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**MOTIVATION FOR WELLNESS TOURISM AMONG  
CHINESE TRAVELERS**

Master Thesis

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This Master thesis has been compiled independently. All works by other authors used while compiling the thesis as well as principles and data from literary and other sources have been referred to.

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## INTRODUCTION

Wellness tourism has become increasingly popular in recent years and is expected to keep growing. This increase is related to the growing global awareness of health, the increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases, and the growing interest in natural solutions. However, inadequate infrastructure and facilities in wellness tourism are crucial to attracting tourists, as are concerns about the quality of services offered. The variety of services offered by wellness tourism can confuse potential tourists. There are risks of cultural appropriation, saturation, and economic disparities, as people from low- and middle-income countries often seek wellness services abroad. (Yan, 2024, pp. 1–3)

Wellness tourism encompasses travel activities aimed at enhancing physical and mental well-being. Several factors influence tourists' decisions to participate in health tourism. These include travel motivation, perceived value, health awareness, socio-cultural influences, economic conditions, policies, the market environment, and individual differences. Tourists often choose health tourism to escape the pressures of daily life and seek relaxation and recovery. Additionally, the attraction of natural environments and the desire to share experiences with family and friends play significant roles in their decisions. (Kemppainen et al., 2021, pp. 11, 13)

Rapid economic development has resulted in significant social pressure and heightened competition in recent years. The acceleration of globalization and the fast pace of life have left many people feeling exhausted, contributing to an increase in the number of sub-healthy individuals. As a result, more people are reporting feelings of burnout, which further raises the number of those categorized as sub-healthy. Post-pandemic, it is expected that various travelers will also invest in experiences that enhance their overall sense of wellness (Liao et al., 2023, pp. 1–2). Wellness tourism has experienced significant growth worldwide since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. The pandemic has greatly affected public health and has also had a notable impact on tourism, which is an important part of the global economy. The effects of the pandemic on health and

wellness tourism are varied. People's perception of virus risks might affect their travel plans due to the health and economic crisis (Gan et al., 2023, p. 1). Zhou et al. (2023, pp. 1, 9) conducted a comparative analysis of the behavioral intentions of potential wellness tourists in China and South Korea, which found that Chinese tourists encounter challenges related to perceived barriers, such as tourism safety, difficulties in interpersonal communication, and unfamiliar environments.

While existing studies acknowledge common challenges in wellness tourism (e.g., inadequate infrastructure, service quality concerns, cultural appropriation risks) (Yan, 2024, pp. 1–3; Zhou et al., 2023, pp. 1, 9) and general motivations (e.g., health awareness, escapism) (Kemppainen et al., 2021, pp. 11, 13; Liao et al., 2023, pp. 1–2), these existing studies often generalize wellness tourism motivations globally or focus on Western contexts, this research zeroes in on Chengdu, Sichuan, a culturally and economically significant yet understudied region in China. There is insufficient empirical evidence to explain how these drivers and barriers differ across different tourists in participating in wellness tourism, which makes it more important to thoroughly understand the topic deeper.

This thesis aims to identify the key motivations for Chinese travelers in participating in wellness tourism to provide recommendations to wellness tourism providers and organizations in China to enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of wellness tourism offerings for Chinese tourists.

Research question:

- What are the primary motivations influencing Chinese travelers to engage in wellness tourism?
- How can wellness tourism offerings be improved to better meet Chinese travelers' needs?

This master's thesis will explore the factors influencing tourists' participation in wellness tourism, with a focus on the motivations of Chengdu tourists by conducting surveys and interviews. The thesis comprises two main chapters. The first chapter provides a literature review on the topic. Here, the author will introduce existing theories related to tourism, theoretical frameworks related to tourist motivations, key

motivations of wellness tourists, and the impact of key factors on wellness tourism choices. The second chapter presents the research itself, explaining the research methods, data collection, and data analysis used. Finally, the author will delve into the discussion, recommendations, and conclusions on the subject.

# 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## 1.1. The concept of wellness

Wellness tourism has emerged as a significant segment within the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing awareness of health and well-being. According to Global Wellness Institute (2018, p. 9), wellness tourism can be defined as “travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being”. These trips aim to achieve a harmonious and balanced state of health across key wellness areas: physical, mental, psychological, and social. The emphasis is on prevention rather than treatment, although some medical interventions may complement lifestyle-based therapies. (Smith & Puczkó, 2008, p. 29)

This form of tourism differs from traditional tourism in that it focuses on holistic health, encompassing physical (e.g. nutrition, sleep, fitness, relaxation), mental (e.g. stress management, mindfulness, positive thinking), and spiritual well-being (e.g. connecting to oneself and the universe through yoga, Tai Chi, meditation or nature). Wellness tourism differs from medical tourism, for which the core product is the medical treatment itself and is primarily focused on treating specific health conditions (Kunwar, 2019, p. 71); also unlike health tourism, it is a specialized branch of general tourism where tourists travel with the specific aim of receiving healing treatments or enhancing their mental, physical, or spiritual well-being (Pessot et al., 2021, p. 1).

Wellness tourism is proactive, aiming to prevent illness and promote overall health through activities such as spa treatments, yoga retreats, and mindfulness practices. It can include spas, retreats, wellness hotels, even sport and fitness holidays. Wellness tourism can be considered to encompass various forms of tourism. (Smith & Puczkó, 2008, p. 30) Smith and Kelly (2006, p. 4) defined it in another study that wellness tourism is more than just a journey toward wellness, not a destination; it is also means of self-discovery. This transformative journey is often nurtured by communities and

environments specifically designed to foster relaxation, rejuvenation, and personal growth.

These supportive settings provide the perfect backdrop for individuals to reconnect with themselves, explore new dimensions of their well-being, and embark on a path of holistic healing and self-improvement. According to Smith (2021, pp. 364, 376), wellness has become one of the most popular buzzwords in contemporary society, with consumers increasingly seeking experiences that enhance their wellness or well-being. The study highlights that the wellness sector offers a wide range of educational, aesthetic, escapist, and entertaining experiences.

The benefits for customers vary significantly. While many spa treatments provide relaxation and temporary stress relief, retreat programs can help individuals transform their lives and develop new skills. Additionally, spiritual practices can lead to transcendent experiences, fostering a new sense of self and purpose. Furthermore, wellness experiences can be personalized or customized based on individual characteristics, personality traits, or even the guest's current mood. Liu et al. (2023, p. 4) concluded that the wellness tourism experience not only improves tourists' overall health but also significantly enhances both physical and mental relaxation and well-being.

Those who pursue self-improvement can boost their self-perception through various activities, including engaging in experiences, utilizing services, and making purchases. A good wellness tourism experience can effectively elevate tourists' mental state, making them feel joyful, relaxed, and confident. Additionally, it provides a sense of fulfillment and a profound sense of well-being. Wellness tourism is a vital contributor to tourists' well-being, with well-being being one of the primary outcomes. The well-being of tourists fluctuates with changes in their tourism experiences.

Over the past decade, the world has experienced significant shifts in attitudes, behaviors, and economic conditions. Persistent issues such as widespread hunger, undernourishment, poverty, and unemployment have led to economic decline, characterized by reduced consumption, savings, and investments, and a deterioration in living standards. These challenges have also contributed to social discontent and a

decline in the happiness index. Tourism, like all other sectors of the national economy, has felt the impact of these economic challenges. Despite economic challenges, dissatisfaction, and depression, the tourism sector has seen a growing trend towards relaxation and wellness. In the past years, more people have sought solace in activities that promote the health and wellness of the soul, body, and mind. (Koncul, 2012, p. 526)

Wellness tourism is an emerging form of tourism that offers an immersive experience centered around natural environments and humanistic elements. It includes activities such as landscape viewing, cultural entertainment, healthcare, and various recreational options, all designed to promote relaxation, enjoyment, and longevity. Currently, wellness tourism primarily encompasses ecological and health tourism, sports and leisure tourism, and recreational vacation tourism. Li's study also highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism businesses nationwide. The pandemic significantly affected the travel industry and disrupted the entire tourism chain (Li, 2023, p. 56).

However, there is a silver lining. Before COVID-19, the main consumers of wellness tourism were older adults. The outbreak raised serious concerns about health and safety, but it also heightened public awareness regarding health issues. This increased health consciousness across all age groups has led to higher spending on health-related services. As a result, wellness tourism, which caters to this growing demand, is expected to become increasingly popular (Li, 2023, p. 57). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the structure of human life worldwide. Nearly all sectors of the economy and business have experienced a slowdown, including the tourism industry.

However, wellness tourism stands out as a sector with several ideal components for safe and comfortable travel. It offers educational values that benefit the body, making it an attractive option for travelers seeking health and well-being. There is no doubt about the ever-increasing trend in the growth and development of wellness tourism. Globally and regionally, wellness tourism encompasses a wide range of services, including medical services, leisure and recreation spas, medical surgical clinics, and medical wellness centers or spas. This sector is expanding rapidly and reaching diverse markets. (Widarini et al., 2020, pp. 402, 407)

Therefore, it can be seen that wellness tourism emphasizes personalization, cultural authenticity, and proactive health management. Trends reflect a post-pandemic shift: travelers prioritize mental resilience (burnout/sleep), seek deeper connections (family/cultural immersion), and embrace science-backed diagnostics alongside traditional healing. The industry is expanding inclusivity—catering to men, families, and menopause demographics—while blending technology (e.g., biomarkers) with low-tech solutions (art, nature). Ultimately, wellness tourism is transitioning from luxury indulgence to a vital tool for holistic, preventative healthcare in fragmented modern lives.

## **1.2. Factors that motivate individuals to travel based on various models**

### **1.2.1. Push and pull motivation theory**

Tourists behavior has been explained thoroughly by the push and pull motivation theory. This theory distinguishes between two factors (internal and external) that drive individual to travel. Internal (push) factors are including the desire for escape, relaxation and adventure, which are psychological and personal. According to the study conducted by Duong et al. (2023, p. 153), internal motivations can be further divided into personal factors, escape, knowledge and cultural experiences. In contrast, external (pull) factors are linked to the destination's appeal, such as its culture, activities, and natural beauty (Duong et al., 2023, pp. 136, 138).

In tourism, push factors influence tourists to decide to travel as internal motivations, such as personal desires and emotional needs. Conversely, pull factors attract travelers because they are external characteristics of a destination, including the features and amenities. Gong et al. (2024, pp. 50–51) identify health motivation (45.41%) and cultural motivation (25.93%) as the top travel motivations among urban residents in China. More than 65% of urban residents in China consider health, encompassing both physical health and interpersonal motivations, as their primary reason for travel. Within the category of health motivation, the recognition rates are as follows: relaxation (88.73%), stress relief (72.23%), and wellness and medical care (29.25%). This means that nearly 90% of urban residents travel primarily for relaxation purposes.

Regarding interpersonal motivations, the recognition rates are: promoting family harmony (75.69%), improving interpersonal relationships (64.72%), and making new friends (49.01%). Push motivations are fundamentally tied to internal or emotional aspects, whereas pull motivations are linked to external, situational, or cognitive aspects. These push and pull dynamics demonstrate how travelers are internally motivated to embark on journeys, while destinations, with their distinctive resources and attractions, draw them in.

The primary pull factors for Chinese tourists include the primary pull factors include the safety and security of the destination, its natural scenery, and the overall environment and weather. Local marketing organizations should emphasize safety in their design and promotion of facilities and travel activities to attract Chinese tourist because personal safety is a top priority for them when traveling abroad. Additionally, outdated infrastructure that does not function efficiently should be improved or replaced to enhance accessibility and safety. Pull factors are highlighted once again for tourism motivations among Chinese travelers.

Wang & Wen (2018, p. 6240) presents a rarely discussed point: obtaining a visa is a significant concern and a major constraint preventing Chinese tourists from traveling to Hawaii. Simplifying the visa application process and removing unnecessary identity screening steps and paperwork could significantly increase Chinese visitor arrivals. Obviously, this study is talking about pull factors greatly influence the travel motivations of Chinese tourists. Additionally, the visa process is highlighted as a pull factor because it is a crucial element that can facilitate Chinese tourists' travel to a destination. Therefore, besides the natural scenery and facilities of the destination, the visa process is also an important influencing factor.

According to another study (Godlewska et al., 2023, pp. 2–3), many individuals are seeking health resorts for recovery after illness or injury and improve their physical well-being. This includes treatments for chronic conditions, rehabilitation, and preventive care a tranquil environment conducive to relaxation is a significant motivator to escape daily stressors and rejuvenate mentally and physically. The need for mental health improvement, including reducing anxiety and depression, drives individuals to seek therapeutic environments. Those align closely with psychological motivations.

Additionally, the authors suggest that some travelers are motivated by the opportunity to meet new people and engage in social activities, which can enhance their overall experience and well-being (Godlewska et al., 2023, p. 3). Therefore, based on push-pull theory, those factors mentioned in Godlewska et al.'s (2023) study could be considered as the variables in order to identify the motivations for participating in wellness tourism Chinese travelers. It's because wellness tourism has emerged as a rapidly growing market segment that appeals not only to individuals seeking thermal treatments but also to those looking for illness prevention, physical enhancement, and spiritual balance (Costa et al., 2015, p. 21).

Pull factors are also generally including destination attributes, affordability, location and additional service. In the study of Godlewska et al. (2023, p. 6), the quality of service offered, the reputation of the establishment, and the availability of specific health treatments are major attractions of a destination. Tourists also seek additional services to benefit from the very healthy resort facilities and its surroundings by spending time in a relaxing and natural environment, striving to maintain good health and prevent illnesses. Mountains, forests, or coastal areas are playing a very crucial role in attracting visitors. The geographical location of a destination is also particularly important, especially its accessibility and the surrounding environment. Reasonable prices at a given destination is a significant pull factor, making a place attractive to more potential travelers. Moreover, the availability of additional services, such as wellness programs, improve the appeal of a wellness destination and have impact on the decision-making process. (Godlewska et al., 2023, p. 4)

A study was conducted by Krishnamoorthy and Venkatesh (2015, p. 276) to collect responses from international wellness tourists in India. The aim was to understand the wellness motivations that these tourists experienced during their visits to wellness service centers in the country. The study looked at what motivates wellness tourists by expanding the push-pull motivation theory, the findings are:

1. Holiday packages offered by wellness tourism operators emerged as a significant pull factor. It is more affordable and offers all services in one location, making it easier for tourists in unfamiliar areas. Additionally, government organizations and

travel commissions have developed programs to encourage vacations. (Krishnamoorthy & Venkatesh, 2015, p. 279)

2. The presence of a partner or spouse played a crucial role in the decision to visit tourist sites due to the sense of fulfilment and experience (Krishnamoorthy & Venkatesh, 2015, p. 280).
3. With the right educational background and access to information sources, wellness tourists were able to effectively evaluate and choose the best destination for their relaxation and rejuvenation needs. The advancement of IT products and the widespread use of the Internet and social media allow individuals to virtually experience a destination even before they visit. (Krishnamoorthy & Venkatesh, 2015, p. 280)

Evidently, the findings above from Krishnamoorthy and Venkatesh (2015, pp. 279, 280) confirm that the push-pull motivation theory is highly effective in gathering information and enables these entities to better understand the diverse motivations of tourists, allowing providers to tailor wellness products and services to meet specific needs and preferences. The application of the push-pull motivation theory provides valuable insights that enable wellness tourism providers and organizations to customize their products and services effectively. From this study, by addressing both the internal motivations and external attractions, wellness service providers can create comprehensive and appealing wellness experiences that cater to a wide range of tourists with appropriate strategies (Krishnamoorthy & Venkatesh, 2015, p. 274).

Ting et al. (2021, p. 1) believe that pull motivation will significantly influence tourists' intention to recommend a destination to others and push motivation plays a moderating role in this relationship. This means that the attractive features of a destination, such as its unique cultural heritage, natural beauty, and available activities can strongly encourage tourists to share their positive experiences and recommend the destination to the people around. Moreover, the internal desires and personal motivations of tourists, such as the need for relaxation, adventure, or desire of escape from daily life can enhance the impact of pull motivations on their recommendation intentions. For instance, a tourist who seeks relaxation and finds a destination that perfectly meets this need is more likely to recommend it to others. Conversely, if the internal motivations

are not fully satisfied, the likelihood of recommending the destination may decrease, even if the external attractions are compelling.

### **1.2.2. Theory of planned behavior in tourism**

The Theory of Planned Behavior, developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, is a psychological framework designed to predict and understand individuals' intentional behaviors. It offers a valuable conceptual tool for addressing the complexities of human social behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 206). Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the primary components of the theory. Additionally, behavioral intentions, actual control, behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, control beliefs, and habit are discussed in the relation to it (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 181–203). The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that human actions are shaped by three main considerations: beliefs about the likely results of the behavior (behavioral beliefs), beliefs about the social expectations or pressures from others (normative beliefs), and beliefs about the factors that could facilitate or obstruct the behavior (control beliefs).

These considerations collectively shape an individual's intentions and actions, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of human behavior. (Bosnjak et al., 2020, pp. 353, 354). The Theory of Planned Behavior conceptual model is widely utilized to examine individual behaviors across various contexts, especially in the analysis and prediction of travel behavior (Subawa et al., 2024, p. 709). This conceptual model has been extensively applied and adapted in research related to travel behavior. Given the significant changes in travel patterns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, studying its application in the context of wellness tourism is particularly important. Subawa et al. (2024, p. 713) also concluded that when tourists perceive that staying at a green hotel can help protect the environment, provide access to healthy facilities, and foster a sense of social responsibility, their intention to visit is likely to increase. Therefore, attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms regarding the behavior, and perceived control over the behavior are typically strong predictors of behavioral intentions. These intentions, when combined with perceived behavioral control, can explain a significant portion of the variance in actual behavior.

### **1.2.3. Understanding health behaviors using the health belief model**

The health belief model (HBM) is used to understand health-related behaviors by looking at how tourists perceive the seriousness and risk of health issues, as well as the advantages of taking preventive measures. Individuals are more likely to take action if they see themselves at risk for a condition with serious consequences, believe that a particular action can reduce their risk, and think the benefits outweigh any costs. (Jones et al., 2015, p. 568). The HBM posits that individuals are more likely to take action when they recognize a personal threat, as long as they believe the benefits of taking that action outweigh any barriers.

The model consists of six key components: perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, cues to action, perceived barriers, and self-efficacy. The HBM is considered a good framework to understand public health behaviors and identify the psychological factors that can be targeted to improve health outcomes (Subedi et al., 2023, p. 3). The HBM is a crucial framework for understanding health-related behaviors and decision-making processes among individuals. The health belief model that developed in the 1950s emphasizes the role of perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, barriers, cues to action, and individual characteristics in shaping health behaviors (Muzayyana & Aini, 2024, p. 1).

This model was created to understand why people engage in behaviors to prevent diseases or why they may neglect to perform early checkups for disease detection (Ban & Kim, 2020, p. 4). Ban and Kim (2020, p. 1) conducted a study to explore the intention to visit Korea for cancer treatment using the HBM. Their findings indicated that a high level of perceived benefits significantly increased the intention to visit Korea for medical tourism, while perceived barriers had a negative impact. This suggests that positive behavioral intentions are driven by the desire to experience advanced medical services in Korea (Ban & Kim, 2020, p. 10).

The study also highlighted that the HBM, a well-established framework, has been widely used in research to predict visiting intentions for medical benefits, such as cancer treatment and plastic surgery. The results provide empirical evidence of medical tourists' intentions, showing that disease experience leads to perceived susceptibility

and barriers, such as expensive medical expenses and long wait period etc., which in turn influence visiting intentions. Additionally, the factors of severity and benefit further increase the intention to engage in Korean medical tourism. Ultimately, this study validates the application of the HBM in the context of medical tourism (Ban & Kim, 2020, p. 12). Therefore, the HBM is a crucial framework for understanding and predicting health-related behaviors by analyzing the psychological factors that shape individuals' choices, the HBM provides valuable insights for developing effective health interventions and fostering positive health outcomes.

#### **1.2.4. Maslow's hierarchy of needs in tourism**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory that including physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, individuals pursue both basic physiological needs and higher-level spiritual needs spontaneously and persistently. When multiple needs arise at the same time, people tend to prioritize the most urgent ones. Generally, if someone is lacking in physiological, security, love, or esteem needs, they prioritize satisfying the physiological needs first. Once these fundamental needs are addressed, higher-level needs become more significant. (Peng, 2020, p. 20) This theory explains how different levels of needs influence the decision to engage in wellness travel.

Wellness tourism addresses physiological needs by providing relaxation and rejuvenation opportunities, and it ensures safety needs through health-focused environments. It fosters social connections, fulfilling the need for love and belonging through communal activities and shared experiences. Esteem needs are met as travelers engage in personal development and receive recognition for their wellness achievements. Finally, wellness tourism promotes self-actualization by offering transformative experiences such as mindfulness practices and holistic therapies. By recognizing and addressing these diverse needs, wellness tourism providers can enhance traveler motivation and satisfaction, leading to a more fulfilling and enriching travel experience. (Karn & Kumar, 2017, p. 216)

Talebi et al. (2023, pp. 167–169) discovered that 77.5% of visitors were motivated to visit the museum to learn and increase their knowledge about history, aligning with the

self-actualization needs in Maslow's hierarchy. Additionally, 10% of visitors came for family entertainment, and 12.5% visited to spend time with friends, which correspond to social needs. A significant 72.5% of visitors expressed that achieving a sense of security and peace influenced their decision to visit, reflecting the need for safety and security. Furthermore, 35% of visitors reported an increase in self-confidence after their visit, and 30% chose to visit because they felt highly respected by the museum guides and curators. This aligns with the esteem level of Maslow's hierarchy, emphasizing the importance of respect and value. Conclusion is that visitors' motivations for visiting the Isfahan Constitutional House closely align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, focusing on self-actualization, safety, esteem, and social needs. They emphasize the importance of self-actualization, particularly through learning and education.

Thus, when multiple needs arise simultaneously, people prioritize the most urgent ones according to Maslow's model. Visitors to museums seek to fulfill self-actualization, safety, esteem, and social needs, aligning with Maslow's hierarchy. This model also explains how different levels of needs influence decisions, such as choosing wellness travel, which caters to needs ranging from relaxation to self-actualization.

### **1.2.5. Effect of the concept of perceived value**

The Perceived Value Theory will be focused on the value that travelers perceive in wellness tourism experiences, which is a crucial concept in health and wellness tourism as it significantly influences tourists' motivations and behavioral intentions. Health and wellness tourists' motivations have a significant positive impact on their behavioral intentions. Additionally, the perceived value of health and wellness tourism among travelers partially mediates the link between their behavioral intentions and different motivations, such as the desire to escape, attraction to destinations, environmental considerations, and interpersonal motivation (Gan et al., 2023, pp. 3–5).

This concept can be broken down to several dimensions including emotional value, health value, and perceived sacrifice (Blut et al., 2024, pp. 503–504). In addition to emotional value, health value, and perceived sacrifice, perceived value can encompass multiple dimensions, including utilitarian and cognitive value, all of which collectively influence tourists' overall experience and satisfaction. Additionally, the attributes

influencing tourists – such as physical wellness, emotional wellness, social wellness, and intellectual wellness – play a significant role in shaping perceived value. This affects both emotional and utilitarian dimensions and can influence behavioral intentions.

Furthermore, perceived value impacts not only immediate behavioral intentions but also has the potential to influence long-term engagement and loyalty, as consistently positive experiences can enhance tourists' commitment and increase their likelihood of returning. (Kim et al., 2024, pp. 2–6). By understanding these dimensions, tourism providers can better customize the services to align with tourists' expectations and enhance the overall experiences. Focusing on unique value propositions can attract more visitors nowadays. The perceived value of the services offered can be improved by emphasizing health maintenance and wellness. Li (2021, p. 264) conducted a study examining the impact of tourists' perceived value (TPV) on brand loyalty, using Xixi National Wetland Park as a case study. This research tested the interrelationships among TPV, brand trust, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty through structural equation modeling. He validated the theory regarding the influence of TPV on brand loyalty for the park, which also serves as a reference for developing brand strategies in other ecotourism areas in China.

Additionally, he noted that an ecotourism destination enhances the quality of the tourist experience and aesthetic appeal through effective management and excellent tourism facilities, thereby reinforcing TPV. This reinforcement is a crucial driving factor in achieving brand satisfaction, strengthening brand trust, and ultimately fostering brand loyalty in ecotourism areas (Li, 2021, p. 271). The Perceived Value Theory highlights the importance of the value travelers perceive in wellness tourism, influencing their motivations and behavioral intentions. Studies show that perceived value, including emotional, health, and utilitarian dimensions, significantly impacts tourists' satisfaction, loyalty, and overall experience. Effective management and quality facilities in ecotourism can enhance perceived value, leading to increased brand trust and loyalty.

### **1.3. Key motivational factors in wellness tourism**

Travelers might be attracted participating in wellness tourism by various factors. Tuzunkan (2018, p. 651) identified significant factors that influence tourists' motivation,

such as the desire to stay fashionable and enhance spiritual health, as key motivators for tourists' intentions to engage in wellness tourism. This underscores a strong interest in self-improvement and alignment with wellness trends. Moreover, motivations like the need for relaxation, stress relief, and overall life improvement highlight the psychological benefits that wellness tourism provides. Interestingly, the research shows no major differences in participation intentions across age groups, indicating the broad appeal of wellness tourism. Additionally, it emphasizes that past experiences positively influence future intentions to participate (Tuzunkan, 2018, p. 659).

According to Haldar (2023, p. 58), in recent years, health tourism has gained popularity in developing countries due to rising health concerns such as obesity, heart disease, cancer, and other lifestyle-related illnesses. Health tourism programs integrate wellness elements for both the body and mind, emphasizing the importance of health for individual well-being. The study clearly states that most respondents view engaging in wellness tourism as a way to experience positive changes and happiness. It also indicates that the desire to visit health destinations is increasing due to stress, busy daily lives, rising medication costs, and the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. The findings highlight that relaxation and the reduction of physical tension are the most crucial factors in deciding on a health destination (Haldar, 2023, pp. 63, 64, 66).

Escape drives individuals to distance themselves from daily concerns and rejuvenate by alleviating stress, worries, and problems. Natural environments such as mountains, beaches, and rural areas offer a temporary reprieve from these stresses, creating a clear separation from the noise and crowdedness of urban life (Ahn & Kim, 2024, p. 3). Relaxation is a key motivation for wellness tourists, emerging as a primary focus for those seeking wellness experiences. Research indicates that wellness tourists prioritize opportunities to engage in restorative and immersive activities.

Visitors actively participate in their experiences when exposed to aesthetically enriching environments at travel destinations (Ahn & Kim, 2024, pp. 10, 11). Krishnamoorthy and Venkatesh (2015, p. 274) observed that spas and other rejuvenation centers are gaining popularity as individuals with sedentary lifestyles increasingly prioritize their physical and mental well-being in India. Historically, Greek pilgrims traveled to meet healing gods, and people journeyed to the Himalayas for yoga and spiritual healing,

likely making them some of the earliest wellness seekers. It is not hard to see that wellness industry has evolved to offer a wide range of services and experiences, from traditional spa treatments to holistic wellness retreats.

A study conducted in Malaysia found that the independent variables of relaxation and relief, health and beauty, escape, and self-development have a significant positive relationship with tourist motivation factors toward health and wellness facilities in the country. Wellness plays a crucial role both mentally and physically, as it can enhance mood for those with a positive mindset and a healthy body. For example, people living in cities often experience higher stress levels when managing work-life balance and daily responsibilities compared to those in rural areas. Spa resorts offering a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere provide soothing experiences that positively impact visitors. Escape is a common activity sought by tourists, helping to explain their choice of specific destinations, the types of experiences they desire, and the activities they wish to engage in.

Additionally, body image is closely tied to mental and emotional health. If a person is unhappy with their body, it can be challenging for them to feel good about themselves, regardless of their feelings, thoughts, or behavior. Overall, relaxation and relief emerge as the most significant motivational factors attracting tourists to health and wellness facilities in Malaysia. The desire for a break and an escape from daily routines drives tourists to seek out these services. (Zailani et al., 2021, pp. 757,758,763).

The study by Chen (2022, p. 11) involved analyzing 172 completed questionnaires to understand the motivations behind tourists' engagement in wellness tourism. The findings revealed that social interaction factors, including interacting with others, connecting, and sharing experiences, have a significant positive correlation with tourists' motivation to participate in wellness tourism and their intentions to engage in wellness activities. This indicates that the opportunity to socialize and build connections is a strong motivator for tourists seeking wellness experiences.

Furthermore, the study identified that factors related to relaxation and escape, such as changing one's routine, getting away from daily stressors, and releasing pressure, also positively influence tourists' motivation to pursue wellness tourism. Overall, Chen's

(2022, p. 3) study underscores the multifaceted nature of motivations driving wellness tourism, emphasizing the roles of social interaction, relaxation, escape, and diverse activities in shaping tourists' intentions and behaviors. The study from Ubud (Meikassandra et al., 2020, p. 86) explored the development of wellness tourism in the region, revealing that the most sought-after wellness products include yoga retreats, meditation retreats, spiritual retreats, detox programs, and spa resorts.

The wellness tourism market in Ubud is predominantly driven by various types of retreats. Among these, yoga, meditation, and spiritual retreats are particularly popular, alongside detox programs and spa resorts. The author also mentioned that the high demand for these wellness products is largely due to tourists' desire for comprehensive services that address all aspects and dimensions of wellness. Specifically, visitors are looking for programs that offer a holistic combination of practices for the body, mind, and spirit. This integrated approach to wellness is a key factor in attracting tourists to Ubud's wellness tourism offerings.

With the acceleration of societal pace, people's lifestyles and routines have undergone significant changes, leading many to experience sub-health conditions. There is a growing emphasis on health and mental well-being, along with an increasing demand for enriching spiritual life and enhancing happiness. Middle-aged individuals, generally in better physical condition, tend to prefer leisure and fitness-oriented wellness tourism products. Younger seniors seek retirement and recuperation-focused wellness tourism, while those in sub-health aim for wellness tourism that promotes both physical and mental health.

Individuals pursuing a high quality of life prefer wellness tourism products that offer leisure, health preservation, and cultural experiences. (Shao & Wang, 2020, pp. 714, 716, 720) Wellness tourists also seek to temporarily change their lifestyle, adjust their physical and mental state, cultivate their character, and improve their health through dietary therapy during their travels. Shao and Wang (2020, p. 716) further notes that spa has certain therapeutic effects on skin diseases, chronic musculoskeletal disorders, metabolic capabilities, and psychological conditions. Therefore, it is evident that spa is a common and important method of wellness.

These studies reveal that tourists are motivated by a variety of factors. Psychological benefits like relaxation, stress relief, and overall life improvement, are significant drivers. Rising health concerns like obesity and heart disease has increased the popularity of wellness tourism. Additionally, the desire for escape and rejuvenation in natural environments and spa resorts attracts those seeking relaxation and relief.

## **2. EMPIRICAL PART**

### **2.1. The current situation in Chengdu, Sichuan**

As an important province for economic development in western China, Sichuan's county-level economic development has garnered widespread attention. The wellness industry, as a crucial part of county-level economic development, has become a significant pillar for sustainable economic growth (Xin et al., 2020, p. 1).

Chengdu is located in the Western Sichuan Plain and is the capital of Sichuan Province and the largest city in the western region of China (Yang, 2024, p. 93). With its diverse climate, unique environment, rich heritage, and large elderly population, offers abundant resources and vast potential for green wellness tourism. The region boasts four types of climate resources suitable for wellness: mild seasons, pleasant sunshine, summer heat, and winter cold. Wellness climate attractions are distributed throughout Sichuan, including Chengdu, primarily as wellness sites, summer climate sites, and cold climate sites.

Among these, summer-type wellness climate attractions account for 50.34%, cold attractions for 2.05%, and sun attractions for 0.68%. The Chengdu Plain Economic Zone, being the most economically developed and densely populated area, has a higher concentration of tourism resources and a greater degree of tourism development and utilization. This zone exhibits a better match between the elements and development of wellness climate attractions. Among the five economic zones in Sichuan, only the Chengdu Plain Economic Zone demonstrates an adequate alignment between the elements and the development of wellness climate attractions (Zhong et al., 2023, pp. 146–149).

Located in southwestern China, Sichuan boasts a long history of city and capital construction, abundant natural resources, and rich ethnic culture. These factors provide

a natural foundation for the development of the health industry in its counties and offer diverse materials for health industry research. In recent years, Sichuan's wellness industry has begun to take shape. For instance, Panzhihua City leverages its natural resources to combine sunshine wellness services with elderly care services, establishing community day care centers. Dujiangyan City has gradually improved its wellness service system, playing a vital role in promoting the wellness industry. Guangyuan City has incorporated the health and wellness industry into the emerging service sector, driving its rapid development.

Currently, Sichuan's county-level economy has entered a critical development stage characterized by total volume leap, momentum transformation, quality improvement, urban-rural integration, and open collaboration. At this stage, the development of the wellness industry has a solid foundation, favorable conditions, potential, and opportunities. Although the overall development of Sichuan's wellness industry has begun to take shape and has encountered unprecedented opportunities, there are still some issues in terms of resources, industrial structure, social consumption concepts, and related policies. The county-level population's outdated mindset, insufficient understanding of the wellness industry, poor basic conditions, and lagging economic and talent policies hinder the further development of Sichuan's county-level health industry (Xin et al., 2020, pp. 2–3).

Therefore, with its rich natural resources, diverse climate and deep cultural heritage, Sichuan's wellness industry has considerable potential to contribute to the economic development of the county. However, it is crucial to address the current challenges in resource management, industrial structure and social consumption patterns. Addressing these issues is crucial to unlocking the potential and ensuring sustainable growth.

## **2.2. Methodology, research design and sampling**

Qualitative research aims to understand the meaning and experience that shapes human lives and social environments. It was designed to be adaptable and responsive to the specific context in which it is carried out. It encouraged gaining depth and complex phenomena through descriptive, textual, or narrative information (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 718). By examining personal experiences, social interaction, and the cultural and

contextual factors that shape behavior and perceptions, this method offered valuable and detailed insights to the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of wellness tourists.

Quantitative research was a powerful tool for gathering and analyzing data that could inform decision-making and improve services, it involved a systematic approach that primarily focused on gathering and interpreting numerical data, aiming to create precise and reliable measurements for statistical analysis (Goertzen, 2017, p. 12). Therefore, the research would employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the motivations and barriers faced by Chinese wellness tourists in order to help tourism organizations develop targeted wellness tourism products that effectively meet the needs of tourists.

The methodologies selected included questionnaires for quantitative data collection, and semi-structured interviews for qualitative data collection. The target group for this research would consist of Chinese travelers who have either participated in or expressed an interest in wellness tourism.

This group would focus on travelers from Chengdu, China, encompassing various ages (at least over 18), genders, income levels, and travel experiences. It is a major city with a population of over 21 million people in 2025 (World Population Review, 2025). This large population was able to provide numerous potential respondents. For example Chengdu, as an important economic centre in Southwest China and the core city of the Economic Circle, has seen its population continue to grow and its urban capacity expand in recent years (Fan et al., 2024, p. 3). Given these factors, wellness tourism becomes particularly significant, as it offered residents opportunities to alleviate stress and improve their overall well-being.

By focusing on this specific population, the study aimed to provide targeted insights that could enhance the wellness tourism offerings for Chinese tourists. Currently, despite a sustained interest in health and wellness among Chinese consumers, their purchasing behaviors and experiences often did not align with this interest. Many wellness tourism programs prioritized a packed itinerary filled with activities, which detracts from the core principles of relaxation and mindfulness (AlixPartners, 2021, pp. 2–3) It may take time for a market eager to maximize limited vacation periods with

numerous experiences to slow down and appreciate wellness products beyond just a simple massage. Additionally, the high-pressure work environment and stressors of urban living faced by many Chinese individuals highlighted the importance of wellness in this market.

Purposeful sampling is a versatile method that, while it is primarily associated with qualitative research, is also applicable and effectively used in mixed methods research and designed to select individuals or groups that are particularly knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest, thereby ensuring the inclusion of "information-rich" cases that can provide insights (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). This approach captures diverse perspectives through various sampling designs, such as maximum variation and extreme case sampling, which document unique variations and identify common patterns. It provided flexibility in research design, allowing for an iterative process that adapts as the study progresses, ensuring the sample accurately reflects the relevant range of variation.

In mixed methods research, it enhanced quantitative approaches by adding qualitative depth, thereby improving the overall understanding of the research problem. By focusing on the richness of data rather than mere representativeness, it addressed the limitations of random sampling, making it a strategic choice for qualitative inquiry (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). This sampling method focused on selecting individuals or groups that possessed specific knowledge or experience related to the phenomenon of interest and allowed for flexibility in the research design. More important was that the selection of respondents is closely linked to the particular aim of the study. It would be applied to the targeted area. It would allow gathering more responses and rich data. Moreover, 385 or more responses would be needed to have a confidence level of 95% (Calculator.net, n.d.) that the real value is within  $\pm 5\%$  of the surveyed value according to the statistics of population in Chengdu is 21.40 million in 2023. (Chengdu Municipal Statistics Bureau, 2024)

Surveys are a powerful tool for collecting extensive quantitative data, by offering a broad understanding of general trends and motivations within a diverse population, researchers are able to gather both quantitative data and deeper insights into specific motivations and expectations (Taherdoost, 2021, p. 15). Therefore, the surveys will be

conducted online, and closed questions will be included in questionnaires, along with a few open-ended questions for respondents who wish to provide more detailed answers. Questionnaires allow for the efficient gathering of data from a large sample size, and they are also cost-effective and time-saving, enabling researchers to collect data quickly and at a lower expense. The structured format of questionnaires helps enhancing the reliability and validity of the responses. Furthermore, the questionnaires will remain anonymous which encourage respondents to give honest answers, leading to more accurate data. (Taherdoost, 2021, pp. 14–16) The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was undertaken on LimeSurvey both in English and Chinese and shared through a link on Chinese social media platforms, such as the RedNote (a popular platform) and WeChat, to gather more responses from the targeted area.

The questions in the questionnaire were formulated by referring to Duong et al. (2023) for demographic questions. Smith & Puczkó's (2008) theory was used to understand respondents' travelling preferences and perceptions of wellness tourism. The tourism motivation questions were based on Gong et al.'s (2024) research framework, and the factors for choosing tourism destinations were referred to Godlewska et al.'s (2023) study. Jones et al.'s (2015) study was also referenced to identify common barriers to participation in wellness tourism and to understand the frequency of respondents' participation in wellness tourism based on Ajzen's (2020) theory.

The question of reasons for recommending wellness tourism was based on Ting et al.'s (2021) study, the extent to which wellness tourism fulfills a need used Peng's (2020) framework, and the question of perceived value referred to Blut et al.'s (2024) study. The questionnaire was accessible to all users who were on these platforms and who chose to participate. The initial question verified if the respondents are Chengdu citizens; only those who answered "yes" proceed to the next section to help ensure more accurate responses. The survey was published on 27<sup>th</sup> of March and closed on 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2025. Eventually, a total of 431 respondents participated in this survey and 399 of them completed answering all the questions.

Interviews work well for studies that focus on personal experiences because they let people share their stories in their own words. While these studies often use direct conversations to understand someone's life, and help people explain their feelings and

experiences. The main goal of these interviews is to understand how people see their lives, their emotions, and the world around them. They give people a relaxed but guided way to talk about their experiences, and what matters to them.

Researchers and participants work together in these conversations to explore how personal feelings and social environments connect, while keeping the person's true voice and perspective at the center (Fossey et al., 2002, pp. 726–727). Semi-structured interviews are seen as more effective than other interview types because they let researchers gather detailed, focused information from people while staying closely tied to the study's goals. It's flexible and adaptable. Semi-structured interviews are valuable for researchers because they can adjust questions as needed during the conversation to explore new ideas, while still keeping the overall study on track (Ruslin et al., 2022, p. 22).

Therefore, semi-structured interviews will be used to gather qualitative data. It allows for a thorough exploration of individual experiences and motivations, providing rich, detailed insights that are difficult to capture with questionnaires. Therefore, the participants have to be at least 18 years old and from Chengdu, especially for those who either participated in or expressed interest in wellness tourism, including various ages, genders, income levels and travel experiences. The option for participating in an interview will be included at the end of the questionnaire to increase the likelihood of securing more interviewees. Respondents will be contacted through The RedNote and WeChat within the targeted area. Approximately 15 interviews were planned to achieve data saturation.

Based on the literature review above, the interview questions (see Appendix 2) have been formulated using the theories of Duong et al. (2023), Gong et al. (2024), Wang & Wen (2018), Smith & Puczkó (2008), Chen and Tuzunkan (2018). Semi-structured interviews can be guided by pre-determined questions while also allowing the flexibility to delve new topics that emerge during the discussion. This adaptability allows for richer, more in-depth data collection. It is also effective for gaining insights into participants' unique experiences and perspectives (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, pp. 1360, 1361). The combination of closed-end and open-ended questions facilitates a

deeper understanding of respondents' perspectives, as well as creating a more engaging environment to encourage respondents to share more openly and honestly.

Also, interviewers might tailor their questions based on the respondent's answers, uncovering unforeseen issues relevant to the research in more detail. In addition, this type of interview is particularly effective for gathering qualitative data that provides context and depth to quantitative findings (Adams, 2015, pp. 493–494). These interviews were conducted both online and in person, depending on the respondents' availability. With participants' permission, audio and video recordings will be made, and be saved on a password-protected device.

Afterwards, recordings will be transcribed, anonymized, and analyzed for the study. The recordings will be deleted within 1 month after defense. Anonymized transcripts are kept for 5 years (per university ethics guidelines), then permanently erased. More importantly, participants will be informed about how their information will be used and their right to withdraw at any time. Eventually, a total of 14 online interviews and one in-person interview were successfully conducted with all participants from Chengdu (see Table 1). With themes derived deductively from six core research questions and inductively from emergent patterns. Respondents' demographics were explicitly categorized to address feedback. Four overarching themes emerged, revealing how socioeconomic status, occupation, and generational divides shape wellness tourism engagement in Chengdu.

**Table 1.** Interviewees' codes, interview dates and duration

Respondents	Interview date	Interview duration, min
R1	27.03.2025	65 min
R2	27.03.2025	40 min
R3	28.03.2025	25 min
R4	28.03.2025	35 min
R5	30.03.2025	32 min
R6	30.03.2025	40 min
R7	01.04.2025	45 min
R8	01.04.2025	50 min
R9	02.04.2025	30 min
R10	03.04.2025	33 min
R11	04.04.2025	45 min
R12	04.04.2025	35 min
R13	05.04.2025	34 min

R14	05.04.2025	36 min
R15	06.04.2025	55 min

To analyze open-ended questionnaire responses and qualitative interview data, content analysis will be employed. This method is effective for examining various data formats, including textual, visual, and audio. In the context of big data, where vast amounts of archived information are generated, content analysis is invaluable. It can identify trends and predict behaviours by analyzing linguistic patterns. (Stemler, 2015, p. 1). By employing this method, qualitative data can be assessed quantitatively, allowing them to determine the frequency of specific words, phrases, or concepts related to wellness tourism motivations, which can efficiently process large datasets allowing researchers to focus on interpretation rather than manual coding (Stemler, 2015, pp. 1, 3). Content analysis will be helpful for generating more detailed and comprehensive recommendations for tourism organizations, such as understanding client preferences and identifying potential trends from the analysis.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics will be the primary analytical tools for examining the quantitative data collected from the survey. Descriptive statistics will provide a comprehensive overview of participants' demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income level, and education level. Inferential statistics will be used for demographics data and the collected data. It aids in decisions-making under uncertainty by providing a probabilistic framework.

Additionally, it also allows for testing hypotheses, helping researchers determine the likelihood that their findings are due to chance, thus supporting informed decisions based on statistical evidence (Allua & Thompson, 2009, pp. 169, 170). By categorizing these characteristics, patterns and trends within the sample population can be identified (Kaur et al., 2018, p. 60). The analysis will explore the motivations of individuals participating in wellness tourism.

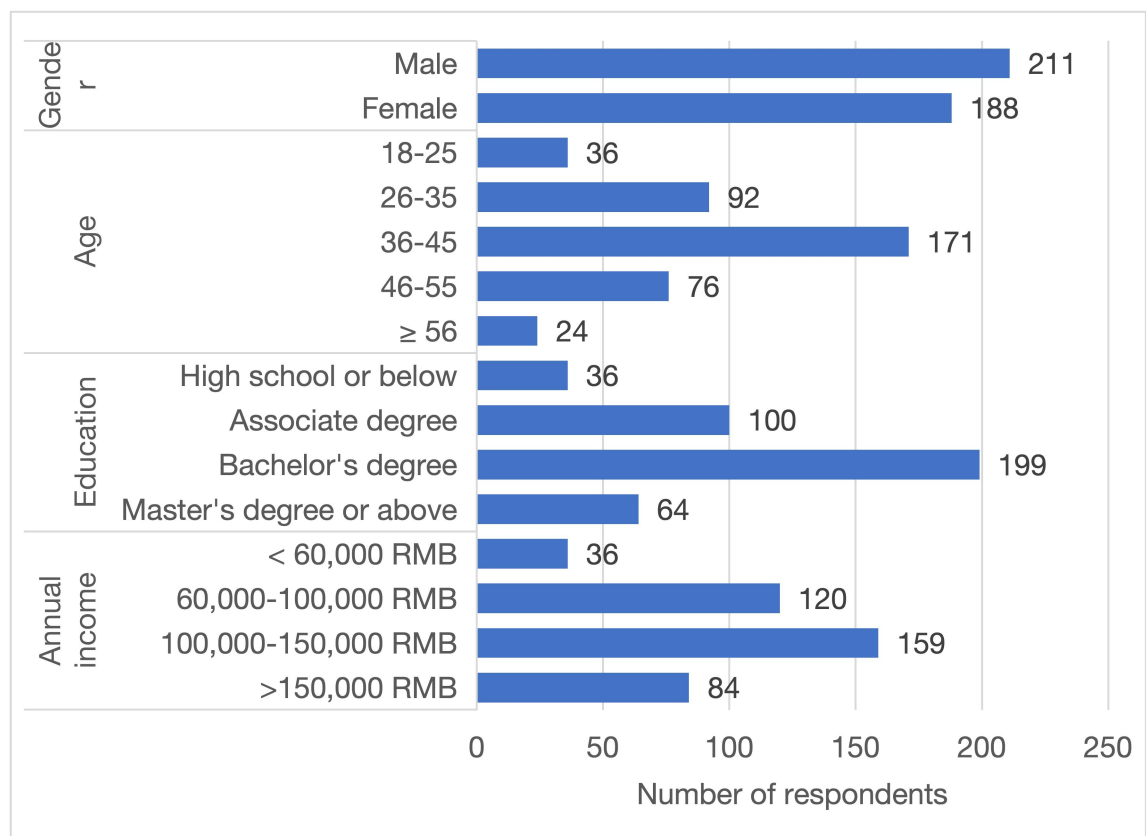
The influence and importance of each of these factors on travel decisions are identified. In addition to motivations, the barriers that participants face when participating in wellness tourism will be explored. Understanding these barriers is crucial to identify areas that can be improved to enhance the overall wellness tourism experience. To ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the data collected, a range of statistical

measures will be employed. These will include analyzing frequencies and percentages to illustrate the distribution of responses. Such detailed statistical analysis will offer a comprehensive overview of participants' experiences and perceptions, ultimately enhancing understanding of wellness tourism dynamics.

## 2.3. The results and analysis

### 2.3.1. Results from the survey

The whole survey has been divided into different parts and the first parts include age, gender, educational level and yearly income. Figure 1 illustrates that 53% participants were male and 47% of respondents were female. It shows that male might be more interested in wellness tourism than female. The age distribution of participants reveals that the largest proportion (43%) fell within the 36–45 age group. Younger participants (18–25 years) represented the smallest cohort at 9%, while those aged 55 or older accounted for 6% of respondents. The study population is predominantly middle-aged, 66% of participants aged 26–45.

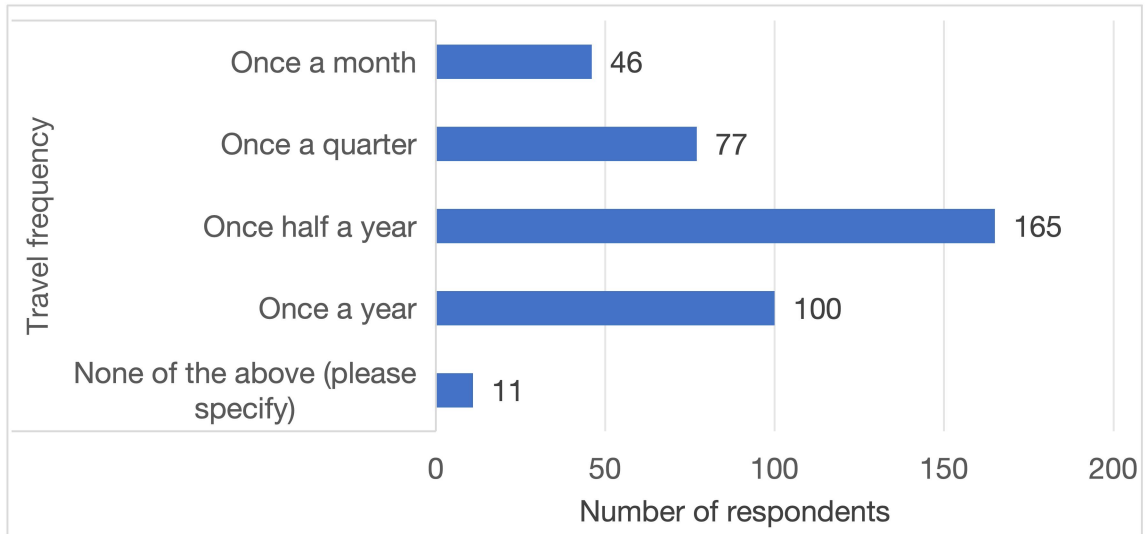


**Figure 1.** Demographic data of respondents (N = 399)

Half of participants (50%) held bachelor's degree, while only 9% of respondents got high school diploma or lower educational level. The highest yearly income among all participants falls within the range of RMB 100,000 to RMB 150,000, accounting for 40% of respondents. Those with an income below RMB 60,000 make up 9% of the group. 91 males aged 36 – 45, of whom 65 hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Out of these, only one single individual earn lower RMB 60,000 annually. Additionally, 41 participants in this group have an annual income between RMB 100,000 and 150,000 or higher. The number of female aged 36–45 is the highest as well with 80 participants. 45 of them held bachelor degree and 17 female participants earn over RMB 150,000 annually, while two respondents in this group held a master's degree or higher but had an annual income lower than RMB 60,000.

The consumer behavior and demand characteristics of Chengdu's wellness tourism market exhibit distinct structural trends. Data reveals that the target demographic is predominantly composed of middle-aged residents of Chengdu (66% aged 26 – 45, 70% with annual incomes of RMB60,000 – RMB150,000), characterized by high educational level (75% holding bachelor degrees or higher) and balanced gender distribution (47% female, 53% male).

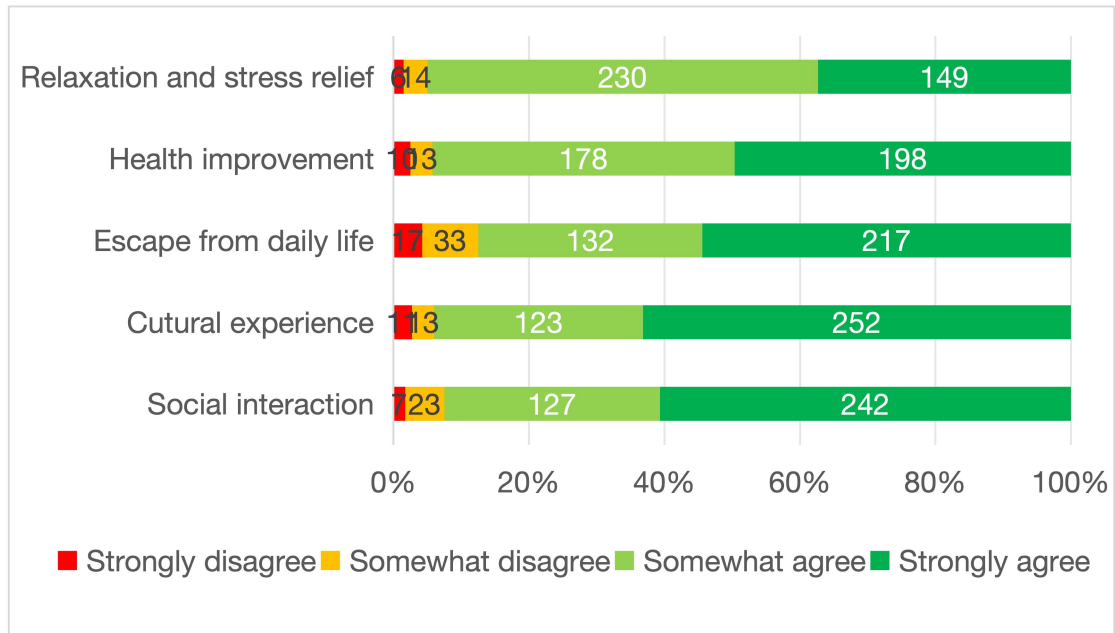
Figure 2 provides a detailed overview of the travel frequency of the respondents. Among them, 12% of participants indicate that they travel once a month, while 19% of individuals opt for a less frequent adventure, traveling once a quarter. A significant portion of the participants, 41%, reported that they travel once a half year.



**Figure 2.** The travel frequency of respondents (N = 399)

53% of male respondents travel once every half-year, of these, with 59% of them aged 36–45. Similarly, in female group, 34 out of 45 females aged at 36–45 with bachelor’s degree prefer traveling once a half year as well. Notably, all female respondents holding master’s degrees or higher report traveling once every half-year, underscoring a consistent preference for frequent travel among highly educated women in this demographic. Interestingly, 28% of participants surveyed chose to share their unique travel frequencies. Within this subgroup, five individuals revealed they travel every two weeks. Another five people specified that they embark on journeys three times a year, while one person indicated travelling twice a month, highlighting a diverse array of travel patterns among the participants.

From Figure 3 on travel motivations, it is evident that respondents' reactions to different motivations vary significantly. 93% have a positive attitude towards social interaction as a travel motivation, indicating that social interaction is an important travel motivation.



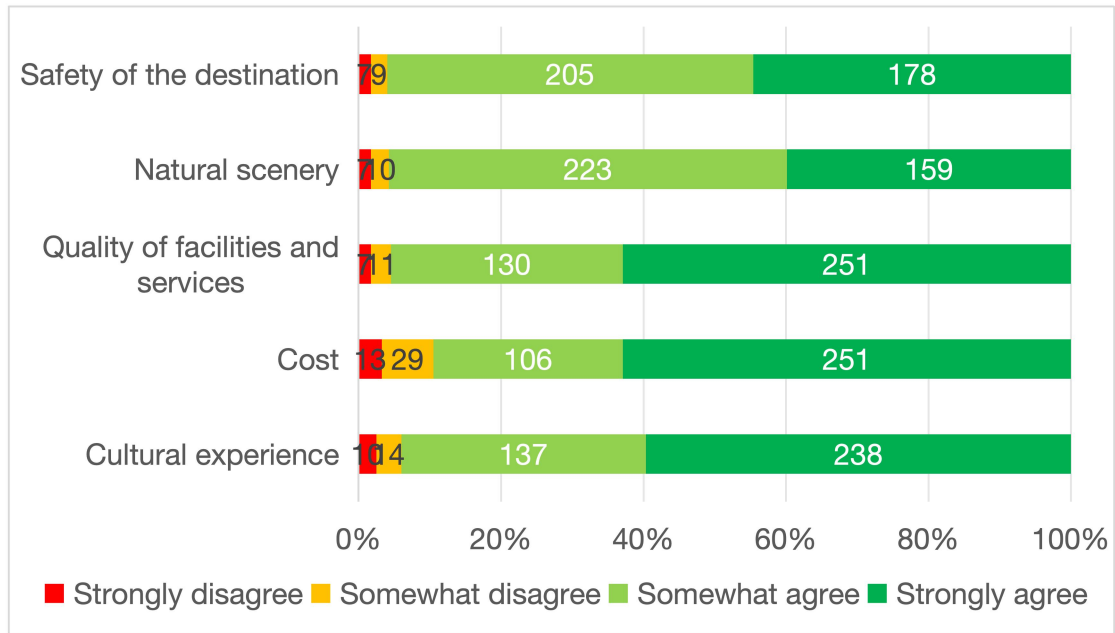
**Figure 3.** The travel motivations of respondents

Cultural experience is also a significant travel motivation, with a total of 94% of respondents agreeing with it. Among them, 63% strongly agree that cultural experience is an important travel motivation, which is more than half of those who somewhat agree. Notably, only one respondent in this 36-45 age group has a high school diploma or lower education level, while the remaining 98% of them hold bachelor's degrees or higher. Total 59% of females somewhat agree that relaxation and stress relief emerge as one of important travel motivators. Most of them are from 36-45 age group. 63% of male participants strongly agreed that cultural experiences are a vital travel motivator.

The motivation to escape from daily life is also recognized by the majority of respondents, with 349 participants (87%) believing that escaping from daily life can motivate them to travel, while the remaining 13% of participants disagree that escaping from daily life is a travel motivation, which makes the highest level of disagreement among all motivations. Those males in 36-45 and 55 or higher age group all held master's degree or above and have an annual income of RMB 150,000 or higher. The only one from younger group also held master's or higher educational degree, but with below RMB 60,000 annual income. 50% of participants strongly agree that health improvement is one of the travel motivations, with a total of 95% holding a positive attitude towards it. The proportions of those who strongly agree and somewhat agree are

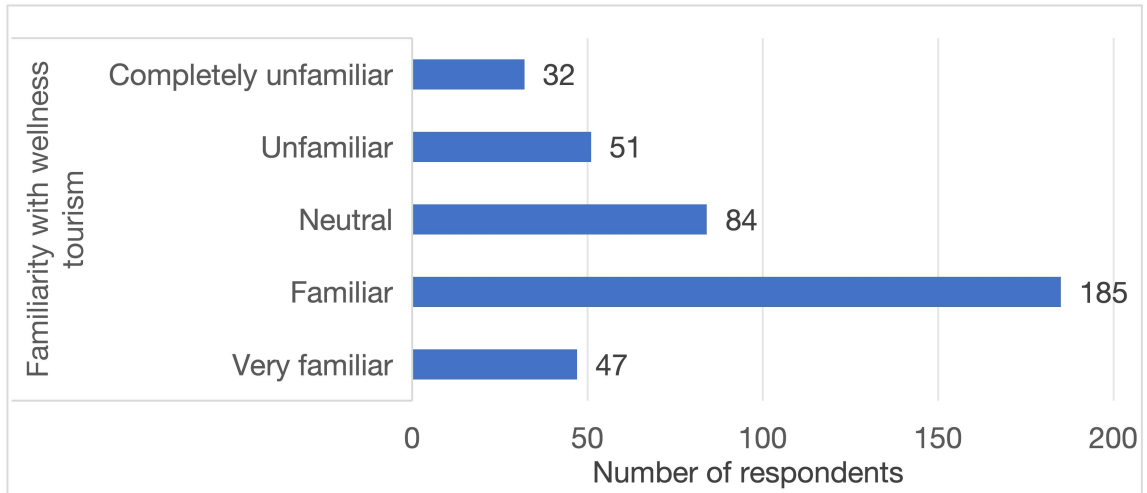
almost equal. Among the 399 valid responses, only 10 people firmly believe that health improvement cannot motivate them to travel. Relaxation and stress relief is the most popular travel motivation, with 95% of respondents holding a very positive attitude towards it. Among them, 37% strongly agree, and 58% of people somewhat agree. Only 5% of people disagree that relaxation and stress relief is a travel motivation. Through this data, it is evident that social interaction and cultural experience are the main travel motivations, with high levels of agreement among respondents. Relaxation and stress relief is the most popular travel motivation, with the highest level of agreement among respondents.

As seen in Figure 4, natural scenery is the most important factor for respondents, with 96% recognizing its importance. Specifically, 40% strongly agree that natural scenery is the main attraction, while 56% somewhat agree. Only 4% disagree. The influence of destination safety follows closely, with a total of 95% of participants holding a positive attitude towards it. Among them, 68% strongly agree that safety is a key factor in choosing a travel destination. Only 5% believe safety is not an important consideration. The recognition of facilities and service quality is also high, with a total agreement rate of 96%. Data shows that 63% strongly agree that the quality of facilities influences decision-making. There is relatively noticeable disagreement regarding cost factors. Although 90% of respondents still consider consumption levels important, the proportion of dissenting opinions is higher than for natural scenery, destination safety, and facilities and service quality, accounting for 10%. The recognition of cultural experiences is also high, with a total agreement rate of 94%. Only 6% hold opposing views.



**Figure 4.** Factors that influence choice of tourism destination

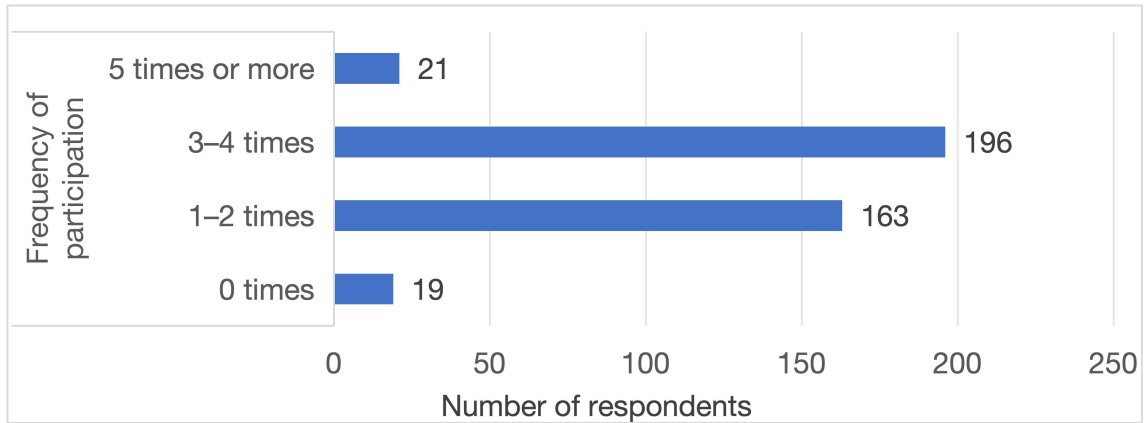
The data in Figure 5 reveals a significant stratification in respondents' familiarity with wellness tourism: 12% reported being "very familiar" and 46% selected "familiar," together accounting for 58%, indicating a strong foundational awareness of wellness tourism within the target group. However, 21% of respondents remained "neutral," 13% stated they were "unfamiliar," and 8% were "completely unfamiliar." It further highlights a polarization in awareness, with a marked disparity between the "very familiar" (46%) and "completely unfamiliar" (8%) segments, while the intermediate attitude ("neutral") was relatively low (21%). This suggests that the popularity of wellness tourism exhibits a clear core audience but uneven coverage across broader populations.



**Figure 5.** Respondents' familiarity with wellness tourism (N = 399)

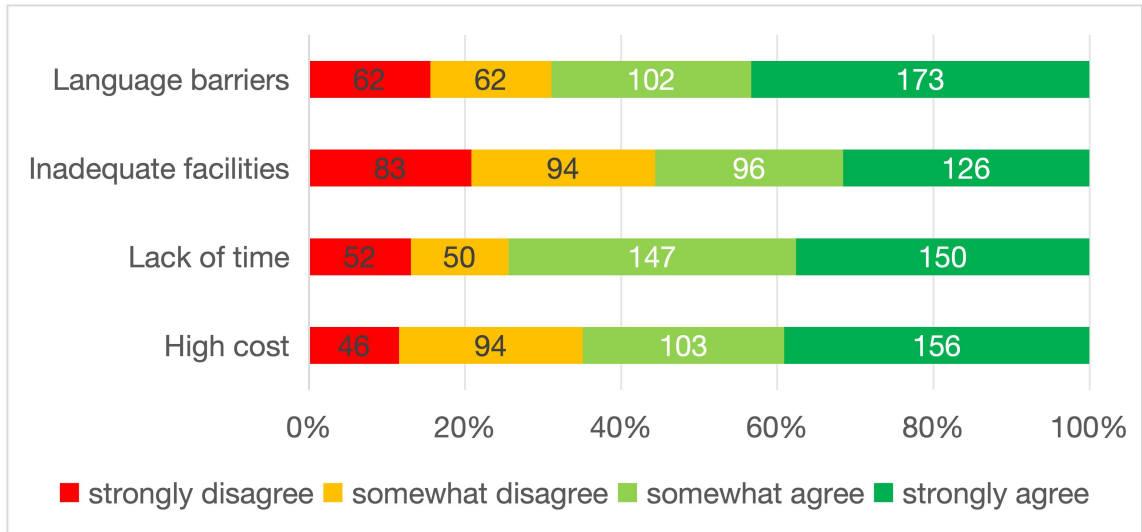
Figure 6 reveals a notable concentration trend in respondents' frequency of participation in wellness tourism: 49% of respondents reported engaging in wellness tourism 3–4 times, representing nearly half of the sample and indicating that moderate-frequency participation (3–4 times) has emerged as the predominant pattern. This is followed by low-frequency participants (1–2 times) at 41%, suggesting that wellness tourism remains an occasional or exploratory activity for a significant portion of the population. Notably, extreme participation categories – non-participants (0 times) and high-frequency participants (5+times) – each accounted for only 5% of the sample, reflecting both the widespread adoption of wellness tourism within the target demographic and the limited scale of deeply engaged, long-term users. Overall, these findings underscore a central clustering tendency in participation behaviors, with moderate-frequency engagement dominating the distribution, while polar extremes (non-participation and high-frequency engagement) exert minimal influence.

Participation in wellness tourism within this group follows a spindle-shaped distribution: 49% engage in wellness tourism 3–4 times annually, while high-frequency participants (5+ times) and non-participants each account for only 5%. This indicates that wellness tourism has become deeply integrated into their routine leisure activities, though user retention and market penetration potential remain underdeveloped.



**Figure 6.** Respondents' frequency of participation in wellness tourism (N = 399)

Figure 7 highlights three primary barriers to participation in wellness tourism. Lack of time emerged as the most significant obstacle, with a total agreement rate of 75%. Language barriers followed closely, with a total agreement rate of 69%, where the proportion of strong agreement (43%) far exceeded other categories, underscoring communication challenges in cross-cultural contexts. Similarly, high cost showed a total agreement rate of 65%, indicating widespread concerns over financial burdens and linguistic limitations. In contrast, inadequate facilities received relatively lower agreement (56%), with 56% of respondents expressing disagreement, suggesting higher tolerance for existing infrastructure. These findings suggest that participation in wellness tourism is primarily hindered by time constraints (75%), language barriers (69%), and high costs (65%) constitute the primary participation barriers, while facility-related issues play a lesser role. Market growth faces multifaceted challenges, pointing to systemic issues in time management, cross-cultural service capabilities, and affordability.



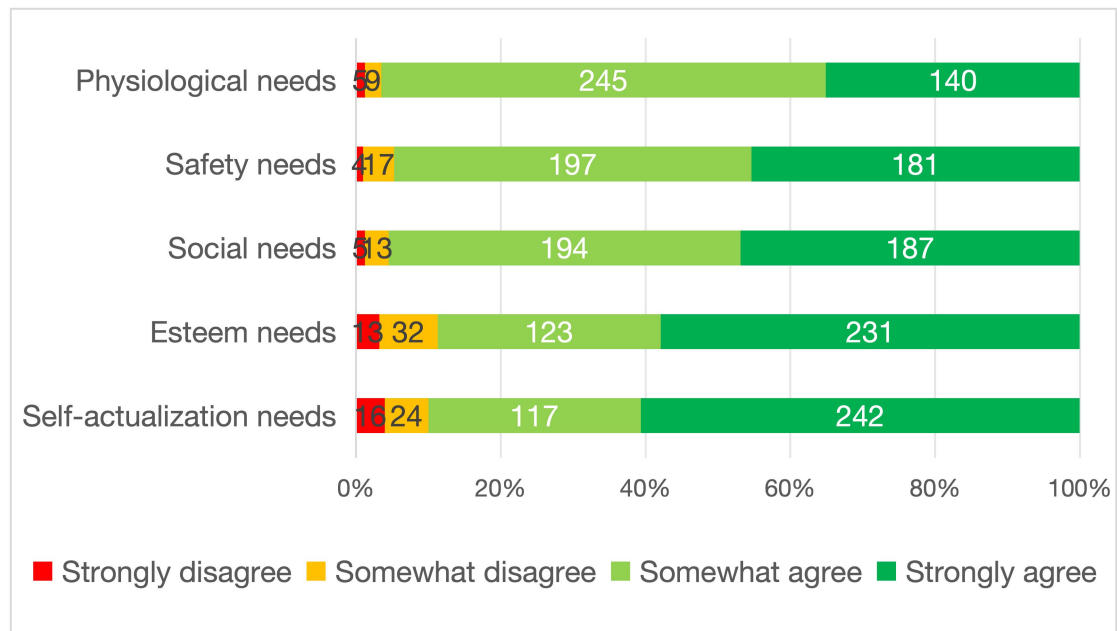
**Figure 7.** Barriers respondents face when participating in wellness tourism

The Figure 8 data shows a distinct pattern in how wellness tourism fulfills different levels of needs, characterized by "broad-based satisfaction for foundational needs and deepening impact for higher-level needs":

Foundational needs (physiological, safety, social) received overwhelmingly high approval, with total agreement rates exceeding 94% (physiological: 96%, safety: 94%, social: 96%). Notably, 47% of respondents strongly agreed that wellness tourism effectively addresses social needs (e.g., fostering family and friend connections), underscoring its role in promoting relaxation, health security, and interpersonal relationships. Higher-level needs (esteem, self-actualization), while slightly lower in total agreement (esteem: 89%, self-actualization: 90%), saw a significant surge in strong agreement rates - reaching 58% for esteem needs (e.g., self-improvement) and 61% for self-actualization (e.g., spiritual growth). These figures represent the highest "strongly agree" proportions across all categories, highlighting wellness tourism's unique capacity to support personal growth and spiritual fulfillment.

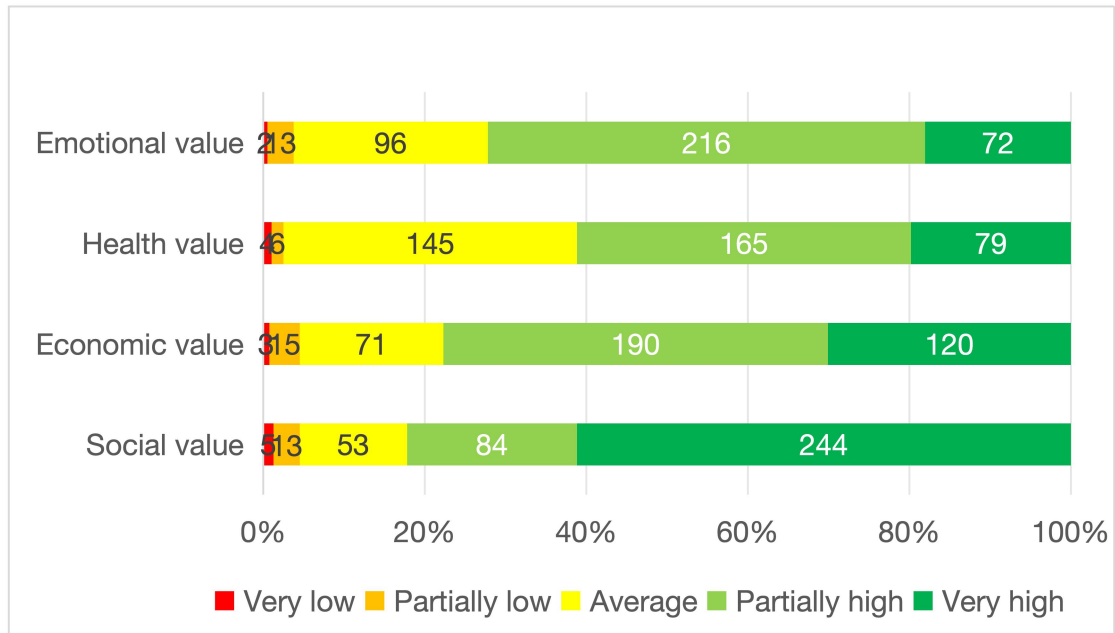
Disagreement rates remained below 10% overall, with the lowest observed for physiological needs (3%), reflecting broad consensus on the multidimensional value of wellness tourism. The findings suggest that wellness tourism not only serves as a tool for addressing basic health and social needs but also emerges as a critical medium for

exploring personal identity and achieving spiritual elevation, with its influence intensifying as needs ascend the hierarchy.



**Figure 8.** How wellness tourism fulfills different levels of needs

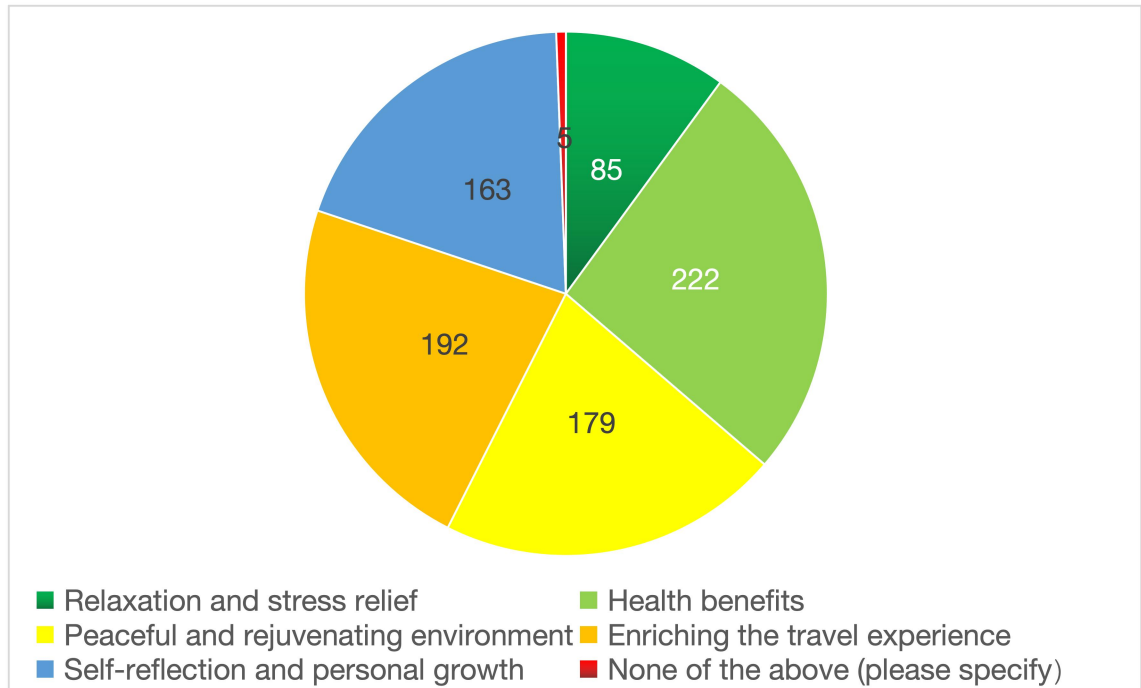
From Figure 9, it can be seen that social value (social opportunities) dominates overwhelmingly with an 82% high approval rate, where 61% of respondents rated its value as "very high," indicating that wellness tourism is perceived as a core context for strengthening social relationships. Economic value (cost-effectiveness) and emotional value (joy, relaxation) follow closely behind, with total approval rates of 78% and 72%, respectively. Health value (physical and mental well-being) shows a total approval rate of 61%, but the proportion of "very high" ratings is relatively low (20%), suggesting relatively conservative confidence in its long-term health benefits. Negative evaluations across all dimensions remained below 5%, underscoring respondents' broad acceptance of wellness tourism's multidimensional value. The findings further emphasize that the main appeal of wellness tourism lies not only in meeting individual health needs but also in fostering social engagement and emotional fulfillment. Additionally, the recognition of cost-effectiveness indicates market expectations for a balance between quality and price in consumer choices.



**Figure 9.** Perceived value of wellness tourism among respondents

Figure 10 indicates that the primary reason respondents recommend wellness tourism to friends or family is health benefits (26%), demonstrating widespread recognition of its direct value in improving physical and mental well-being. Enriched travel experiences (23%) and peaceful and rejuvenating environments (21%) follow closely behind, reflecting users' dual emphasis on the uniqueness of travel and comfortable settings, highlighting wellness tourism's differentiated appeal compared to other types of tourism. Self-reflection and personal growth (19%) as a recommendation at the spiritual level underscores wellness tourism's unique value in fostering internal development, particularly attracting groups seeking self-improvement. Surprisingly, relaxation and stress relief accounts for only 10%, with only 85 respondents selected it as a recommendation. Additionally, 1% of respondents selected "none of the above" and specified that primarily due to their lack of firsthand experience with wellness tourism, which limits their basis for recommendation. Thus, it is evident that the underlying logic of respondents' recommendations centers on functional value (health improvement, environmental experiences) as the core, supplemented by spiritual value (self-growth), while the influence of relaxation needs remains weak. Although the proportion of non-experienced individuals is small, it signals the need to lower cognitive barriers through practical experiences to convert potential users. Overall, the recommended motives for

wellness tourism reflects its comprehensive value in enhancing both physical-mental well-being and experiential upgrades.

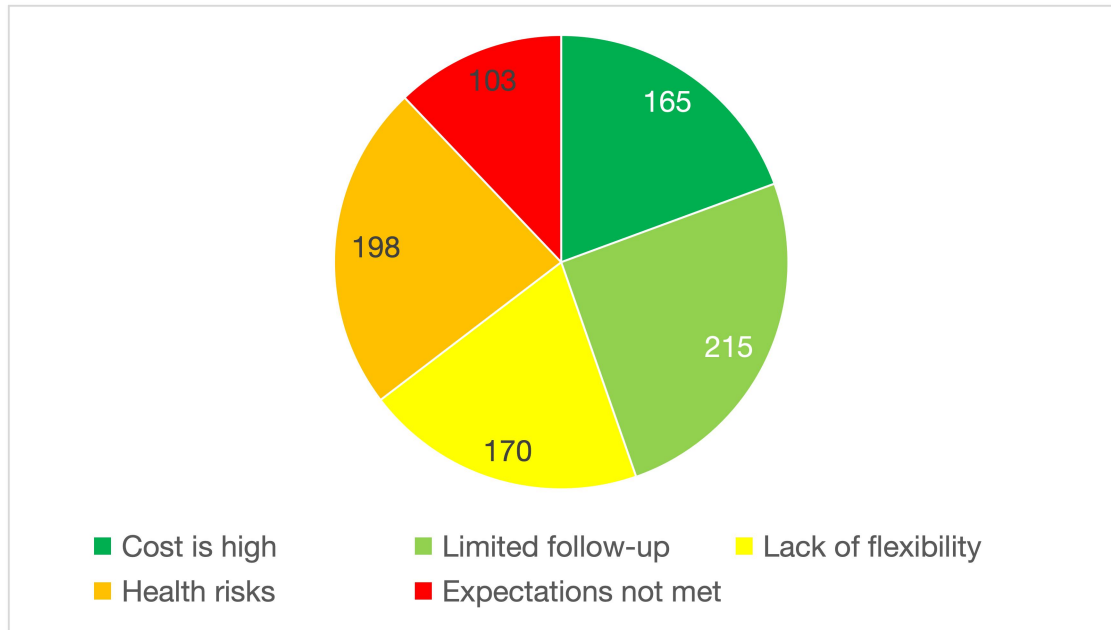


**Figure 10.** Reasons to recommend wellness tourism

The Figure 11 illustrates that negative feedback on wellness tourism primarily revolves around service sustainability, safety assurance, and cost control, while the impact of experiential gaps remains relatively limited.

Limited follow-up services (25%) ranked highest why respondents would not recommend wellness tourism to people around, indicating that the lack of post-experience support is a primary barrier. This suggests some respondents may discontinue recommendations due to an inability to derive sustained value. Health risks (23%) followed closely, reflecting concerns about potential safety or health hazards during wellness tourism activities, which directly undermine trust and willingness to recommend. Lack of flexibility (20%) and high costs (19%) jointly highlight structural flaws in the experience: the former points to rigid itineraries including fixed packages, time constraints, while the latter indicates perceived insufficient cost-effectiveness, with financial burdens weakening long-term engagement. Unmet expectations (12%), though

the lowest proportion, still reveal discrepancies between actual experiences and promotional claims, which may harm word-of-mouth advocacy.



**Figure 11.** Reasons not to recommend wellness tourism

This distribution provides clear directions for industry improvement: strengthening post-service systems, enhancing risk assessment mechanisms, and improving product flexibility and pricing transparency to rebuild user confidence and recommendation intent. Analysis of recommendation attrition further identifies lack of post-experience support (25%), health risk concerns (23%), and inflexible or overpriced products (39% combined) as critical factors eroding user loyalty, emphasizing the urgent need to enhance service sustainability, safety protocols, and product adaptability.

The survey shows that Chengdu's wellness tourism market is driven primarily by well-educated, middle-aged consumers who prioritize social connections, cultural enrichment and high-quality natural environments. While high awareness and participation in wellness tourism reflects its increasing integration into people's leisure lifestyles, persistent barriers such as time constraints, costs and service sustainability gaps prevent deeper engagement in wellness tourism. The industry's ability to meet basic needs while expanding its role in personal growth and social value makes it promising, but only if

industry improvements prioritize flexibility, safety and post-experience support to convert potential users and retain loyal advocates.

### **2.3.2. Results from the interviews**

To explore how people in Chengdu engage with wellness tourism, 15 interviews were conducted with locals from diverse backgrounds, including college students, office workers, retirees, delivery riders, and stay-at-home parents. Their ages ranged from 18 to 65, and their lifestyles varied significantly. These conversations revealed striking differences in how people view and access wellness tourism, shaped by their age, jobs, and family responsibilities. Below, the main patterns that emerged were analyzed.

The definitions of wellness tourism diverged sharply across age groups. Older participants framed wellness tourism as healthcare-driven, prioritizing traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and distrusting modern commercialized trends. For instance, R6 relied on hot springs for arthritis relief, stating, “The warmth helped my joints,” while R12 dismissed luxury seminars as scams. This group’s reliance on TCM reflects deep cultural trust in established practices, contrasting sharply with younger generations. A critical barrier for this cohort was digital exclusion: only R6 navigated online bookings, requiring family assistance, while others avoided digital platforms entirely due to complexity. Conversely, younger adults exhibited fragmented definitions. Professionals like R5 treated weekend meditation retreats as “stress-relief quick fixes” to cope with urban burnout. In contrast, high-income participants like R9 redefined wellness tourism as a status symbol, labeling his extreme fasting retreat as a body optimization project. Notably, four younger respondents (R3, R5, R7, R14) admitted their engagement was superficial, driven by workplace pressures rather than personal well-being. This contrast highlights a generational divide: older adults focus on health preservation, while younger individuals fluctuate between escapism and social performance.

Motivations for participating in wellness tourism were significantly influenced by individuals' occupations and life stages. Professionals linked wellness tourism to career advancement and skill acquisition. R11 studied Qiang ethnic baths during fieldwork trips, blending professional research with personal wellness. Similarly, R9 redefined his

retreat as an executive survival challenge. For this group, wellness tourism served dual purposes: personal rejuvenation and professional capital. R12 and R13, however, redefined wellness through practical integration into daily labor. R13 proposed healing journeys by linking wellness incentives (e.g., massage vouchers) to work routes, while R12 advocated retrofitting sanitation trucks with massage seats, asserting, “Wellness doesn’t require resorts.” Their approaches rejected luxury models, emphasizing accessibility and practicality. Additionally, R10 has to cancel plans due to childcare duties, lamenting, “Finding childcare is harder than climbing a mountain.” Single participants, while unburdened by family obligations, often fell prey to marketing traps, as seen with R7’s critique of Bali retreats for internet influencers.

Barriers centered on time, cost, and trust, particularly among students and laborers. Economic exclusion is of the problems, wellness tourism will cost half a semester budget of R7, while R13 also replied that it’s completely not affordable. For low-income groups like R12, wellness remained a luxury: “Health? Eating hot meals is health for us.” Time poverty has strong impact as well. R13 described post-shift exhaustion: “After delivery, my legs shake too much to walk upstairs, no energy to do anything else.” while R5 cited fragmented leave that limited participation to weekends. Parents like R10 faced compounded barriers, balancing childcare with limited personal time. Some participants experienced a trust deficit. R6 demanded certified traditional Chinese medicine experts to combat scams, while R11 critiqued unverified wellness herbal programs. Non-participants (e.g., R4, R7) held misconceptions, equating wellness tourism with unattainable luxury, for instance, R7 stated that Bali retreats are for internet influencers, and the concept is vague: R4 even doesn’t know what it means. Those structural inequalities—cost exclusion, time poverty and mistrust—make wellness tourism the privilege of the affluent and time-able groups, alienating marginalized groups.

Participants emphasized the need for culturally specific solutions. Younger respondents dismissed traditional spa models in favor of combining with something modern and new. For instance, R3 suggested integrating TCM with tea culture, while R14 proposed music-led meditation raves. Affordability was a key concern for some participants, who called for short-term programs, such as R5's suggestion of a weekend forest meditation

camp, and integration into the workplace, like R12's idea of massage seats in trucks. Additionally, niche demands highlighted market gaps. R15 critiqued mainstream wellness programs as too soft, advocating "hardcore challenges like Mount Fuji squats"—a call for intensity-driven wellness tourism. Similarly, R8 urged tech integration, suggesting smart wearable products to tailor wellness plans. Therefore, cultural localization and affordability are crucial for universal access, while specific unmet needs present opportunities for market diversification.

## **2.4. Discussion and recommendations**

Overall, the results of the survey align with the findings from the literature review, confirming couple of key motivational factors that influence wellness tourism. However, there are some biases and unique insights for the Chengdu situation. The survey results indicate that the primary motivations for wellness tourism among Chengdu residents are relaxation and stress relief, health improvement, and cultural experiences. These findings are consistent with previous studies, such as those by Duong et al. (2023, p. 153) and Haldar (2023, p. 58), which highlight the importance of relaxation and health as key drivers for wellness tourism. The high agreement on cultural experiences as a motivation also aligns with the findings of Gong et al. (2024, pp. 50–51) and Godlewska et al. (2023, pp. 2–3), emphasizing the role of cultural enrichment in travel decisions.

Interestingly, the survey revealed that social interaction is a significant motivator for Chengdu residents, with 93% of respondents agreeing that it influences their travel decisions. This finding is supported by Chen's (2022, p. 11) study, which identified social interaction as a strong motivator for wellness tourism. The emphasis on social interaction may reflect the collectivist culture prevalent in China, where social bonds and communal activities are highly valued.

The primary barriers to participating in wellness tourism identified in the survey are lack of time, language barriers, and high costs. These findings are consistent with the literature, such as the studies Ban and Kim (2020, p. 4), which highlight time constraints and financial burdens as significant obstacles to travel. The prominence of

language barriers underscores the need for more accessible and inclusive wellness tourism services for non-English-speaking travelers.

The survey results indicate that wellness tourism is perceived to fulfill various levels of needs, from physiological and safety needs to esteem and self-actualization needs. This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as discussed by Peng (2020, p. 20) and Talebi et al. (2023, pp.167–169). The high agreement on the fulfillment of social needs and esteem needs suggests that wellness tourism provides a comprehensive and enriching experience for travelers. However, the interviews revealed a paradox: while higher-income groups used wellness tourism for self-enhancement but just will a small number, lower-income participants focused on physiological needs (e.g., pain relief), while this aligns conceptually with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, further research with larger, stratified samples is required to validate this relationship.

The perceived value of wellness tourism among respondents is also high, with social value and economic value being the most recognized dimensions. This finding is consistent with what discussed by (Gan et al., 2023, pp. 3–5) and (Kim et al., 2024, pp. 2–6), which emphasizes the importance of social and economic benefits in shaping tourists' motivations and behavioral intentions. This discrepancy suggests that while respondents value immediate emotional rewards (e.g., family bonding), sustained health outcomes require clearer communication. 95% of respondents believe that wellness tourism enhances health. However, some expressed skepticism about its specific effects, such as the long-term benefits of stress reduction.

This indicates a need for more education on the barriers to effectiveness. Additionally, 23% of respondents raised concerns about the health risks associated with wellness tourism, including the use of inappropriate therapies. This highlights the perceived barriers identified in the Health Belief Model (HBM). The wellness industry should establish a certification system to enhance trust and safety for consumers.

Therefore, the primary motivations driving travelers to engage in wellness tourism are health improvement and cultural experiences, with educated middle-aged professionals looking to relieve urban stress and connect with traditional cultures such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). To better address these needs, offerings should prioritize

addressing time constraints and costs through accredited TCM therapies, culturally infused programs, and flexible, affordable options such as weekend packages to enhance wellness credibility. Streamlining access through multilingual services and inclusive digital platforms can bridge the gap between the elderly and marginalized groups, ensuring that wellness tourism is in line with Chengdu's cultural identity while expanding its reach beyond the affluent.

Based on the research findings and theoretical frameworks, the following recommendations aim to enhance wellness tourism offerings in Chengdu by addressing key barriers and aligning with travelers' motivations.

- Hiring bilingual staff, alongside providing translated materials and disability-friendly facilities (e.g., wheelchair-accessible meditation spaces), in order to cater to international and diverse demographics.
- Developing age-specific products (e.g., senior-friendly wellness packages) to engage underrepresented demographics and convert respondents with limited awareness through experiential marketing.
- Design flexible programs such as half-day/weekend wellness activities or corporate wellness packages to address time constraints and provide quick stress relief solutions.
- Integrate wellness activities with traditional Chinese medicine experiences, such as acupuncture, herbal workshops, or tea culture, to create comprehensive wellness packages.
- Offer various packages, like budget-friendly options (e.g., pay-per-activity yoga classes), while maintaining high-end packages (e.g., luxury hot spring retreats).
- Consider launching a digital post-experience system/platform like a WeChat mini-program which is important for people to have virtual follow-up support.
- Collaborating with potential partners such as tech firms to develop wearable devices/products for personalized wellness tracking or local farms to offer organic foods.

The study also has some important limitations to keep in mind. First, its demographic scope – focusing primarily on middle-aged, educated, middle-income residents of Chengdu – limits the generalizability of results to other geographic regions or

underrepresented populations. Second, the study used surveys and interviews where people described their own behaviors. This can be unreliable because people might say what they think sounds good instead of what they actually do. Methodologically, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to analyze dynamics, such as seasonal variations in travel preferences or long-term shifts in wellness-related behaviors.

Plus, the way participants were chosen likely included more wellness-focused people than average, making the results seem more positive than they really are. Conceptually, while frameworks like Maslow's hierarchy of needs provided a foundational lens, they risk oversimplifying the multifaceted motivations underlying wellness tourism. High-income people often cared about self-improvement or fun, while less wealthy people focused on basic health needs – a detail that needs deeper research. The study also didn't measure actual health outcomes (like fitness or stress levels), relying instead on what people felt they gained.

Furthermore, people may have different definitions and interpretations of terms like social interaction, which further complicates interpretive challenges. Finally, the study looked at how people perceive risks (like health concerns), but leaving a critical gap in understanding risk-motivated decision-making. While these limitations mean the findings shouldn't be applied too broadly, they highlight what future studies should fix – like tracking changes over time, including more diverse groups, and using concrete health data alongside surveys, and enhancing understanding of the evolving landscape of wellness tourism.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the motivations driving Chinese travelers' engagement in wellness tourism, with a focus on Chengdu residents. The research objectives were achieved and the research questions were answered. Grounded in theoretical frameworks such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where wellness tourism addresses foundational needs (e.g., relaxation as physiological relief) and higher-level aspirations (e.g., cultural immersion for self-actualization). Similarly, the push-pull theory of motivation clarifies how internal drivers such as urban burnout (push) and external attractions such as Chengdu's heritage sites (pull) work together to influence travel decisions.

The study emphasized the interplay between psychological drivers, cultural values, and structural barriers. A mixed-methods study was conducted, combining survey data from 399 respondents and semi-structured interviews with 15 Chengdu residents. A questionnaire was uploaded through social media platforms (e.g., WeChat and RedNote) targeting urban residents interested in wellness tourism. data were collected between March and April 2025.

The findings of this study align with global wellness tourism trends while revealing unique cultural and regional nuances. It also revealed that wellness tourism in Chengdu is primarily motivated by the pursuit of health improvement and cultural immersion, reflecting a blend of personal well-being goals and collectivist cultural values. Participants sought experiences that harmonized traditional practices, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), with natural and heritage-based activities. However, barriers such as time constraints, high costs, and trust gaps hindered deeper engagement, particularly among marginalized groups like low-income workers and time-poor parents.

Future research directions in the context of Chengdu's wellness tourism could focus on three interconnected areas. First, comparative studies could examine how Chengdu's

wellness tourism dynamics differ from those of other Chinese regions, such as Yunnan's emphasis on eco-tourism, to uncover scalable best practices. Such analysis might reveal unique regional strengths or innovative approaches that could be adapted across diverse contexts. Secondly, a behavioral analysis of tourists' price sensitivity could provide insights into consumer preferences for culturally tailored wellness offerings, such as TCM retreats, in contrast to standardized spa programs. Understanding these preferences could inform pricing strategies and product differentiation. Finally, sustainability integration presents a critical avenue for exploration, particularly in aligning wellness tourism with environmental conservation goals. Research might investigate practical strategies like developing low-impact hiking trails or promoting carbon-neutral homestays to ensure that tourism growth does not compromise ecological integrity. Together, these directions aim to enhance industry practices while balancing cultural relevance, economic viability, and environmental stewardship.

This thesis demonstrates that wellness tourism in Chengdu holds significant potential to address urban residents' growing demand for stress relief, health improvement, and cultural connection. By prioritizing nature, heritage, and community-driven experiences over generic luxury offerings, Chengdu can establish itself as a unique wellness destination that resonates with all travelers. Success will depend on collaborative efforts among policymakers, communities, and private stakeholders to bridge infrastructure gaps and ensure equitable access.

It was a profound privilege to undertake this research, guided by the unwavering support of university's academic supervisors and the invaluable contributions of participants who shared their perspectives. Hopefully, this work serves as a catalyst for innovative, culturally grounded tourism development in Chengdu and inspires future studies to explore the untapped synergies between wellness revitalization and holistic well-being.

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## Appendix 1. Survey Questions

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research study as part of a Master's thesis at the University of Tartu, Estonia. This study aims to explore the motivations behind wellness tourism and identify the key factors that make wellness destinations appealing to Chinese travelers. Your participation will greatly contribute to this research.

I kindly ask you to complete this anonymous survey, which will take approximately 5–10 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers – only those that best reflect your personal views and experiences. The data collected will be used solely for academic research purposes. Please answer the following questions truthfully and to the best of your knowledge. Your responses are invaluable and will help enhance the understanding of wellness tourism.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Survey Questions:

1. Are you from Chengdu 您来自成都吗?

- Yes / 是
- No / 否

2. What is your age 您年龄是?

- 18–25
- 26–35
- 36–45
- 46–55
- 56 and above/及以上

3. What is your gender 您性别是?

- Male/男性
- Female/女性

## Appendix 1 continued

4. What is your annual income level 您的年收入情况?

- Below 60,000 RMB/低于60,000元
- 60,000–100,000 RMB/50,000-100,000元
- 100,000–150,000 RMB/100,000-150,000元
- Above 150,000 RMB/150,000元以上

5. What is your education level 您的教育水平?

- High school or below/高中及以下
- Associate degree/大专
- Bachelor's degree/本科
- Master's degree or above/研究生及以上

6. How often you travel 您多久旅游一次?

- Once a month/一月一次
- Once a quarter/一个季度一次
- Once half a year/半年一次
- Once a year/一年一次
- None of the above (please specify)/以上都不是 (请注明)

7. How familiar are you with wellness tourism 您多了解康养旅游呢? (Smith & Puczko, 2008, p. 29)

- Very familiar/非常熟悉
- Familiar/熟悉
- Neutral/一般
- Unfamiliar/不熟悉
- Completely unfamiliar/完全不熟悉

**Appendix 1 continued**

8. Please rate the following motivations for travelling using the Scale 1–4 (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree) 请使用 1–4 评分标准对以下旅行动机进行评分 (1 = 非常不同意; 2 = 有点不同意; 3 = 有点同意; 4 = 非常同意) (Gong et al., 2024, pp. 50–51)

	strongly disagree / 非常不同意	somewhat disagree / 有点不同意	somewhat agree / 有点同意	strongly agree / 非常同意
Relaxation and stress relief/放松与减压				
Health improvement/ 改善健康				
Escape from daily life/逃离日常生活				
Cultural experiences/ 文化体验				
Social interaction/社交				

9. To what extent do the following factors influence your choice of tourism destination? (1 = very low; 2 = somewhat low; 3 = average; 4 = somewhat high; 5 = very high) 您认为以下因素多大程度上影响您对旅游目的地的选择? (1 = 非常低; 2 = 较低; 3 = 一般; 4 = 较高; 5 = 非常高) (Godlewska et al., 2023, p. 6)

	very low / 非常低	somewhat low / 较低	average / 一般	somewhat high / 较高	very high / 非常高
Safety of the destination/目的地的安全性					
Natural scenery/ 自然风景					
Quality of facilities and services/设施和服务质量					
Cost/消费					

**Appendix 1 continued**

Cultural experiences/ 文化体验				
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10. Please rate each of the following barriers you face when participating in wellness tourism on a scale of 1–4, 请根据以下您在参与健康旅游时遇到的障碍的严重程度进行评分。(1 = strongly disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree) (1=非常不同意; 2=有点不同意; 3=有点同意; 4=非常同意) (Jones et al., 2015, p. 568).

	strongly disagree / 非常不同意	somewhat disagree / 有点不同意	somewhat agree / 有点同意	strongly agree / 非常同意
High cost/ 费用过高				
Lack of time/ 时间不足				
Inadequate facilities/ 设施不完善				
Language barriers/ 语言障碍				

11. How many times have you participated in wellness tourism/您进行过几次康养旅游? (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 181–203)

- 0 times/0次
- 1–2 times/1-2次
- 3–4 times/3-4次
- 5 times or more/5次及以上

12. How do you think wellness tourism meets your following needs 您认为康养旅游如何满足您的以下需求? (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = strongly agree) (1=非常不同意; 2=有点不同意; 3=有点同意; 4=非常同意) (Peng, 2020, p. 20).

**Appendix 1 continued**

	strongly disagree / 非常不同意	somewhat disagree / 有点不同意	somewhat agree / 有点同意	strongly agree / 非常同意
Physiological needs (e.g., relaxation, health) / 生理需求 (如放松、健康)				
Safety needs (e.g., sense of security, health protection) / 安全需求 (如安全感、健康保障)				
Social needs (e.g., spending time with family and friends) / 社交需求 (如与家人朋友共度时光)				
Esteem needs (e.g., self-improvement, gaining recognition) 尊重需求 (如自我提升、获得认可)				
Self-actualization needs (e.g., self-discovery, spiritual growth) / 自我实现需求 (如自我发现, 精神成长)				

**Appendix 1 continued**

13. How do you perceive the value of wellness tourism in the following aspects 您对康养旅游的以下方面的感知价值如何? (1 = very low; 2 = partially low; 3 = average; 4 = partially high; 5 = very high) (1 = 非常低; 2 = 较低; 3 = 一般; 4 = 较高; 5 = 非常高) (Blut et al., 2024, pp. 503–504)

	very low/ 非常低	partially low / 较低	average / 一般	partially high / 较高	very high / 非常高
Emotional value (e.g., joy, relaxation) / 情感价值 (如愉悦、放松)					
Health value (e.g., physical, mental health) / 健康价值 (如身体健康、心理健康)					
Economic value (e.g., cost-effectiveness) / 经济价值 (如性价比)					
Social value (e.g., social opportunities) / 社会价值 (如社交机会)					

14. What reasons would you choose to recommend wellness tourism to your friends or family? 您会以什么理由向朋友或家人推荐康养旅游? (Ting et al., 2021, p. 1)

1. Relaxation and stress relief / 放松和缓解压力
2. Health benefits / 健康益处
3. Peaceful and rejuvenating environment / 宁静和有活力的环境

**Appendix 1 continued**

4. Enriching the travel experience / 丰富旅行体验
5. Self-reflection and personal growth / 自我反思与个人成长
6. None of the above (please specify)/以上都不是 (请注明)

15. What reasons would stop you from recommending wellness tourism to your friends or family? 哪些原因会阻止您向亲朋好友推荐康养旅游?

1. Cost is high / 费用高
2. Limited follow-up / 后续服务有限
3. Lack of flexibility / 缺乏灵活性
4. Health risks / 健康风险
5. Expectations not met / 期待没有被满足
6. None of the above (please specify)/以上都不是 (请注明)

## Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. Could you please briefly introduce yourself, including your age, occupation? 能否请您简要介绍一下自己，包括年龄、职业？

2. How often do you travel? 您多久旅游一次呢？

3. Can you describe the considerations that motivate you to choose a destination when you travel? 您能描述一下促使您选择旅行目的地的考虑因素吗？ (Duong et al., 2023, p. 153; Gong et al., 2024, pp. 50–51; Wang & Wen, 2018, p. 6240).

4. Can you talk about how much you know about wellness tourism? 您能谈谈您对健康旅游有多少了解吗？ (Smith & Puczkó, 2008, p. 29).

5. Have you ever participated in wellness tourism? 您是否参加过康养旅游？

If the answer is Yes for last question, then next question will be No. 4, if answer is No, then next question will be No.5

6. What are the primary motivations for you to participate in wellness tourism? 您参与健康旅游的主要动机是什么？ (Chen, 2022, p. 3)

7. What are the barriers for you to participate in wellness tourism? 您参与健康旅游的障碍是什么？

8. What are your suggestions or expectations for wellness tourism? 您对未来的康养旅游有什么期望或建议？ (Tuzunkan, 2018, p. 659)

# RESÜMEE

## MOTIVATION FOR WELLNESS TOURISM AMONG CHINESE TRAVELERS

Hao Jiang

Käesolev magistritöö uuris Hiina reisijate motivatsioone ja väljakutseid tervisturismis osalemisel, keskendudes Chengdu elanikele. Uuring, mis kasutas ankeete ja intervjuusid, tuvastas, et osalemist ajendasid lõõgastumine, tervise parandamine ja kultuurilised kogemused, millele lisandub sotsiaalne interaktsioon, mis peegelduvad Hiina kollektiivsetes väärtustes. Pandemiajärgsel perioodil on turistide eelistustes suurenenud tähelepanu ohutusele ja looduskaunitele keskkondadele, mis on toonud esile sihtkohtade valiku, mis ühendavad tervise ja turvalisuse. Takistused toovad esile struktuurse ebavõrdsuse: ajapuudus ja kõrged kulud mõjutavad ebaproportsionaalselt linnaprofessionaale ja madala sissetulekuga gruppe, samas kui keelebarjäärid takistavad kultuuridevahelist suhtlust.

Generatsioonidevahelised erinevused on ilmekad: vanemad inimesed prioriteerivad traditsioonilist Hiina meditsiini (THM), kuid seisavad silmitsi digitaalsete tõketega, samas kui nooremad professionaalid kasutavad tervisturismi kui staatuse sümbolit või kui põgenemisvõimalust linnamelu väsimusest. Chengdu potentsiaal tervisekeskusena, mis põhineb kliimati mitmekesisusel, THM pärandil ja kultuurilistel paikadel ja jääb alaarenenuks, kuna taristu on puudulik. Näiteks on 50% terviseatraktsioonidest suvepuhkepaigad, kuid nende ligipääs väljaspool Chengdu tasandiku majandustsooni on piiratud. See lahknevus ressursside ja kasutuse vahel rõhutab vajadust strateegilise arengu järele.

Soovitused keskenduvad kultuurilistele ja praktilistele kohandustele. Traditsioonilise Hiina meditsiini (THM) integreerimine kaasaegsetesse programmidesse võiks hõlmata näiteks interaktiivseid ravimtaimede töötube, kus külastajad õpivad ise ravimtaimi korjama ja tinktuure valmistama, või akupunktuuriga kombineeritud jõatreeninguid

mägedes. Ajapuuduses linnakodanike jaoks võiks luua modulaarseid nädalavahetusepakette (nt 36-tunnised "looduslikud resetid"), mis sisaldavad transpordi, toitumisprogrammi ja lühikesi THM-konsultatsioone. Vanemate generatsioonide digitaalse kaasamise suurendamiseks tuleks arendada WeChati platvormi spetsiaalseid liideseid koos videonõuannetega broneerimisprotsessi jaoks, samas kui noortele võiks pakkuda virtuaalseid tervisevisiite enne reisi, kasutades AI-põhiseid soovitusi. Ohutuse tõstmiseks tuleks luua Chengdu tervisturismi sertifitseerimissüsteem, mis ühendab rahvusvahelised standardid (nt GSTC) kohalike THM-protokollidega, näiteks desinfitseerimisrituaalid ravimtaimede kasutamisel spaades.

See töö täidab lünga tervisturismi uurimuses, analüüsides regionaalseid, kultuurilisi ja pandeemiajärgseid nüansse, kasutades alternatiivset metodoloogilist raamistikku. See mitte ainult ei uurigi tegureid, mis mõjutavad Hiina reisijate osalemist tervisturismis, vaid pakub ka poliitikakujundajatele ja tööstushuvilistele mustrit kultuuriliselt kaastundlike ja võrdsete tervispakkumiste kujundamiseks Chengdus ja sarnastes keskkondades. Teoreetiline ja praktiline panus tugevdab töö argumentatsiooni. Kokkuvõtteks töö rõhutab, et edukas tervisturism nõuab kohalike väärtuste sünteesi globaalsete standarditega, mis Chengdu puhul tähendab traditsioonilise Hiina tarkuse ühendamist moodsate tehnoloogiatega. Selline lähenemine võib muuta linna mitte ainult Hiina, vaid ka Aasia tervisekeskuseks.

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Hao Jiang

18/05/2025