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From memorable wellness tourism experiences to word of mouth: The role of hedonic well-being and rewards

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between memorable wellness tourism experiences (MWTE), rewards, hedonic well-being, and word of mouth (WOM) intentions in the context of wellness tourism. **Methodology** – Data were collected from 422 respondents through an online structured survey questionnaire and analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). **Findings** – The results indicate that MWTE positively affects hedonic well-being. A positive relationship between hedonic well-being and both one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions was also identified. The findings confirm that rewards significantly moderate the relationship between MWTE and hedonic well-being, showing that the positive effect of memorable experiences on visitor hedonic well-being is stronger when rewards are perceived as more valuable. **Implications** – The theoretical contribution of this study expands the body of knowledge in consumer behaviour and enriches the understanding of the dimensions influencing wellness visitors' WOM intentions. The practical contribution is demonstrated by providing guidance to marketers and wellness service providers in designing reward-oriented marketing strategies that enhance the memorability of wellness visitors' experiences and encourage WOM intentions.

Keywords: memorable wellness tourism experience, hedonic well-being, one-to-one WOM intention, one-to-many WOM intention, rewards

JEL classification: M310

Od nezaboravnih *wellness* turističkih doživljaja do usmene preporuke: Uloga hedonističke dobrobiti i nagrada

Sažetak

Svrha – Svrha ovog istraživanja je utvrditi odnos između nezaboravnih doživljaja u *wellness* turizmu, nagrada, hedonističke dobrobiti i namjera usmene preporuke (WOM) u kontekstu *wellness* turizma. **Metodologija** – Podaci su prikupljeni od 422 ispitanika putem *online* strukturiranog anketnog upitnika te analizirani primjenom parcijalnih najmanjih kvadrata u modeliranju strukturalnih jednačina (PLS-SEM). **Rezultati** – Rezultati ukazuju na to da nezaboravni doživljaj u *wellness* turizmu pozitivno utiče na hedonističku dobrobit. Takođe je

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utvrđena pozitivna povezanost hedonističke dobrobiti s namjerom usmene preporuke jedan-prema-jedan i jedan-prema-više. Rezultati potvrđuju da nagrade značajno moderiraju odnos između nezaboravnih doživljaja u *wellness* turizmu i hedonističke dobrobiti, pokazujući da je pozitivan učinak nezaboravnih iskustava na dobrobit posjetilaca snažniji kada se nagrade percipiraju kao vrijednije. **Implikacije** – Teorijski doprinos ovog istraživanja proširuje postojeća znanja u području ponašanja potrošača te produbljuje razumijevanje dimenzija koje utiču na WOM namjere *wellness* posjetilaca. Praktični doprinos ogleda se u pružanju smjernica marketinškim stručnjacima i pružiocima *wellness* usluga za oblikovanje strategija usmjerenih na nagrade koje povećavaju nezaboravnost doživljaja posjetilaca i podstiču namjere usmene preporuke.

Ključne reči: nezaboravni *wellness* turistički doživljaj, hedonička dobrobit, jedan-prema-jedan WOM namjera, jedan-prema-više WOM namjera, nagrade

JEL klasifikacija: M310

1. Introduction

In the age of a fast-paced lifestyle, wellness tourism is becoming increasingly important as visitors seek holistic experiences that enhance their mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Wellness tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry (Dini & Pencareli, 2022; Sthapit et al., 2023). Its market size was USD 893.9 billion in 2024, and it is forecasted to reach USD 1.38 trillion by 2029 (Statista, 2026). Globally, from 2019 to 2024, the Republic of Croatia was among the ten countries with the highest annual growth rates (10.5%-11.5%) in the wellness industry (Global Wellness Institute, 2026a). It is characterised as a “high value-added” tourism segment because wellness tourists spend significantly more and demonstrate a high degree of satisfaction and loyalty to wellness services (Liu et al., 2023). In 2025, the growing adoption of wellness services among younger generations, particularly Generation Z (McKinsey & Company, 2025), was especially notable. As they prioritise mental health, sustainability, and digital transformation, they place high value on environmentally friendly products, highly personalised experiences, and holistic well-being (Subramaniam & Thuraiselvam, 2025). Among the travel trends set to define 2026, *quietcations* stand out. Travellers are increasingly combining slow travel with immersive experiences in niche destinations (Euronews, 2026), while emphasizing comfort, silence, and emotional well-being through purpose-driven journeys (Euromonitor International, 2025). Among younger generations, the trend of *glowcations*, defined as holidays that combine travel, beauty, wellness, and technology, is also notable (Euronews, 2026). From a holistic perspective, wellness tourism is fundamentally driven by the pursuit of well-being. It involves activities aimed at maintaining or improving personal health and overall quality of life (Global Wellness Institute, 2026b). Within this context, relaxation and relief, escape, health and beauty, self-reward, and enjoyment are identified as the most common motivational factors for wellness tourists (Murad et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2024). Given that wellness tourism is inherently experience-based and well-being-driven, understanding how such experiences are formed and evaluated becomes particularly important.

Within tourism research, the concept of memorable tourism experiences has received considerable attention for its role in shaping tourist satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Chen et al., 2020; Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024; Fan et al., 2023; Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Tešin et al., 2025), particularly in niche forms of tourism (Jonas et al., 2020; Lončarić et al., 2021; Nugraha et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Subramaniam et al., 2018). Memorable tourism experiences are especially relevant in wellness settings due to their strong emotional, psychological, and hedonic dimensions (Dahanayake et al., 2023;

Dahanayake et al., 2025b). However, despite their importance, this concept remains largely underexplored in the wellness tourism domain (Dahanayake et al., 2023). Much of the existing research has focused primarily on the antecedents or general outcomes of memorable tourism experiences, while less attention has been paid to the specific psychological mechanisms and behavioural consequences associated with them in this field. In particular, hedonism has been recognized as a key component of wellness tourism experiences (Dahanayake et al., 2025b), while achieving well-being is a central goal of wellness tourism (Sthapit et al., 2023). However, the integration of these concepts into behavioural intention frameworks remains limited. Existing studies have shown that wellness tourism generates complex, holistic, and deeply personal experiences that become memorable and significantly influence different types of well-being (Dahanayake et al., 2025a; Sthapit et al., 2023; Sthapit et al., 2025). They also shape future decision-making (Dahanayake et al., 2024; Sthapit et al., 2023), including revisit intentions and loyalty (Dahanayake et al., 2025a; Goyal & Taneja, 2023; Huang et al., 2019; Sthapit et al., 2023).

Considering the experiential and hedonic nature of wellness tourism, Seow et al. (2024) emphasise the role of rewards, such as comfort, relaxation, enjoyment, and social interaction, in shaping wellness experiences and satisfaction, yet these factors remain insufficiently explored in the literature. Although rewards are known to motivate behaviour and increase satisfaction, their limited understanding in wellness tourism points to an important gap in understanding how perceived rewards function within wellness tourism experiences. The desire to enjoy a peaceful atmosphere, achieve comfort, escape from reality, and experience physical rest represents the main reward expectations of wellness tourists (Seow et al., 2017; Seow et al., 2024). This is particularly evident in the post-COVID-19 era, as people increasingly seek experiences that promote a healthy lifestyle, improve physical and mental well-being, and enhance overall quality of life (Dimitrovski et al., 2025; Sthapit et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2024). The prospect of rewards is one of the strongest external motivational factors encouraging wellness tourists to make initial and repeat visits (Seow et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how to develop marketing strategies based on perceived rewards that create meaningful and memorable experiences is becoming increasingly important for stimulating positive behavioural outcomes.

Word of mouth (WOM) is recognised as a crucial outcome in tourism and hospitality research (Fan et al., 2023), yet it remains underexplored in wellness tourism. However, information exchange through WOM and electronic WOM (eWOM) strongly influences potential tourists' decision-making (Fan et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2024; Tsai & Bui, 2021), particularly in experience-based contexts such as wellness tourism, where personal recommendations are highly trusted (Goyal & Taneja, 2023). In tourism settings, positive eWOM can both reflect favourable evaluations and serve as a mechanism for sharing and disseminating experiences (Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013). While a few studies have addressed the relationship between well-being and WOM intentions (Dimitrovski et al., 2025; Han et al., 2025), it remains unclear how hedonic well-being derived from memorable wellness tourism experiences (MWTE) influences different forms of WOM intentions. As previous research suggests that WOM intentions may differ depending on the audience (Fan et al., 2024), this study distinguishes between one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions.

The literature remains fragmented in explaining how perceived rewards shape the process through which MWTE translate into hedonic well-being, and how these factors jointly relate to differentiated forms of WOM, particularly one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions. To address this, the research aims to examine: (1) how MWTE contribute to hedonic well-being and how, in turn, hedonic well-being relates to different forms of WOM intentions, and (2) whether perceived rewards change the relationship between MWTE and hedonic well-being. Thereby, this study fills two important gaps in the literature. First, it provides a more

integrated understanding of wellness tourism experiences and behavioural intentions by linking MWTE, hedonic well-being, and differentiated WOM intentions within a single framework. Second, it addresses the call of recent studies (Seow et al., 2024) to further explore the concept of rewards in wellness tourism, which has been largely overlooked.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

As a focal point of the tourism industry and academic research (Bagheri et al., 2024), experiences consist of subjective, intangible, and emotional elements that are formed throughout the entire journey and remain memorable (Dahanayake et al., 2024). According to Larsen (2007), “tourist experience is a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory” (p. 15). As emotional events supported by the senses are much better remembered, memorability can be significantly enhanced by sensory experiences (Oh et al., 2007), which are an integral part of wellness tourism. Therefore, this industry has considerable potential to provide memorable tourism experiences (Dahanayake et al., 2024). Moreover, the effort to maintain mental and physical health distinguishes the wellness tourism experience from a conventional tourism experience (He et al., 2023). Positive emotions and feelings arising from such experiences may be significant predictors of tourists’ satisfaction, quality of life, well-being, and behavioural intentions (Dahanayake et al., 2024; He et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2018; Sthapit et al., 2023). Although most marketing scholars have examined the antecedents and dimensions of MWTE, this study adopts an outcome-oriented perspective. Accordingly, we define MWTE, following Sthapit et al. (2025), as “an experience that generates positive memories that can later be recalled in substantial detail after a wellness tourism experience” (p. 8). The importance of the relationship between memorable tourism experience and hedonic well-being has been well documented in the literature. As a relatively new construct in the marketing literature, MWTE significantly enhances tourist well-being (Vada et al., 2022). It has also been shown that MWTE is a significant predictor of subjective well-being (Sthapit et al., 2023), as well as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Sthapit et al., 2025). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Memorable wellness tourism experience is positively related to hedonic well-being.

Rooted in positive psychology, researchers explain the concept of well-being through hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions (Rahmani et al., 2018). While the former is associated with emotional aspects (Sthapit et al., 2019), the latter relates to personal growth and functioning (Vada et al., 2019). This study adopts a hedonic approach to well-being, as it includes the pleasure aspect related to tourists’ positive emotions and happiness (Sthapit et al., 2019). Generally, people can achieve a high level of hedonic well-being based on two types of stimuli (Rahmani et al., 2018, p. 156): “(1) relaxation and comfort, or the physical and psychological state of felt energy; and (2) pleasure in experiencing positively perceived activities”, both of which are directly related to wellness tourism. In the literature, the hedonic approach is often associated with the concept of subjective well-being (Sthapit et al., 2019) and examines how experiences enhance enjoyment and overall life satisfaction (Fan et al., 2023), for example during wellness activities. Furthermore, a high level of subjective well-being leads to more positive than negative feelings and a high a level of life satisfaction (Chen & Yoon, 2019).

Behavioural intentions refer to “the degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to engage or not in specified future behaviours” and their positive outcomes include intentions to return and positive WOM communications (Vada et al., 2022, p. 716). In tourism literature, WOM has been extensively studied and is considered the most important

concept for understanding tourists' behavioural intentions (Tsai & Bui, 2021). Due to increased technology usage, the way people communicate has changed significantly, with eWOM communication increasingly replacing traditional forms of communication (Goyal & Taneja, 2023). Today, consumers have various opportunities to participate in multiple forms of WOM communication. Recent research therefore conceptualises and categorises WOM intention based on how it is generated and communicated (Chen et al., 2015). This study is based on Chen et al. (2015), Fan et al. (2024), and Šegota et al. (2022) classification of WOM intentions, in which the authors distinguish between one-to-one WOM intention and one-to-many WOM intention. One-to-one WOM intention refers to "WOM generated by one person and communicated to another person in private" (Šegota et al., 2022, p. 802), e.g., private WOM communication with family and friends via phone or email. In contrast, one-to-many WOM intention refers to "WOM generated by one individual to share with others without identifying the audience" (Šegota et al., 2022, p. 802), e.g., individual WOM communication via social media. Assuming that intentions are the fundamental predictor of actual behaviour, this study applied the aforementioned WOM intentions of wellness visitors to gain more detailed insight into their behavioural intentions. Kim (2026) considered the concept of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being essential for determining WOM intentions and found that it has strong predictive power for WOM intentions regarding holiday trips. Furthermore, Fan et al. (2023) demonstrated the mediating role of hedonic well-being between hotel guest experience and WOM intentions. By distinguishing WOM intentions into one-to-one and one-to-many, Fan et al. (2024) found that the perception of personal well-being is a key predictor of both types of WOM intentions among hotel guests. For the wellness spa hotel experience, Dimitrovski et al. (2025) revealed that wellness-induced well-being positively affects WOM. Therefore, it is assumed that:

H2: Hedonic well-being is positively related to one-to-one WOM intention.

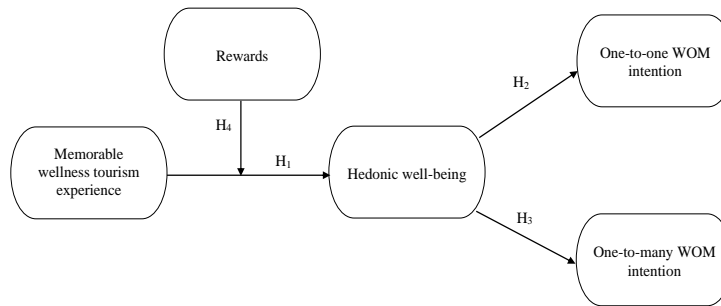
H3: Hedonic well-being is positively related to one-to-many WOM intention.

Mainstream research focuses on extrinsic rewards, which are visible and tangible, and intrinsic rewards, which arise from a sense of accomplishment (Karn & Kumar, 2021). The latter can be gained through personal rewards from participation in leisure activities, while interpersonal rewards are obtained through social participation in leisure activities (Mair, 2015). During travel, tourists achieve personal and interpersonal rewards, such as escaping everyday life, enjoying new experiences, and communicating and sharing experiences through social interactions (Suhartanto et al., 2020). This approach, based on Iso-Ahola's two-dimensional theory of tourist motivation, suggests that the psychological benefits of travel arise from the interaction of two elements: escape (from everyday life, routine, or stress) and the pursuit of specific interpersonal and/or personal rewards (Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991). Combining these two elements, Šimková and Holzner (2014) found that rural tourists are primarily motivated by the pursuit of rewards such as peace, authentic experiences, unspoiled nature, enjoyment, and relaxation, as well as by the desire to escape reality, including technology, urban environments, and noise. According to Seow et al. (2024), in the context of wellness tourism, rewards "include providing tourists with a sense of comfort, meeting interesting people, enjoying a calm atmosphere, and taking leisure time" (p. 4). Seow et al. (2017) indicated that perceived rewards stimulate the travel intentions of medical tourists. Moreover, Seow et al. (2024) demonstrated that higher levels of perceived rewards among wellness tourists (e.g., enjoying a relaxing atmosphere and a sense of well-being) were associated with higher levels of satisfaction and positive experiential outcomes. Hence, it is posited that:

H4: Rewards moderate the relationship between memorable wellness tourism experience and hedonic well-being.

The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Source: Authors' research

3. Methodology

3.1. Measures

To collect the data, a questionnaire consisting of three parts was designed. The first part included three screening questions designed to exclude respondents who do not use social networks, have not travelled primarily for wellness purposes, or have not used wellness services in the past 12 months. The second part of the questionnaire comprised five groups of structured questions. The first and second sets assessed respondents' attitudes towards MWTE and hedonic well-being, using scales from [Sthapit et al. \(2025\)](#), who adapted the original scales from earlier studies by [Oh et al. \(2007\)](#) and [Diener et al. \(1985\)](#). The third and fourth sets measured respondents' WOM intentions, specifically one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions, with the scale adapted from [Fan et al. \(2024\)](#). The fifth group examined respondents' attitudes towards the rewards generated by wellness tourism, with items taken from [Seow et al. \(2024\)](#). Respondents rated the statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – completely disagree to 7 – completely agree). The third part of the questionnaire collected respondents' socio-demographic data.

3.2. Sample and data collection

For the purposes of this paper, an empirical study was conducted using the survey method with an online structured questionnaire. The study was conducted from March 2025 to January 2026, employing a snowball sampling technique. The sample consisted of primary wellness travellers who were citizens of the Republic of Croatia, aged 18 or older, and active users of social networks. All participants had travelled primarily for wellness purposes (to maintain or improve their health or well-being), and had used wellness services (such as visits to thermal baths or spas, massages, fitness or nutritional programs, and facial and body treatments) within the past 12 months. After identifying the initial participants who met these criteria, they were asked to refer additional respondents from their acquaintances who were willing to participate. A link to the online survey was provided, where potential participants could express their interest and confirm they met the research criteria. A total of 422 correctly and fully completed surveys were collected.

Using SmartPLS 4.0 and the partial least squares structural equation modelling approach (PLS-SEM), the outer model, inner model, and hypothesis testing were assessed. PLS-SEM

is favoured for studies emphasizing prediction and theory advancement (Henseler et al., 2016).

4. Research results

The study included 422 respondents, of whom 63.3% were female and 36.7% were male. Most respondents were born between 1995 and 2006 (70.8%). Smaller proportions of the respondents were born between 1965 and 1979 (14.5%), and 1980 and 1994 (12.1%). Regarding education, most respondents had completed undergraduate studies (35.5%) or secondary education (35.1%), followed by those with a graduate degree (28.4%). The majority were employed (69%) or students (26.8%). The largest proportion of respondents reported a monthly income of €1,201–1,500 (23.2%), followed by €901–1,200 (17.8%) and €1,501–1,800 (17.1%), while 14.5% had an average monthly income of up to €600. This was followed by those earning €601–900 (9.2%) and €1,801–2,100 (6.9%), with only 6.2% reporting a personal income of more than €2,500.

Regarding travel frequency, 45.7% of respondents travel once or twice a year, while 35.3% travel three to five times a year. Only 13% of respondents travel more than five times a year. When planning a trip, respondents use Instagram frequently (AS = 4.64, SD = 2.08), whereas Facebook (AS = 3.79, SD = 2.16) and TikTok (AS = 3.73, SD = 2.44) are used to a moderate degree. They occasionally use YouTube (AS = 3.41, SD = 2.22), and very rarely use LinkedIn (AS = 1.95, SD = 1.71) or X (AS = 1.75, SD = 1.62).

4.1. Measurement model results

The hypotheses were tested using the partial least squares structural equations modelling (PLS-SEM) method. Internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed to evaluate the measurement model. In Table 1, the results of the measurement model are presented.

Table 1: Measurement model results

Constructs	Code	Item	Outer loadings	α	CR (rho_a)	AVE
MEMORABLE WELLNESS TOURISM EXPERIENCE	mwte_1	“I have wonderful memories of my recent wellness tourism experience.”	0.926	0.933	0.939	0.881
	mwte_2	“I will not forget my recent wellness tourism experience.”	0.944			
	mwte_3	“I will remember my recent wellness tourism experience.”	0.946			
HEDONIC WELL-BEING	hedwb_1	“In most ways, my recent wellness tourism experience was close to ideal.”	0.938	0.959	0.961	0.860
	hedwb_2	“The conditions of my recent wellness tourism experience were excellent.”	0.956			
	hedwb_3	“I am satisfied with my recent wellness tourism experience.”	0.951			
	hedwb_4	“I achieved the most important things during	0.902			

		my recent wellness tourism experience.”				
	hedwb_5	“I would not change the plans I made for this recent wellness trip.”	0.887			
ONE-TO-ONE WOM INTENTION	WOMone_1	“I will bring up the wellness services I have used in a positive way in conversations I have with my friends and acquaintances.”	0.946	0.916	0.928	0.857
	WOMone_2	“In social situations, I will speak favourably about the wellness services I have used.”	0.877			
	WOMone_3	“I will talk up positively about the wellness services I have used to people I know.”	0.952			
ONE-TO-MANY WOM INTENTION	WOMmany_1	“I will provide online reviews about wellness services I have used on social networking sites.”	0.909	0.944	0.946	0.855
	WOMmany_2	“I will share or post images of wellness services on social networking sites that were taken by others.”	0.930			
	WOMmany_3	“I will share information about wellness services I have used on social networking sites.”	0.940			
	WOMmany_4	“I will post or share images of wellness services I have used on social networking sites that I have taken myself.”	0.920			
REWARDS		To me, wellness tourism...		0.904	0.925	0.741
	rew_1	“Can provide an opportunity for physical rest.”	0.913			
	rew_2	“Bring me a sense of comfort.”	0.942			
	rew_3	“Allow me to take a break from the reality.”	0.912			
	rew_4	“Give me a chance to meet interesting people.”	0.554			
	rew_5	“Makes me able to enjoy a calm atmosphere.”	0.920			

Source: Authors' research

All item loadings exceed the recommended value of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2014), ranging from 0.877 to 0.956, except for the item: “Give me a chance to meet interesting people” (0.554). However, beyond relaxation and health benefits, studies show that social aspects, such as meeting new health-oriented people, are also important rewards associated with the wellness tourism experience (Pesonen & Kompula, 2010; Seow et al., 2024). This consistently appears as a high-interest activity across various segments of wellness travellers (Konu, 2010). According to Hair et al. (2011), items with loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 should be removed only if this increases composite reliability above the recommended threshold. Additionally, the results show that the indicator is acceptable, as the composite reliability and

convergent validity values are satisfactory. The five constructs have Cronbach's alpha coefficients between 0.904 and 0.959, surpassing the threshold of 0.7 and indicating high reliability of the measurement instrument. The composite reliability (CR) values range from 0.925 to 0.961, all above the critical value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011). The average variance extracted (AVE) values for all latent constructs exceed the threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014), confirming convergent validity.

The discriminant validity results were assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Discriminant validity

Fornell-Larcker						HTMT				
	MWTE	HWB	WOM ONE	WOM MANY	REW	MWTE	HWB	WOM ONE	WOM MANY	REW
MWTE	0.939									
HWB	0.771	0.927				0.810				
WOM ONE	0.757	0.776	0.926			0.812	0.823			
WOM MANY	0.351	0.372	0.427	0.925		0.374	0.391	0.463		
REW	0.666	0.601	0.668	0.267	0.861	0.728	0.647	0.731	0.312	

Note: MWTE – Memorable wellness tourism experience, HWB – Hedonic well-being, WOM ONE – One-to-one WOM intention, WOM MANY – One-to-many WOM intention, REW – Rewards

Source: Authors' research

The results in Table 2 confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model, since, for each construct, the square root of the AVE is greater than its correlations with other latent variables. Additionally, the discriminant validity of the model is confirmed by the HTMT values, which range from 0.312 to 0.823 and are below the threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.2. Structural model results

The first criterion for evaluating the structural model, the assessment of collinearity, was conducted by checking the inner variance inflation factors (VIF) of the latent constructs. Since the inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 2.210, which are below the threshold value of 3 (Hair et al., 2021), the results suggest that there is no issue of collinearity between the latent constructs.

The second step of the structural model assessment involved testing hypotheses, calculating path coefficients, and determining significance levels. The bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples was used to evaluate the significance of the path coefficients. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Hypotheses testing

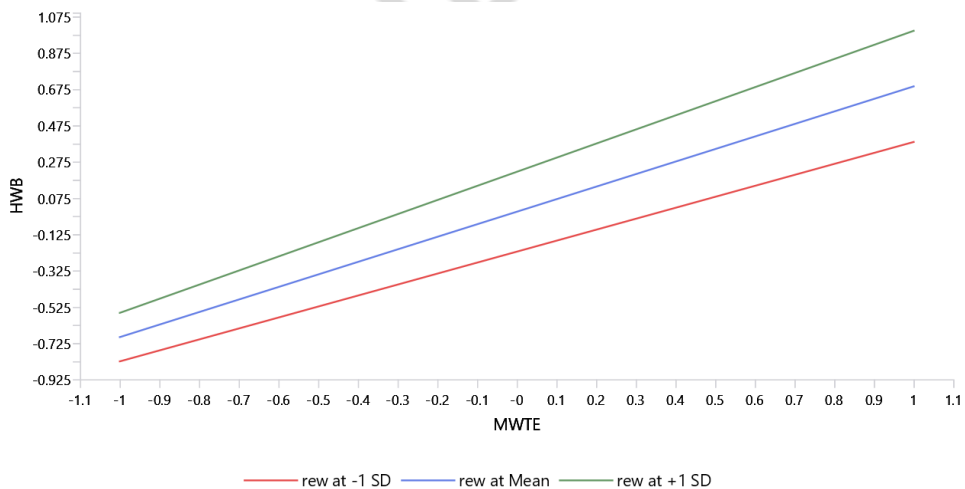
Path	Path coefficients	t values	Effect size (f ²)	p values	Hypothesis
Memorable wellness tourism experience → Hedonic well-being	0.691	14.075	0.675	0.000	H ₁ : supported
Hedonic well-being → One-to-one WOM intention	0.776	29.402	1.514	0.000	H ₂ : supported
Hedonic well-being → One-to-many WOM intention	0.372	8.210	0.160	0.000	H ₃ : supported
Rewards x Memorable wellness tourism experience → Hedonic well-being	0.086	3.330	0.026	0.001	H ₄ : supported

Source: Authors' research

From the previously presented table, it is evident that all relationships are statistically significant. Regarding hypothesis H1, MWTE positively influences hedonic well-being ($\beta = 0.691$, $p = 0.000$), confirming H1. Hedonic well-being also has a significant positive effect on one-to-one WOM intention ($\beta = 0.776$, $p = 0.000$) and one-to-many WOM intention ($\beta = 0.372$, $p = 0.000$), confirming H2 and H3.

The moderating effect of rewards on the relationship between MWTE and hedonic well-being ($\beta = 0.086$, $p = 0.001$) is positive and significant, indicating that higher perceived rewards strengthen the positive effect of MWTE on visitors' hedonic well-being, thus confirming H4. To further interpret the nature and direction of the moderation effect, a simple slope analysis was conducted at low (-1 SD), mean, and high ($+1$ SD) levels of rewards (Fig. 2), showing that the positive relationship between MWTE and hedonic well-being is enhanced at higher levels of rewards.

Figure 2: Simple slope analysis of the moderating effect of rewards



Note: MWTE – Memorable wellness tourism experience, HWB – Hedonic well-being, REW – Rewards

Source: Authors' research

To evaluate the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used. The exogenous variable, MWTE, explains 61.9% of the variance in the endogenous variable, hedonic well-being, indicating a moderate level of explanatory power. The results further show that hedonic well-being explains 60.2% of the variance in one-to-one WOM intention, also indicating a moderate proportion of explained variance in this endogenous variable. In

contrast, hedonic well-being explains 13.8% of the variance in one-to-many WOM intention, indicating a weak level of explanatory power for this endogenous variable.

Based on the reported effect size coefficients (f^2) and following [Cohen's \(1988\)](#) guidelines, the f^2 values for the direct effects ranged from 0.160 to 1.514, indicating medium to large effects. Specifically, the effect of MWTE on hedonic well-being was large ($f^2 = 0.675$), as was the effect of hedonic well-being on one-to-one WOM intention ($f^2 = 1.514$), whereas the effect of hedonic well-being on one-to-many WOM intention was moderate ($f^2 = 0.160$). Regarding the moderation effect, [Hair et al. \(2021\)](#) suggest that f^2 values of 0.005, 0.01, and 0.025 indicate small, medium, and large interaction effects, respectively. The f^2 of the moderating effect was 0.026, indicating a large effect size.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study contributes to consumer behaviour research by clarifying the relationship between MWTE, hedonic well-being, rewards, and WOM intention, distinguishing between one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions. Specifically, the results reveal a significant positive effect of MWTE on hedonic well-being, complementing the findings of [Sthapit et al. \(2023, 2025\)](#) and answering calls for more detailed investigation of well-being derived from MWTE ([Dahanayake et al., 2025a](#)). This finding suggests that the memorability of wellness tourism experiences is not only cognitively assessed as satisfaction, commonly interpreted through the expectation-disconfirmation framework, but also evaluated at an emotional level through hedonic well-being. A significant positive relationship between hedonic well-being and WOM intentions was also identified, confirming the relationship suggested by [Kim \(2026\)](#) in the wellness tourism context. It indicates that recommendation intentions largely depend on service providers' ability to fulfil hedonic needs. This supports the findings of [Han et al. \(2025\)](#) who identified hedonic well-being as one of the core conditions for WOM intentions. Additionally, the study also establishes that hedonic well-being influences both one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions; however, its effect is stronger for one-to-one communication. This suggests that in wellness tourism, where experiences are highly personal and subjective, tourists may prefer to share their experiences within trusted social circles rather than broadcasting them to a wider audience. Although [Fan et al. \(2024\)](#) also reported a stronger preference for one-to-one WOM among resort hotel guests, these differences were considerably less pronounced. It suggests that the nature of wellness experiences may intensify this tendency. The relatively low explanatory power for one-to-many WOM intentions suggests that, in the context of online sharing, additional factors may play a more substantial role in shaping individuals' willingness to communicate their experiences. In online consumer behaviour, beyond service-related predictors such as quality, satisfaction, value, and experience, a range of personal, social, and technological factors influence these intentions ([Ismagilova et al., 2021](#); [Zhang et al., 2017](#)). These include media usage behaviour, marketing mavenism, peer influence, and technology acceptance ([Anastasić et al., 2026](#); [Li & Liu, 2023](#); [Zhang et al., 2017](#)). This is also shaped by privacy concerns ([Ali et al., 2026](#)), since sharing WOM with a broader audience online often requires a higher level of self-disclosure compared to one-to-one communication. Furthermore, the findings confirm that rewards significantly moderate the relationship between MWTE and hedonic well-being. While previous research ([Seow et al., 2024](#)) found that perceived rewards significantly influence wellness tourists' satisfaction and experience, the moderation analysis expands this finding. Specifically, it shows that the emotional value of experiences increases when accompanied by rewards associated with pleasure and relaxation, which ultimately leads to greater hedonic well-being.

An important theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending MWTE theory beyond its predominant focus on antecedents and cognitive outcomes. While prior research has largely examined the dimensions and predictors of MWTE, as well as its direct relationships with satisfaction and behavioural intentions, this study advances the literature by incorporating hedonic well-being as a key experiential outcome of MWTE that influences two different types of WOM. In doing so, it contributes to the still limited understanding of affective mechanisms underlying WOM intentions, particularly in the context of wellness tourism, where such processes are still underexplored. Furthermore, by distinguishing between one-to-one and one-to-many WOM intentions, the study provides novel insights into the heterogeneity of post-consumption recommendation behaviours. Although positive effects are observed for both types, the stronger influence on one-to-one WOM suggests that the highly personal and subjective nature of wellness experiences may shape how and with whom tourists choose to share their experiences. This contributes to the broader WOM literature by emphasizing the need to differentiate communication contexts when examining WOM intentions. Finally, the study contributes by integrating the concept of perceived rewards, whose role in wellness tourism has received limited empirical attention. By demonstrating that rewards significantly moderate the relationship between MWTE and hedonic well-being, the findings suggest that the emotional benefits of wellness experiences are not determined solely by the experience itself. They are reinforced through additional experiential cues, such as comfort, pleasure, and personal indulgence. From a theoretical perspective, this emphasizes the role of reinforcement mechanisms within wellness consumption, positioning perceived rewards as an important factor in understanding how memorable experiences translate into hedonic well-being.

The practical implications of this study provide guidance for wellness service providers in designing reward-oriented marketing experiences that improve tourists' hedonic well-being and encourage WOM behaviour. The findings indicate that creating memorable wellness tourism experiences should be a key managerial priority, as these experiences directly contribute to tourists' hedonic well-being, which in turn stimulates WOM intentions. Hence, wellness service providers should focus on designing immersive and emotionally engaging experiences across all service touchpoints to reinforce a strong sense of "feeling good". In particular, they should focus on providing experiences that generate emotional rewards for tourists and strengthen their sense of hedonic well-being. Service providers should ensure that experiences are accompanied by clear and perceivable rewards, such as comfort, relaxation, peace, or a sense of indulgence, as these elements strengthen the positive impact of MWTE on hedonic well-being. Additionally, as the findings showed stronger influence on one-to-one than on one-to-many WOM intentions, wellness providers should not disregard traditional WOM channels and rely solely on stimulating online recommendations despite their growing importance. They should also encourage interpersonal sharing by fostering experiences that are personally meaningful and easily recommendable within close social circles.

This study has several limitations. Since a purposive sampling technique was employed, the results should be regarded as indicative. The use of snowball sampling may cause selection bias due to the non-random nature of participant recruitment. As a result, the sample is dominated by younger and female respondents, which may not fully reflect the broader population of wellness tourists, so the generalisability of the findings should be interpreted with caution. The research is also geographically limited, as it was conducted exclusively among citizens of the Republic of Croatia. Future research should address these limitations by using probabilistic sampling techniques and including international respondents in order to provide a broader perspective. Doing so would enable cross-cultural comparisons and help identify potential differences arising from travellers' socio-cultural environments. Achieving

a more balanced sample in terms of gender and age could also lead to more generalisable findings. Another limitation of this study concerns the measurement of the hedonic well-being construct. The scale demonstrates very high internal consistency, which may indicate some redundancy among indicators. While this reflects strong coherence of the construct, it also suggests that certain items may capture highly similar aspects, potentially limiting the breadth of construct representation. As the scale was retained in its original, validated form to preserve content validity and comparability with previous research, no items were removed. However, future studies should consider evaluating shorter or more parsimonious versions of the scale, as well as testing alternative operationalisations of hedonic well-being that may better balance reliability and construct coverage. Additionally, considering the relatively low explanatory power of one-to-many WOM intentions, we encourage future research to incorporate additional personal, social and technological predictors. In line with emerging trends in wellness tourism, further research should focus on different generational cohorts, especially Generation Z, and apply multigroup analysis to identify potential differences between Generation Z and other generational cohorts. Furthermore, complementing the quantitative approach used in this study with qualitative methods would allow researchers to better understand wellness tourists' memorable experiences, perceived rewards, and their WOM intentions. Conducting longitudinal research is also recommended to explore how these relationships change over time.

CRedit author statement

Marina Perišić Prodan: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Ana Čuić Tanković:** Conceptualization, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Jelena Kapeš:** Conceptualization, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of generative AI in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors did not use generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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