-50)	0,125	2	0,25

Source : Researcher, 2025

Table 3. EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary)

Opportunities	Weight	Rating	Score
Support from sub-district	0,111	4	0,444
Potential for forming a healer community training	0,111	3	0,333
The growing trend of wellness and cultural tourism	0,111	4	0,444
Sea travel can be developed as a marine tourism attraction	0,111	3	0,333

Source : Researcher, 2025

Threats	Weight	Rating	Score
Differences in healers' perspectives (sacred vs tourism)	0,111	2	0,222
The ancestral origin of healer knowledge (passed down through generations)	0,111	2	0,222
The dominance of modern medicine	0,111	2	0,222
Limited infrastructure (communication networks and tourism facilities)	0,111	2	0,222
Dependence on external funding	0,111	2	0,222

Source : Researcher, 2025

Interpretation of IFAS and EFAS

Based on the results of the IFAS matrix, which includes both strengths and weaknesses, the total score obtained is 2.75, indicating that internally Desa Sebelat has relatively strong conditions to support the development of ethnomedicine-based tourism. The main strengths lie in the strong trust of patients and the community in ethnomedicine practices, the continuity of traditions passed down through generations, and the experience of traditional healers who still actively provide treatment to local residents. In addition, the support of traditional healers for tourism development further strengthens the internal potential of the village. These factors indicate that ethnomedicine practices remain strongly embedded in the local culture and can serve as an authentic foundation for tourism development. However, several weaknesses remain significant, particularly the limited regeneration of healers, the declining interest of younger generations in learning traditional knowledge, and the absence of village programs specifically supporting ethnomedicine-based tourism.

Meanwhile, the EFAS matrix, which consists of opportunities and threats, shows a total score of 2.664, indicating that external conditions provide relatively open opportunities for development. Several external factors that may support the integration of ethnomedicine into tourism include support from the sub-district government, the potential formation of healer communities or training programs, and the growing global trend of wellness and cultural tourism. In addition, the sea journey to Pulau Midai may offer a unique tourism experience as part of marine tourism activities. However, several threats must also be considered, such as the dominance of modern medical treatment, differences in perspectives among healers regarding the sacred nature of traditional practices when associated with tourism, and limited tourism infrastructure and communication networks. These challenges may affect both the sustainability of ethnomedicine practices and the feasibility of tourism development if they are not properly managed.

Overall, the IFAS and EFAS results indicate that ethnomedicine practices in Desa Sebelat are supported by relatively strong internal cultural resources and moderately open external opportunities. Based on the IFAS and EFAS analysis, ethnomedicine-based tourism development in Sebelat Village is positioned in the SO (Strength-Opportunity) quadrant, indicating that development should prioritize leveraging internal cultural strengths to capitalize on emerging tourism opportunities. This

position supports a proactive strategy that emphasizes the development of ethnomedicine-based tourism through community empowerment and cultural preservation.

In this context, ethnomedicine functions not only as a traditional healing system but also as a form of intangible cultural heritage that reflects local knowledge, community identity, and traditional health practices. Therefore, the appropriate development direction is to strengthen existing cultural resources while gradually addressing structural limitations, particularly through community empowerment, the regeneration of traditional healers, and the development of small-scale cultural and wellness tourism initiatives that maintain the authenticity of local traditions. This indicates that the village has strong internal potential supported by relatively favorable external opportunities. Therefore, the appropriate strategic direction is an aggressive strategy that utilizes existing strengths to maximize available opportunities, particularly in developing ethnomedicine-based tourism.

The IFAS and EFAS matrices do not merely summarize internal and external conditions, but function as analytical tools that reveal the structural

position of ethnomedicine within the tourism development context. The dominance of strengths related to cultural continuity and community trust indicates that ethnomedicine is not only socially embedded but also viable as a tourism resource. However, lower scores in regeneration and infrastructure highlight vulnerabilities that may hinder long-term sustainability. Furthermore, the EFAS results show that external opportunities, such as the global wellness tourism trend, depend on the community's capacity to manage cultural transformation. This suggests that ethnomedicine-based tourism development requires careful alignment between cultural preservation and tourism commodification.

Therefore, the IFAS–EFAS analysis indicates that ethnomedicine in Desa Sebelat is positioned within a condition of “cultural strength but structural limitation”, requiring a gradual and community-centered development approach rather than rapid commercialization. Based on these results, a SWOT matrix was developed to formulate strategic directions for integrating ethnomedicine into sustainable tourism development in Desa Sebelat.

Formulation of the SWOT of Sebelat Village

Table 4. SWOT Matrix

Criteria	Strategy Formulation
S-O	The strong trust of the community in ethnomedicine practices and the experience of traditional healers can be utilized to develop ethnomedicine as a cultural and wellness tourism attraction. Support from the village and sub-district governments, along with the growing global trend of wellness and cultural tourism, provides opportunities to introduce traditional healing practices such as <i>betetas</i> , <i>betangas</i> , massage, and herbal treatments as part of educational and experiential tourism activities. In addition, the sea journey to Pulau Midai can be integrated as a marine tourism experience that strengthens the uniqueness of the destination.
W-O	The weaknesses related to the limited number of healers and the declining interest of younger generations can be addressed through a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) approach. CBT can support the preservation of ethnomedicine practices while strengthening community participation in tourism development (Bumyut et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2025). The formation of healer communities or training programs can also facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge to younger generations and strengthen local capacity in developing ethnomedicine-based tourism (Liu et al., 2025).
S-T	The strong cultural attachment of the community to ethnomedicine practices can be utilized to maintain the relevance of traditional healing amid the increasing dominance of modern medical services. By positioning ethnomedicine as a cultural heritage and educational tourism attraction, these practices can gain broader recognition while maintaining their authenticity and cultural meaning.
W-T	Collaboration between the village government, traditional healers, and the local community is essential to address the weaknesses and threats affecting the sustainability of ethnomedicine practices. Efforts such as documentation of traditional knowledge, regeneration of healers, and the development of small-scale cultural and wellness tourism initiatives can help reduce the risk of knowledge loss and strengthen the long-term preservation of ethnomedicine in Desa Sebelat.

Source : Researcher, 2025

To further interpret the strategic implications, the SWOT results can be analyzed as follows:

The dominance of SO strategies indicates that the development pathway is primarily driven by internal cultural strengths that can be leveraged to respond to external tourism trends. However, the presence of WO and WT strategies highlights that ethnomedicine development is constrained by structural and generational challenges. This finding reinforces the argument that tourism development cannot be separated from community capacity building. In this context, ethnomedicine-based tourism should not be positioned as a fully commercial product, but rather as a gradual socio-cultural innovation that evolves through local participation. Moreover, the SWOT results demonstrate that the sustainability of ethnomedicine is not only dependent on tourism demand, but also on the ability of local actors to negotiate between cultural preservation and external economic pressures.

Ethnomedicine Practices and Their Implications for Sustainable Tourism

From a tourism perspective, ethnomedicine practices in Desa Sebelat represent important cultural resources that can support sustainable tourism development. Traditional body care practices such as *betangas*, traditional massage, *luluran*, and *bekasai* can be positioned within wellness tourism, as they emphasize relaxation, body cleansing, and well-being through natural ingredients and traditional techniques. These practices reflect local knowledge related to body care and are suitable to be developed as authentic wellness experiences. Compared to destinations such as Bali and Lombok, where traditional healing practices such as *melukat* and *usada* have been integrated into structured wellness tourism experiences, and where traditional healing is also associated with halal tourism and wellness services, ethnomedicine in Sebelat remains community-based and embedded in daily cultural life. This condition presents both challenges and opportunities for developing more authentic and community-driven tourism experiences. In addition, healing practices such as *betetas*, *param*, *bajong*, *kecundoi*, *jamu-jamu*, and *aek tawa* are closely related to the community's traditional health system and can be positioned within health and educational tourism. These practices allow visitors to learn about traditional healing methods, the use of natural materials, and cultural meanings related to health and well-being. Cultural traditions such as *sekapur sirih* also contribute to cul-

tural tourism by reflecting values of hospitality and social interaction within the Midai community. In practical terms, ethnomedicine-based tourism in Sebelat Village can be developed through activity-based programs, including guided demonstrations of traditional healing practices (e.g., *betetas* and *betangas*), educational sessions on herbal preparation, and storytelling about local health beliefs. These activities can be integrated into small-scale tourism packages that combine ethnomedicine experiences with cultural performances, local culinary traditions, and marine tourism. This approach allows ethnomedicine to be presented as an educational and cultural experience rather than a clinical treatment, while maintaining ethical considerations, cultural sensitivity, and authenticity. However, its development remains at an early stage and requires gradual, context-sensitive implementation that considers community readiness, infrastructure limitations, and capacity building to ensure long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ethnomedicine practices in Desa Sebelat represent an important form of local cultural knowledge that reflects community-based health systems, cultural identity, and intangible cultural heritage. These practices, including traditional healing methods such as *betetas*, *param*, *bajong*, *kecundoi*, *jamu-jamu*, and *aek tawa*, as well as body care practices such as *betangas*, *luluran*, and *bekasai*, can be positioned within sustainable tourism not merely as tourism attractions, but as culturally embedded experiences that contribute to educational, cultural, and wellness tourism. The findings indicate that ethnomedicine has the potential to support sustainable tourism through small-scale and community-based approaches that emphasize cultural continuity and local participation. In this context, tourism should be understood as a complementary approach that supports the preservation of cultural practices rather than transforming them into commercial products. However, the integration of ethnomedicine into tourism development requires careful consideration. Challenges such as the risk of cultural commodification, the coexistence of traditional and modern healthcare systems, and varying levels of community readiness highlight that tourism is not inherently an appropriate solution without proper management. Therefore, its implementation must be gradual, context-sensitive, and aligned with local values and capacities. From a practical perspective, this study highlights the importance of developing activity-based tourism pro-

grams. These include guided demonstrations of traditional healing practices, educational sessions on local knowledge, and wellness-based experiences such as *betangas*, *luluran*, and *bekasai* that emphasize relaxation and body care rooted in traditional practices. These approaches can support knowledge transmission, strengthen community participation, and maintain the authenticity of ethnomedicine within the context of sustainable tourism development. This study is limited by its qualitative scope and the relatively small number of participants, which may not fully capture community perspectives. Future research is recommended to further examine the health benefits of ethnomedicine practices through scientific and interdisciplinary approaches, including empirical testing of their effectiveness, in order to strengthen their validity within a health context and to better understand their role in ethnomedicine-based tourism experiences.

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