

Urban Health and Well-being in the Age of Transformation: Exploring the Potential of Integrating Wellness Tourism with Agro Business in Anuradhapura

Lavanya Sapumohotti*,
Jeeva Wijesundara,
Minushi Polhena

Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Anuradhapura's rich cultural heritage, traditional agricultural economy, and ancient irrigation systems present a unique opportunity to merge traditional healing practices with wellness tourism. Despite these strengths, the region faces economic instability, youth outmigration, and weak institutional coordination. At the same time, tourists increasingly seek authentic, nature-based, and health-oriented experiences. This research explores how wellness tourism can be integrated with the agro-business sector in Anuradhapura to promote sustainable development and community well-being. Using a mixed-methods approach by combining literature review, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of agro-wellness precedents from India, Indonesia, and Thailand, this study identifies spatial, economic, and cultural opportunities for merging wellness and agriculture. By leveraging Anuradhapura's serene environment, spiritual heritage, and agro-climatic advantages, the research highlights opportunities for wellness farm stays, agro-therapy, and holistic visitor experiences that revitalize the rural economy while preserving ecological and cultural integrity. It contributes to broader discussions on tourism diversification, community empowerment, and sustainable regional development.

Keywords: Agri business, Wellness tourism, Urban Health and Wellness, Anuradhapura.

* Corresponding Author: W. Lavanya Geema Sapumohotti;
E-mail- lavasapumohotti@gmail.com

Introduction

Anuradhapura, a culturally and agriculturally rich district in tourism, this project would be finding the potential of how wellness tourism can be successfully incorporated into agribusiness. However, there is increasing potential to enhance these cultural attractions with wellness related products that capitalize on the area's agricultural heritage, natural environment and traditional healing systems especially 'hela wedakama'. This study explores how wellness-oriented activities such as meditation, herbal therapy, and farm-to-table dining can be strategically incorporated into agricultural landscapes to benefit both the local and visiting communities. The aim is to develop a design framework that connects wellness practices and agri-spatial planning, enhancing community well-being and sustainable rural tourism.

Hippocrates often credited with the statement, "*Nature itself is the best physician*" (Hippocrates, as cited in Jones, 1923) This principle resonates today, as travelers seek authentic, nature-based experiences to counter urban stress. By aligning architecture, landscape, and agricultural design, Anuradhapura can offer immersive wellness experiences where visitors engage, heal, and reconnect with nature and tradition.

Architecture and planning play an important role in shaping how people feel in space. Just as buildings influence our daily routines and emotions, the design of landscapes and agricultural spaces can also promote healing and connection. Integrating wellness focused experiences like meditation areas, herbal gardens, Ayurvedic treatments, and farm-to-table dining into agro-tourism environments allows for a more holistic approach to rural development.



Fig .1: Nature and architecture

Source: <https://moss.amsterdam/2019/12/19/between-nature-and-architecture-is-art/>

By examining case studies, conducting interviews, and engaging stakeholders, the research helps understand the needs of farmers, tourists and other stakeholders. The goal is to propose a sustainable development strategy that not only strengthens the agri-business sector in Anuradhapura but also enhances the overall well-being of everyone involved.

Background and Context

In the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, the country's most historical and culturally rich city Anuradhapura was established in the 4th century BC by King Pandukabhaya. It remained as the political and religious heart of the island until the 11th century CE. It was the island's initial capital, and as of now the city is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

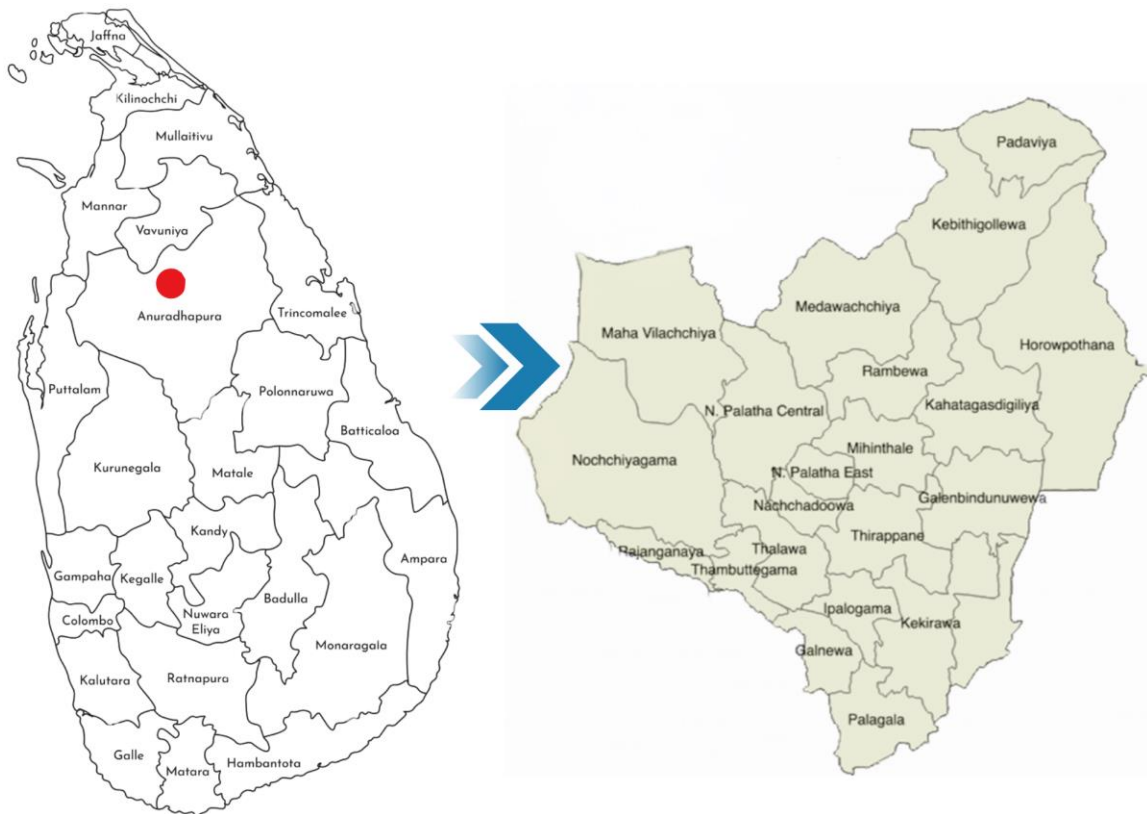


Fig.2: Map of Anuradhapura
Source: Created by Author

The district lies within the dry zone, sustained by one of the world's oldest irrigation systems, featuring man-made tanks and reservoirs that support extensive paddy and horticultural cultivation. Despite this agricultural and cultural richness, Anuradhapura continues to face socioeconomic challenges, including low market access, technological lag, and limited diversification in tourism. These challenges highlight the need for integrated development approaches that merge agriculture, culture, and wellness tourism transforming traditional livelihoods into sustainable, experience-based economies.

Research Problem Statement

Rural communities in Anuradhapura, despite their deep agricultural roots and rich cultural heritage, face complex intervening's of socioeconomic and infrastructural challenges that hinder sustainable development. Interviews with farmers, residents, traditional healers, and tourists reveal that agriculture remains the backbone of rural life, yet it offers limited and seasonal income, leading to economic insecurity and underemployment during off seasons. Young generations are leaving rural areas for cities at a greater rate because they believe there are no opportunities in rural areas. This explains depopulation in rural areas, the loss of native knowledge systems, and growing isolation of youth from their cultural and natural heritage.

Furthermore, poor market access, resource constraints, and inadequate infrastructure hinder the growth of organic and sustainable agriculture. Despite the region's potential and growing global demand for wellness and authentic rural experiences, the tourism sector in Anuradhapura remains underdeveloped and poorly coordinated. Institutional fragmentation among the agriculture, health, and tourism sectors further limits integrated rural development. Traditional healing systems such as '*Hela Wedakama*', though culturally significant, lack formal recognition

and policy support. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore strategies that integrate wellness tourism with agro-business to foster sustainable rural development, community well-being, and diversified tourist activities in Anuradhapura.

Research Questions

- What are the spatial and cultural characteristics of agri-business environments in Anuradhapura that support wellness tourism integration?
- How can wellness principles of healing, mindfulness, and nature-based experiences be adapted to rural agricultural context like Anuradhapura?
- What spatial and design strategies can facilitate wellness agriculture synergy?
- How do the stakeholders perceive and value the integration of agriculture into wellness?
- What are the potential economic and community benefits?

Research Objectives

- To analyze the current role and challenges of agri-business in Anuradhapura's rural economy.
- To identify key principles and global trends in wellness tourism relevant to rural Sri Lankan contexts.
- To study successful agro-tourism and wellness tourism integrations by analyzing local and international precedent studies.
- To assess spatial, cultural, and economic potentials for implementing wellness-agriculture synergies in Anuradhapura.
- To develop a design-based framework or strategic model for sustainable wellness tourism within agro-based landscapes.

Literature review

Overview of Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism emphasizes holistic well-being of physical, mental, and spiritual through practices such as yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, spa therapy, and healthy dining. It involves destinations or activities that provide an integrated approach to health with an emphasis on the body, mind, and spirit (Global wellness institute, 2023). With rising urban stress and lifestyle-related illnesses, travelers increasingly seek authentic, nature-based experiences that support relaxation and self-renewal. Globally, wellness tourism now accounts for over 10% of international tourism expenditure (GWI, 2020) and is projected to continue growing as travelers pursue meaningful, health-oriented experiences connected to local culture and ecology (Spenceley et al., 2019). Theoretically, wellness tourism aligns with sustainable and experiential travel models, where authenticity, cultural integration, and ecological sensitivity are central concepts directly applicable to Anuradhapura's rural and spiritual context.

Agri-Business in Sri Lanka

Agro-business is one of the main pillars of the Sri Lankan economy and continues to be inseparably integrated with rural livelihoods and traditional knowledge systems. In Anuradhapura, agricultural practices, from paddy and vegetables to spices and herbal cultivation, reflect centuries of ecological adaptation supported by its ancient irrigation systems. However, growth

is constrained by weak infrastructure, limited technology adoption, and fragmented market access. As Perera (2021) highlights, diversifying through agro-tourism and wellness experiences could create new economic streams by engaging visitors in sustainable farming and cultural practices. Precedent initiatives in Sri Lanka and across Asia further demonstrate how agriculture and wellness can be effectively combined to enrich tourism and community life. These range from village-based retreats like 'Ulpota' to eco-wellness estates such as 'Santani', as well as international examples like 'Fivelements' in Bali and the 'New Life Foundation' in Thailand. Together, they illustrate diverse yet complementary models where cultural practices, ecological care, and wellness experiences converge to create sustainable agro-wellness opportunities.

Ulpota, Village-Based Yoga & Ayurveda (Sri Lanka)

A seasonal Buddhist farming village offering yoga and Ayurveda retreats. Visitors live in mud huts, share vegetarian meals, and participate in farm life. 'Ulpota' demonstrates authentic agro-wellness through community engagement and low-impact living, emphasizing simplicity and spiritual grounding.



Fig.3: Ulpota- village based yoga & ayurveda retreat
Source: <https://dk.lakpura.com/pages/wellness-tourism>

Santani Wellness Resort (Sri Lanka)

Built on a former tea estate, 'Santani' integrates eco-conscious architecture, ayurveda, and organic food production, showing how luxury wellness tourism can align with environmental regeneration.



Fig.4: Santani Wellness Resort

Source: https://www.bestoflanka.com/santani_wellness_resort_and_spa.php?Id=05

Fivelements - Healing through Nature & Food (Bali, Indonesia)

Combines Balinese healing, plant-based cuisine, and regenerative farming. Its design connects the farm, kitchen, and therapy spaces, embodying a closed-loop model of nourishment and healing.

Fig.5: Fivelement Retreat, Bali: Yoga & meditation place



Source: <https://www.expedia.co.in/Abiansema-Hotels-Fivelements-Retreat-Bali.h4757593.Hotel-Information>

New Life Foundation – Recovery through Community & Agro-Work (Thailand)

A community-based recovery center combining meditation, counseling, and agro-work. It reveals how farming can serve as a therapeutic practice supporting long-term mental well-being and self-sufficiency.

Fig.6: New Life Foundation, Thailand: tourist working in field



Source: <https://www.bookyogaretreats.com/new-life-foundation-thailand>

Collectively, these precedents illustrate scalable models of wellness-agriculture integration through community participation, ecological restoration, and cultural authenticity principles applicable to Anuradhapura's rural context.

Wellness Tourism Potential in Agro-based Regions of Sri Lanka

The tourist industry in Sri Lanka demonstrates a significant growth recovering strongly from the past years challenges.

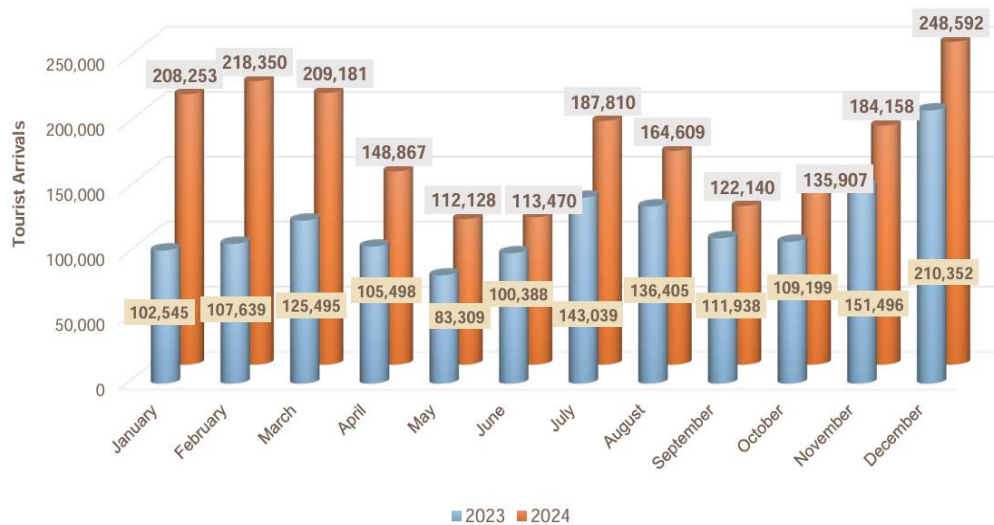


Fig. 06: Monthly arrival of tourists, 2023 & 2024

Source: Year in Review-2024 Sri Lanka by SLTDA

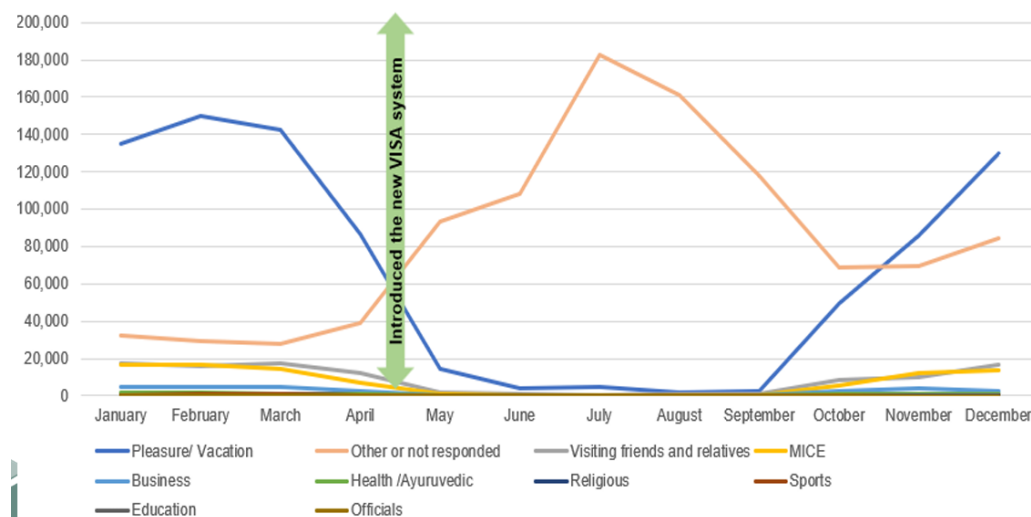


Fig.07: Tourist Arrival by Purpose of visit-2024 SLTDA

Source: Year in Review-2024 Sri Lanka by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA, 2024)

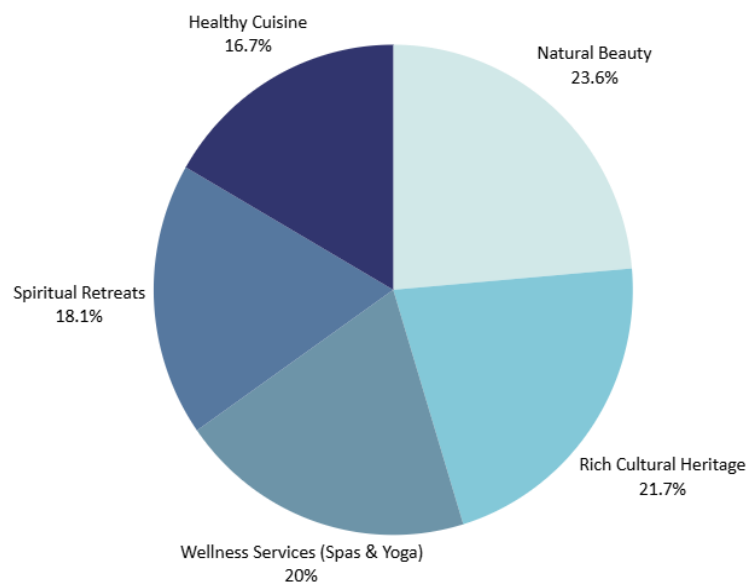


Fig.8: Preferences for Wellness Tourism Destinations

Source: Data extracted by Global Wellness Institute

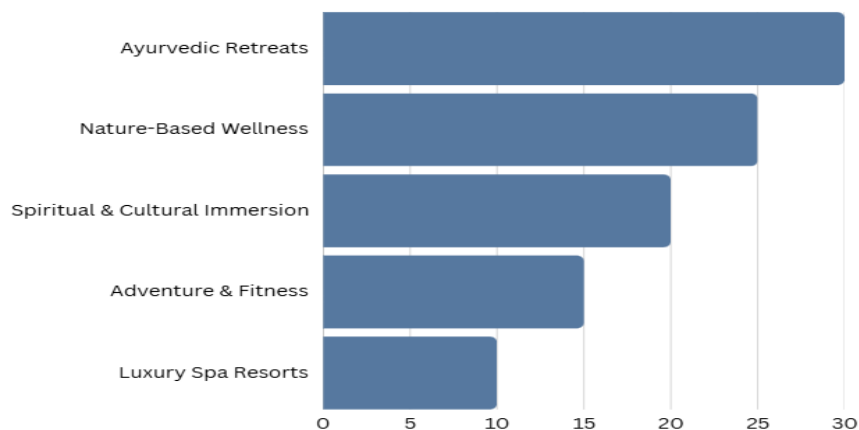


Fig.09: Preferences for Wellness Tourism Destinations for Locals

Source: Data extracted by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA, 2024), Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS, 2023)

These tendencies point to strong synergies between what wellness tourists seek and what agro-based regions in Sri Lanka can offer, especially when topped with wellness infrastructure, trained personnel, and experience design. There is great potential for agro business and wellness tourism all over the country, and the following examples can be chosen for specific regions.

Table 01: Wellness potential according to regions

Region	Wellness Potential
Anuradhapura	Spiritual wellness, Ayurvedic healing, agro-wellness
Ella & Haputale	Hiking, Mountain retreats and yoga fusion experiences
South Coast (Galle, Mirissa)	Beachfront spas, surf and wellness combo retreats
Kandy	Cultural wellness, meditation centers, herbal gardens

Source: Data extracted by Wellness Tourism Toolkit (USAID)

Among these, Anuradhapura stands out for its cultural depth and agro-ecological resources, making it ideal for wellness-agriculture integration.

As analyzed by Global wellness institute (2023), The global wellness tourism market was valued at approximately USD 850.55 billion in 2021 and is projected to surpass USD 2.1 trillion by 2030. This growth, attributed to an increasing desire for preventive health practices, stress management, and spiritual rejuvenation, especially among post-pandemic travelers. Sri Lanka's wellness tourism is emerging as a promising sub sector. Even though health and wellness currently account for only 0.8% of total tourist purposes (SLTDA, 2024), demands are rising especially among Europe, India and China.

- India: 416,974 arrivals (good demand for Ayurveda and rural experience)
- Russia: 201,920 arrivals (demand for nature, detox, and wellness)
- UK and Germany: Total 314,423 arrivals (demand for spiritual retreats and eco-tourism)

These niches manifest growing demand for destinations that provide leisure, along with rejuvenation and cultural wealth. Integrating wellness programs into agro-tourism settings provides a complex value proposition for guests and host communities alike.

Key Wellness Attractions and Resources in Anuradhapura

Table 02: Key Wellness resources in Anuradhapura

Category	Key Features & Resources
Spiritual & Cultural	Sri Maha Bodhi, Ruwanwelisaya, Mihintale, Buddhist rituals
Natural Landscapes	Paddy fields, tanks (Tissa Wewa, Nuwara Wewa), forest areas
Healing Traditions	Indigenous healers, herbal medicine gardens, Ayurvedic clinics
Culinary & Agriculture	Organic farms, farm-to-table meals, traditional healthy cuisine
Community Experiences	Rural homestays, rituals, agro-ecotourism, volunteer programs

Source: Data extracted by SLTDA (2024), EDB (2022), GWI (2023), EI (2023)

The intersection of spirituality, landscape, and traditional medicine provides a foundation for a locally grounded wellness framework in Anuradhapura. Across the world, there are places where the integration of agriculture, community wellness, and experiential learning has been achieved in ways that offer valuable insights. In this study, a few examples are examined to understand how different regions have successfully brought these elements together.

Navdanya Earth University – Dehradun, India

Navdanya, or Earth University, is an Indian farmers' movement that combines seed saving, organic agriculture, and learning by experience into a single system. Established in 1987 by environment activist Vandana Shiva. It has become a meeting point for agro-ecology, learning, and community wellness. Located in the Doon Valley of Uttarakhand, the site is an organic farm, biodiversity conservation center, seed bank, and educational campus (Navdanya, 2024). Learners and visitors

directly engage with the practice of farming through demonstration plots, organic fields, seed-saving projects, and residential workshops, so the farm acts as a "living classroom".



Fig.7: Locals and visitors working on farm

Source: <https://blog.nangu.eco/navdanya-biodiversity-heroes-of-india/>

Culturally, it builds on India's indigenous agro-ecological traditions, specifically community seed-exchange and growing of local crop varieties, hence enhancing farmer identity and traditional knowledge and building authentic learning spaces. Navdanya's strength is that it can connect education with agri-business in a direct line, what one learns in school and does in the fields is at the same time present in the products put on the market with an ensuing sustainable synergy between well-being, agriculture, and empowerment of the community.



Fig.8: Navdanya earth university

Source: <https://www.navdanya.org/2017-03-29-08-02-10/biodiversity-based-organic-farming>

Bali silent retreat – Indonesia

An eco-sanctuary located in the rice terrace landscape in Bali, integrating wellness practices and agricultural ecology. The sanctuary offers tourists to be one with nature. Its wellness philosophy is based on the seasonal cycles of rice cultivation, whereby visitors become immersed in the

agrarian setting through meditative walks among terraced fields and rice-view accommodation (Bali Silent Retreat, 2024). Spatially, the retreat also has a minimal built footprint, with minimal-impact structures and pathways that guide visitors through rice terraces and forests. Guest rooms and meditation pavilions are oriented towards the rice-field, so that the farming landscape itself can become the primary wellness amenity. Economically, the retreat emphasizes experiential value over product sales, promoting the silent and nature-immersive setting as its primary product. Culturally, it draws strength from its strong association with Balinese rice-terrace traditions and community farming practices, which provide authenticity and contextual relevance. The success of this space lies in its ability to transform the existing agricultural setting into the core wellness asset, achieving sustainable operations with low infrastructure investment, but delivering high value. (Bali Silent Retreat, 2024).



Fig. 9: Bali silent retreat – Indonesia

Source: <https://www.balisilentretreat.com/accommodation/>

Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary, Thailand

Kamalaya is a wellness retreat on Koh Samui Island, Thailand, that most accurately captures the integration of wellness programming with agro-ecological and cultural resources. It was initially designed as an upscale retreat, and to combine clinical-type wellness therapy from detox to stress management to integrative health consultations with use of on-campus gardens and farm-to-table dining. This approach combines traditional Asian healing systems with Western medical modalities to produce a culturally embedded but worldwide marketable holistic wellness products (Kamalaya, 2024).

Kamalaya is thoughtfully zoned. Restaurants and gardens are physically connected to wellness pavilions and treatment facilities, enabling visitors to directly feel the physical link between cultivation, cuisine, and healing practice. The retreat is divided into distinct areas for public retreat activities, one-to-one consultations, and healing landscapes, balancing the clinical relevance with experiential natural environments. Economically, it operates in the luxury wellness travel market, generating high revenues from high-spending packages while keeping expenses down and maximizing brand presence through the creation and use of its own crops. It is combined with Thai healing and Ayurveda creating a blend for wellness that taps both expenses down and

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Fig.10: Kamalaya, Thailand

Source: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/travel/2025/01/09/wellness-travel-thailand-kamalaya-retreat/>

Remark: Integrating Wellness and Agri-Business in Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura, a former capital of Sri Lanka, offers excellent possibilities to integrate wellness tourism with agri-business. Its cultural landscape is strongly rooted in Buddhist spirituality, meditation, and monastic culture, already attracts pilgrims and health-conscious tourists. Coupled with this spiritual heritage, the region's abundance of medicinal flora and strong traditions of indigenous medicine, in particular Ayurveda and Hela Wedakama, position it as an ideal place for authentic wellness experiences related to healing and agriculture.

The region's agro ecosystems, including paddy cultivation, tank-based irrigation systems, and medicinal plants, provide a strong foundation for agro-wellness activities. Farm-to-table dining, herbal garden walks, Ayurvedic treatment, and community-based agro-tourism are a few of the possibilities. Drawing from precedents such as Navdanya (India), Bali Silent Retreat (Indonesia), and Kamalaya (Thailand), Anuradhapura can adopt design-led models that integrate spatial planning, community wellness, and ecological design. However, current development remains fragmented, with limited coordination between agriculture, wellness, and tourism sectors. This research identifies a critical gap in cross-sector integration and proposes a context-specific, design-based framework to support sustainable rural development, community health, and cultural resilience.

Research Method

The research method combines qualitative, case study-based approach in constructing a holistic conceptual framework for integrating wellness tourism into agri-business. The study combines field interviews, literature review, and comparative case analysis to obtain a multi-dimensional understanding of the topic. Field interviews were conducted with 17 participants, including 6 local farmers, 4 'Hela Wedakama' practitioners, 4 local tourists, and 3 foreign tourists, to represent the perspectives of both primary producers and consumers of wellness-agri experiences. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly engaged with agriculture, tourism, or traditional healing practices. The literature review synthesized secondary data from academic studies, policy reports, and tourism development frameworks to establish theoretical foundations on agri-business, wellness tourism, and rural sustainability.

In addition, five international and regional case studies from India, Indonesia, and Thailand were analyzed to identify functional frameworks, spatial strategies, and community engagement models that successfully integrate agriculture and wellness. Data from these precedents were examined systematically to recognize recurring themes and adaptable strategies relevant to Anuradhapura's socio-cultural and environmental context. The study is limited by the small qualitative sample size and the subjective nature of stakeholder perspectives, which may not represent the entire population. Access to quantitative economic data was also restricted. It is assumed that stakeholder opinions reflect broader community attitudes and that selected case studies are contextually transferable to Anuradhapura's setting. This mixed-methods integration of field data, literature, and case evidence ensures a grounded yet adaptable framework for developing sustainable wellness-agri models.

Analysis and Discussion

The integration of wellness tourism and agro-business in Anuradhapura presents both opportunities and challenges rooted in its cultural depth, agricultural diversity, and climatic constraints. Situated in Sri Lanka's Dry Zone with a tropical monsoon climate defined by high mean temperatures of 27–30°C and severe dry seasons with intermissions due to the north-east monsoon rains. These climatic factors directly influence both agricultural cycles and wellness experiences, underscoring the need for adaptive design solutions. The region's ancient tank-based irrigation system (wewa) demonstrates an early model of climate adaptation, a precedent that can inform water-sensitive and restorative landscape design today. However, extended heat exposure limits outdoor wellness activities, suggesting the necessity of passive cooling design, shaded courtyards, and integrated water elements as architectural responses.

Table 03: Climatic Impacts and Design Responses in Agro-Wellness Integration

Priority	Intervention	Description	Expected Impact
Short-Term (1–2 years)	Climate-sensitive spatial design	Incorporate passive cooling, shaded pavilions, and water-retentive landscaping	Enhances visitor comfort; reduces energy demand
Medium-Term (3–5 years)	Community capacity building	Train farmers and women’s groups in agro-wellness hospitality and herbal production	Strengthens local participation and income diversity
Medium-Term (3–5 years)	Seasonal programming	Align wellness activities with agro-ecological rhythms (harvest yoga retreats, planting rituals)	Synchronizes tourism with agricultural cycles
Long-Term (5–10 years)	Integrated wellness-agro network	Develop linked wellness circuits across tanks, farms, and heritage sites	Establishes Anuradhapura as a model agro-wellness destination
Continuous	Water management revival	Restore ancient tank systems as functional, aesthetic, and educational features	Reinforce sustainability and heritage preservation

Source: Adapted from Department of Meteorology (2024); Weerasinghe & Ranasinghe (2020); Gunawardena (2019); GWI (2023); Author’s field observations (2025).

Anuradhapura’s spiritual legacy as the ancient Buddhist capital further enhances its potential for wellness-agro integration. Its rituals, meditation practices, and healing traditions naturally align with wellness tourism trends favoring authenticity over commercial spa models. The existing agricultural landscape paddy, chena, and herbal cultivation creates opportunities for immersive agro-wellness programs such as guided farm walks, seasonal harvesting, and herbal therapy sessions. Moreover, the presence of local Ayurvedic knowledge and Hela Wedakama practitioners adds a vital human dimension that can differentiate Anuradhapura’s wellness offerings from imported spa cultures. The steady flow of pilgrims provides a baseline tourist market, which can be diversified through cross-programming that links cultural pilgrimage with rejuvenation retreats. Despite these positive attributes, there are some challenges.

Table 04: Challenges, Impact Assessment, and Recommended Interventions

Challenge	Impact Severity (1–5)	Description	Strategic Response / Intervention
Climatic stress	5	Heat limits wellness participation	Apply climate-responsive design; schedule activities seasonally
Inadequate rural infrastructure	4	Restricts visitor accommodation	Promote eco-lodge and retreat investment
Limited wellness market awareness	3	Pilgrims unaware of wellness potential	Awareness campaigns; cross-marketing with religious tourism
Cultural dissonance near sacred sites	4	Risk of commercialization	Zoning controls; stakeholder consultations
Inequitable benefit sharing	5	Excludes farmers/herbalists	Cooperative models; fair-trade pricing
Water resource stress	4	Over-use of irrigation tanks	Integrate wewa rehabilitation; water metering

Source: Compiled from SLTDA (2024); IPS (2023); Perera (2021); Spenceley & Meyer (2019); Author's field analysis (2025)

While Bali focuses on eco-landscape immersion and Kamalaya emphasizes clinical wellness, Anuradhapura's strength is its synthesis of cultural authenticity and agricultural resilience. This comparison reveals a strategic opportunity to position Anuradhapura as a spiritually grounded wellness-agro destination rather than a commodified spa cluster. To ensure that such integration is functional, several strategies can be suggested.

Table 05: Prioritized Strategic and Design Recommendations

Timeframe	Key Intervention	Description / Example	Lead Stakeholders	Expected Outcome
Short-Term (1–2 yrs)	Climate-sensitive architecture	Shaded pavilions, natural ventilation	Architects + Local councils	Immediate comfort; low-energy model
Medium-Term (3–5 yrs)	Community training & co-ops	Farmers trained in agro-wellness hospitality	NGOs + Tourism Board	Employment diversification
Medium-Term (3–5 yrs)	Seasonal programming	Yoga at harvest; herbal workshops at planting	Tourism Dept + Wellness operators	Year-round visitation
Long-Term (5–10 yrs)	Integrated wellness circuits	Network of farms, tanks, temples	Urban planners + Investors	Regional branding; sustained economy
Continuous	Revive ancient tanks	Dual use for water & therapy	Irrigation Dept + Designers	Ecological & cultural resilience

Source: Author's conceptual framework (2025), synthesized from GWI (2023); Perera (2021); Jayasuriya & Senanayake (2022).

Potential limitations should still be considered. There may be a heavy upfront cost of capital investment to build infrastructure, and the Sri Lankan agro-wellness tourism market remains relatively underdeveloped compared to the rest of Asia. Cultural sensitivity is vital since wellness settings must respect the spiritual ambiance of Anuradhapura without reducing it to a commodified environment. Besides this, long-term economic sustainability of such projects will rely on a delicate balance between high-quality visitor experiences and reasonably exciting local communities. Anuradhapura's potential as a model agro-wellness region lies in strategically aligning climate-responsive design, spiritual heritage, and agricultural identity. Through prioritized interventions, equitable community engagement, and respect for local ecology, it can emerge as a context-specific framework for wellness tourism integration enhancing visitor wellbeing while revitalizing rural economies and preserving traditional wisdom.

Conclusion

Using the findings of previous studies and Anuradhapura's environmental and socio-cultural conditions, this research establishes a strategic framework for integrating wellness tourism into the region's agri-business sector. The framework adopts an interconnected, multi-dimensional approach that unites spatial planning, cultural identity, ecological sustainability, and economic viability within a single development vision. Spatially, the plan proposes zoning the landscape into activity clusters that balance production, health, and culture. For instance, paddy fields, fruit orchards, and herbal gardens can double as experiential wellness zones hosting yoga, meditation walks, Ayurvedic healing, and farm-to-table dining, thereby merging productivity with recreation and therapy.

Culturally, the model emphasizes reinterpreting Anuradhapura's monastic healing and spiritual traditions within modern wellness narratives. Integrating local rituals, Ayurvedic knowledge, and temple-based mindfulness practices ensure that wellness tourism remains authentic and community-driven, rather than externally imposed. Economically, the framework calls for diversification through multi-sectoral income streams, combining farm outputs, value-added agro-products, and wellness-based services such as retreats, workshops, and agro-therapy programs. This reduces vulnerability to seasonal fluctuations in agriculture or tourism while strengthening local entrepreneurship. Environmentally, the strategy advocates for climate-resilient design and adaptive infrastructure, incorporating rainwater harvesting, shaded meditation pavilions, green roofs, and regenerative farming. These interventions enhance sustainability and appeal to the growing global market for ecologically responsible destinations.

To improve implementation feasibility, the framework introduces a phased action plan:

Phase 1 – Pilot Development: Launch a small-scale agro-wellness demonstration site focusing on one or two integrated farms to test visitor engagement, community readiness, and infrastructure needs.

Phase 2 – Capacity Building and Scaling: Train local farmers, youth, and Ayurvedic practitioners in wellness hospitality, business management, and marketing; expand the model to multiple clusters.

Phase 3 – Institutional Integration: Collaborate with government, tourism boards, and NGOs to formalize policies supporting agro-wellness linkages, branding, and certification.

Potential barriers include infrastructural constraints, limited community awareness, and risks of over-commercialization. However, these can be mitigated through participatory planning, continuous community consultation, and adaptive monitoring to ensure cultural integrity and equitable benefits.

Ultimately, this strategic framework envisions Anuradhapura as a prototype of agro-wellness convergence, where agriculture is celebrated as an essential component of well-being. By fusing spiritual heritage, Ayurvedic healing, ecological stewardship, and local livelihoods, the model provides a replicable pathway for sustainable rural development offering both design direction and policy guidance for similar regions across Sri Lanka and beyond.

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