



The Development Guidelines of Wellness Tourism for Affluent Tourists in the Eastern Economic Corridor (A Case Study of Chonburi Province)

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the motivational factors for travel among affluent tourists that influence perceptions of wellness tourism potential and their decision to engage in it. Also, the study examined the readiness of wellness tourism development in Chonburi Province. A mixed-methods research design was employed. The quantitative research utilized a survey method to collect data from affluent Thai and international tourists who traveled to Chonburi Province for wellness tourism purposes. A purposive sampling was applied, yielding a total of 356 valid responses. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The qualitative research involved in-depth interviews with 12 key stakeholders associated with tourism development and wellness service provision in Chonburi Province. The findings revealed that motivational factors, including both push and pull motivations, positively influenced the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province. Moreover, there are only three factors, which include natural tourism resources, cultural factors, and environmental and safety factors, that were found to significantly affect affluent tourists' decisions in traveling for wellness. Previous studies on wellness tourism potential have primarily focused on evaluations from the supply-side perspective, while tourists' personal experiences and motivations remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining tourist motivations in relation to the perceived potential of wellness tourism destinations, providing practical insights for tourism stakeholders to develop effective strategies and sustainable management policies for attracting wellness tourists to Chonburi Province and surrounding areas.

Keywords: 1) Travel Motivation 2) Wellness Tourism Potential 3) Travel Decision-making 4) Affluent Tourists 5) Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)

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Introduction

The global wellness tourism industry generated a market value of approximately USD 6.8 trillion in 2024, representing a 7.9% increase from the previous year. The wellness tourism sector alone generated approximately USD 894 billion in tourism expenditures in 2024 and is projected to continue growing rapidly in 2025. International wellness tourists spent significantly more per trip than general international tourists, while domestic wellness tourists also demonstrated substantially higher expenditures compared to average domestic travelers. Wellness tourists are typically affluent, well-educated, and frequent travelers who are willing to spend more on services and facilities that support health and well-being, while also seeking to maintain healthy lifestyles during travel experiences (Global Wellness Institute, 2025).

Wellness tourism in Thailand has been identified as the key components of the National Strategic Plan (2017–2026), aims to Thailand's position as an international wellness tourism hub. This strategy comprises four core pillars: Medical Service Hub, Wellness Hub, Academic Hub, and Product Hub (Department of Health Service Support, 2016). In addition, the Thai government has actively promoted this strategy in alignment with health and economic policies under the Health Economy framework, emphasizing the expansion of Thailand's potential in medical services, wellness services, research and development, investment, and the overall health ecosystem. Furthermore, wellness tourism, beauty tourism, and Thai traditional medicine have been

designated part of the six sub-plans under the Tourism Master Plan, which focuses on the development and enhancement of standards across the entire wellness tourism value chain. This includes products, services, personnel, entrepreneurs, and related tourism destinations. The plan emphasizes the creation of differentiation and a unique identity through service delivery rooted in distinctive Thai characteristics recognized at the international level, combined with the application of Thai knowledge and local wisdom integrated with creativity, science, technology, and innovation to generate added value for products and services.

The strategy also prioritizes affluent tourists, promotes the diversification of tourism offerings in response to evolving tourist demands, and supports the development of high-potential tourism segments while preserving Thailand's core strengths and national identity. Importantly, it places strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, continuous tourism revenue generation, and the establishment of a tourism foundation grounded in international standards and quality (National Economic and Social Development Council, 2018). In 2024, Thailand officially entered a Complete Aged Society, with the population aged 60 years and over accounting for approximately 13 million people, or 20 percent of the total population (National Statistical Office, 2024). This demographic transition is consistent with the global trend toward population ageing (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2020). As a result, elderly tourists have increasingly become an



important target market for many countries. This group of travelers has attracted considerable attention due to their greater availability of leisure time and strong emphasis on health and well-being. Elderly tourists typically seek travel experiences that reduce stress, promote mental relaxation and physical activity, provide an escape from modern urban lifestyles, and offer access to healthy food. Moreover, this segment demonstrates relatively high purchasing power and readiness to consume tourism-related products and services (Pinthong and Pongwat, 2022, p. 111). Furthermore, the Third National Tourism Development Plan (2023–2027) places strong emphasis on the development of a value-based tourism industry, aiming to increase revenue from both international and domestic tourists while enhancing the overall quality of tourism. The plan highlights the importance of aligning tourism development with changing consumer behaviors and the expansion of high-income markets (high-value tourism), rather than focusing solely on increasing tourist numbers (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2023).

Chonburi Province is one of the key target areas for tourism industry development under the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) policy, which places strong emphasis on affluent tourists and wellness tourism. The province demonstrates substantial readiness to support a wide range of wellness tourism activities, including traditional Thai massage, herbal compress massage, body scrubs, aromatherapy massage, and hydrotherapy. In addition, Chonburi is equipped with a large number of hotels, modern healthcare facilities, and

diverse wellness tourism attractions, including Thai lifestyle-based wellness destinations, nature-based wellness destinations, and recreational wellness destinations (Riwattana, Phonngam and Sriwatthanakul, 2023, p. 189). Prior studies on wellness tourism indicate that health-conscious tourists tend to travel to engage in activities related to physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, often combining health promotion and rehabilitation activities. Such activities include spa and water-based therapies alongside physical exercise, hiking, mountain climbing, learning about local culture, and consuming local cuisine (Janma, 2022, pp. 53–55). Similarly, Dillette, Douglas, and Andrzejewski (2020, p. 801) proposed that wellness tourism comprises four interrelated dimensions: physical, mental, spiritual, and environmental, which collectively contribute to holistic well-being. Among these dimensions, the environmental dimension serves as a fundamental supporting factor that enhances physical recovery, psychological healing, and inner growth among tourists. These outcomes subsequently lead to increased satisfaction, revisit intention, and the development of a positive destination image for wellness tourism. In contrast, a study by Phatcha, Phetchanchai, and Kaosaard (2020, p. 87) examined the wellness tourism potential influencing tourists' travel decisions and found that tourist attractions, facilities, transportation, service quality, and tourism promotion significantly affect tourists' decisions to participate in wellness tourism within the destination.

Previous studies have primarily examined tourist motivation in relation to tourist

satisfaction or post-travel behaviors. However, research on tourist motivation to the perceived potential of wellness tourism destinations remains limited. Moreover, studies on wellness tourism potential have largely relied on evaluations from the perspective of experts and local stakeholders, thereby reflecting a supply-side perspective, with limited attention given to tourists' personal experiences, individual motivations, and affluent tourist segments. Therefore, this finding aims to examine how affluent tourist motivation influences the perceived potential of wellness tourism destinations, investigate the wellness tourism potential affecting affluent tourists' travel decision-making, and explore the readiness of wellness tourism potential in Chonburi. The findings provide valuable insights into the travel decision-making processes of affluent tourists. The findings offer practical implications for public and private tourism stakeholders by informing effective development strategies and management policies to attract wellness tourists to Chonburi and its surrounding areas, thereby supporting sustainable tourism development.

Literature Review

Travel Motivation:

Motivation refers to the internal and external factors that stimulate individuals to engage in purposeful behavior and sustain such behavior over time (Daft, 2000, pp. 36-37). Pearce and Lee (2005, p. 228) further explained that tourism motivation is a critical factor in identifying tourists' behaviors as they seek to fulfill their personal needs. Crompton (1979, p.

408) and Iso-Ahola (1982, p. 258) examined motivational factors that influence tourists' choice of destinations and proposed that tourism motivation can be classified into two main categories: push factors and pull factors. Push factors are socio-psychological forces that originate internally and motivate individuals to travel or escape from their routine environment. In contrast, pull factors refer to destination attributes that attract tourists to specific locations in response to their internal push motivations. Wendri and Muliati (2019, p. 188) found that pull motivational factors influencing niche tourism, particularly wellness tourism, include enjoyment of hot stone massage, relaxation in whirlpools, jacuzzis, and traditional bathing experiences. These activities are perceived as expectations during the planning stage; however, they subsequently become key triggers that influence tourists' decisions to engage in wellness tourism. Similarly, Damijanić (2020, p. 131) identified push motivational factors as including health trends, relaxation, self-reward, and novelty seeking. Health trends are associated with maintaining good health and improving physical appearance, while relaxation and self-reward relate to leisure activities aimed at stress reduction. Conversely, pull factors consist of wellness tourism products categorized as basic wellness, intangible wellness, and enhanced wellness, as well as destination attributes such as cultural and natural heritage, entertainment and recreation, landscape and geographical characteristics, and health-related infrastructure, all of which play a significant role in shaping wellness tourism demand. Furthermore, Subawa, Mimaki, Mimaki, Baykal, and



Utami (2023, p. 13) found that pull factors are associated with more positive tourist attitudes and behavioral intentions toward wellness tourism destinations.

Wellness Tourism

Phuthong, Anuntavoranich, Chandrachai, and Piromsopa (2021, pp. 1043-1044) examined indicators for assessing the potential of wellness tourism destinations in Thailand and found that the evaluation framework can be categorized into seven key components: destination environment, travel and tourism policy, infrastructure, man-made resources and cultural tourism, health-related strategies and structures, innovation potential, and collaborative and proactive marketing strategies. Similarly, Panyo (2020, p. 175) proposed that wellness tourism potential should be assessed based on the tourism components framework (5As), comprising attraction, activities, accessibility, amenities, and accommodation. In line with this framework, Pawchit, Jaemjamrut, and Thampasit (2021, p. 160) found that attractions, accessibility, and amenities significantly influence ecotourism development outcomes. Furthermore, Klangnurak and Jaroenwisan (2023, p. 182) supported these findings by identifying accommodation and activities as key components of wellness tourism destinations.

Travel Decision-making

Kotler and Keller (2012, pp. 166-172) described the consumer decision-making process as a sequence of stages that consumers use when deciding to purchase products or services. This process consists of five stages, although consumers do not necessarily follow every stage in all purchase decisions. The de-

cision-making process begins before the purchase and continues to have effects after the purchase. The five stages of the decision-making process include problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. In the tourism context, travel decision-making is regarded as a complex process that involves understanding the underlying reasons influencing tourists' choices. These decisions are shaped by multiple factors and may change over time in response to situational conditions and evolving circumstances (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008, pp. 146-152).

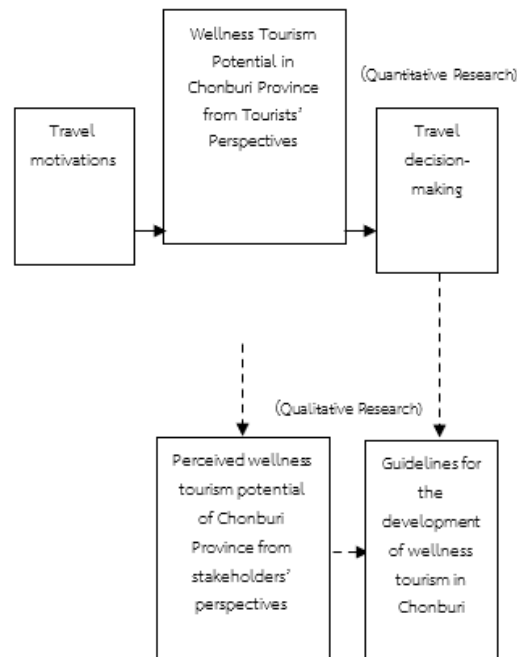


Figure 1 Research Framework

Methods

This research received ethical approval from the Human Ethics Committee of Burapha University under approval number HU046/2566. This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The details of the research methodology are presented as follows.

Quantitative Research

The quantitative approach was used to address Objective 1, which aimed to examine how affluent tourist motivation influences the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province, and Objective 2, which investigated the influence of wellness tourism potential on affluent tourists' decisions to participate in wellness tourism in Chonburi Province. The sample for this study consisted of Thai and international affluent tourists who traveled to

Chonburi Province for wellness tourism purposes.

In this study, affluent tourists refer to Thai tourists who stay overnight in Chonburi for at least 3 days and 2 nights, with an average tourism budget ranging from 1,540.68 to 2,262.34 THB per person per day or approximately 6,890.14 THB per trip, as well as international tourists from Asia (China, India, and Russia) who stay approximately 4–9 days with estimated travel expenditures of 3,150–3,750 USD per trip, and international tourists from Europe (Italy, Spain, Germany, France, and Sweden) who typically stay 9–13 days with estimated travel expenditures of at least 4,000 USD per trip (Pinthong and Rodhring (2025, p. 197). The sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977, pp. 75-77) formula for an unknown population proportion, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.



Data were collected using purposive sampling, resulting in a total of 384 valid questionnaires. This study collected data using a questionnaire adapted from previous studies by Crompton (1979, p. 408), Iso-Ahola (1982, p. 258), Phuthong, Anuntavoranich, Chandrachai, and Piromsopa (2021, pp. 1043-1044), and Kotler and Keller (2012, pp. 166-172). The questionnaire was divided into four sections as follows. Section 1 consisted of closed-ended multiple-choice questions using a nominal scale. This section gathered demographic information of the respondents for descriptive analysis, including gender, marital status, age, educational level, and monthly income. The questions were presented in the form of checklists. Section 2 comprised questions related to push and pull motivations for wellness tourism travel in Chonburi Province. Section 3 focused on wellness tourism potential for affluent tourists. Section 4 addressed questions concerning travel decision-making for wellness tourism among affluent tourists. Sections 2–4 were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, to 1 = very low. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by five experts, yielding Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) values ranging from 0.67 to 1.00 for all items, which met the acceptable criterion of 0.50 or higher (Rovinelli and Hambleton, 1976, p. 830). After revising the questionnaire based on the experts' recommendations, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents. The reliability of the instrument was then assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, resulting in a value of 0.851, indicating a high level of

reliability, as the coefficient approached 1.00 and exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978, p. 245). Also, descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

Qualitative Research

This study collected qualitative data from 12 key informants who were involved in policy formulation and service provision related to wellness tourism. The participants consisted of two stakeholders involved in wellness tourism management in the Eastern region, two executives or board members of the Eastern Spa and Wellness Association, two executives, business owners, or authorized representatives from spa and health massage businesses in the Eastern region, and two residents from Chonburi. The sample size was determined by applying the rule of thumb, as referenced in Sim, et al. (2018, pp. 620-622), in conjunction with the concept of data saturation (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022, pp. 2-4). Data were collected using in-depth interviews, with open-ended questions guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on stakeholders involved in wellness tourism development in the Eastern region of Thailand, based on the expert judgment. In addition, snowball sampling was employed, whereby the initial informant recommended other potential participants for subsequent inter-

views. The data obtained from the in-depth interviews were analyzed to examine stakeholders' perspectives related to wellness tourism policy formulation and the readiness of wellness tourism potential in Chonburi Province. The analysis was conducted using content analysis, which involved synthesizing key ideas from the interview transcripts. In addition, analytic induction was applied to interpret meanings, identify relationships, and generate conclusions based on patterns emerging from the qualitative data. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, research triangulation techniques were employed. Specifically, data triangulation was used to verify the accuracy and credibility of the information obtained. This process involved collecting responses to the same interview questions from three different groups of participants, as well as comparing information provided by multiple informants within the same stakeholder category. This approach helped confirm the consistency and validity of the data and ensured that the findings accurately addressed the research questions. Furthermore, theory triangulation was applied by interpreting the qualitative findings through multiple theoretical perspectives relevant to wellness tourism. Finally, the results were presented in the form of descriptive narrative analysis, with synthesized interpretations aligned with Research Objective 3.

Results

Quantitative Research Findings

The analysis of respondent profiles revealed that the majority of were female (51.7%), aged 25–34 years (57.3%), and held a

bachelor's degree (45.5%). Most respondents reported a monthly income between of 25,001 and 50,000 THB (53.4%) and were employed in the private sector (50.3%). Regarding travel characteristics, most wellness tourists traveling to Chonburi Province were Thai tourists from the Eastern region (56.5%), while the majority of international tourists originated from South-east Asia (59.8%). Most respondents traveled with friends (41.0%). In terms of information sources, respondents primarily obtained tourism-related information from friends or family members (26.2%), followed by search engines (22.6%), online travel agencies (21.6%), tourism-related social media platforms (18.9%), and official websites of tourist attractions, destinations, or accommodation providers (0.8%), respectively. Furthermore, the most influential factors affecting decisions to participate in wellness tourism in Chonburi Province were price (12.0%), followed by accommodation (9.2%) and tourist attractions (8.5%), respectively.

The relationships among the variables were examined using correlation analysis. The results indicated that push factors were positively correlated with pull factors at a moderate level, with a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.717$, which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. In addition, push factors demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province ($R = 0.750$, $p < 0.01$).



Table 1 Correlation Analysis of Push and Pull Motivational Factors and Wellness Tourism Potential in Chonburi Province

	Push	Pull	Attraction	Visit
Push	1			
Pull	.717**	1		
Attraction	.729**	.750**	1	
Visit	.505**	.478**	.618**	1

**p < 0.01

Based on Table 1, the correlations among each pair of independent variables were found to be at a moderate level. The correlation coefficients between the independent variables did not exceed 0.80, which is within the acceptable threshold suggested by Berry and Feldman (1985). This indicates that multicollinearity is not present, and therefore,

all independent variables are appropriate for inclusion in the multiple regression analysis

The results of the hypothesis testing were used to address Objectives 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 1: Tourist motivational factors among affluent tourists positively influence on the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province.

Table 2 Results of Hypothesis Testing on the Influence of Travel Motivations on the Wellness Tourism Potential of Chonburi Province

Travel Motivations	B	Beta	t	P-Value
Push factors	0.323	0.393	8.540	0.000**
Pull factors	0.417	0.468	10.166	0.000**

R = 0.798, Adjusted R Square = 0.635, F = 309.975, P * < 0.01

Based on Table 2, the results indicate that tourist motivation, comprising both push and pull factors, has a positive influence on the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province. This conclusion is supported by the p-values, all of which were less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. The multiple regression results showed that R = 0.701 and R² = 0.491, indicating that the independent variables explained 49.1% of the variance in the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.724, suggesting no significant autocorrelation. Multicollinearity diagnostics revealed acceptable Tolerance (0.431) and VIF

(2.319) values, confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern and that the assumptions of multiple regression analysis were satisfied (Hair, et al., 2010, pp. 200-204).

The findings further reveal that both motivational factors significantly affect wellness tourism decision-making in Chonburi Province at a moderate level, with an R-square value of 0.637, which was statistically significant at the 0.05 level (Sig. = 0.000). This suggests that the model explains approximately 63.7% of the variance in wellness tourism potential.

Among the motivational factors, pull factors exerted the strongest influence on

wellness tourism decision-making ($\beta = 0.468$), followed by push factors ($\beta = 0.393$). Notably, both factors exhibited positive effects on the dependent variable.

Hypothesis 2: The wellness tourism potential positively influences tourists' decisions to participate in wellness tourism in Chonburi Province

Table 3 Results of Hypothesis Testing on the Influence of Wellness Tourism Potential in Chonburi Province on Wellness Tourism Decision-Making among Affluent tourists

Wellness Tourism Potential	B	Beta	t	P-Value
Natural tourism resources	0.340	0.296	3.683	0.000**
health-specific factors,	0.013	0.012	0.126	0.900
expertise and staff factors	0.168	0.160	1.659	0.098
Economic factors,	-0.045	-0.044	-0.499	0.618
Cultural factors	0.238	0.238	2.925	0.004*
infrastructure, amenities, and regulatory factors	-0.098	-0.093	-1.015	0.311
environmental and safety factors	0.190	0.184	2.170	0.031*
sports activity factors	-0.066	-0.068	-0.988	0.324

R = 0.639, Adjusted R Square = 0.395, F = 30.011, P ** <0.01, P * <0.05

Based on Table 3, the results indicate that the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province, specifically natural tourism resources, cultural factors, and environmental and safety factors, positively influenced wellness tourism travel decisions of affluent tourists. The regression results showed that R = 0.620 and R² = 0.380, indicating that the independent variables explained 38.0% of the variance in the dependent variable. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.559, suggesting no significant autocorrelation. Multicollinearity diagnostics revealed acceptable Tolerance (0.516–0.625) and VIF (1.601–1.937) values, confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern and that the assumptions of multiple regression analysis were satisfied (Hair, et al., 2010, pp. 200–204).

This conclusion is supported by p-values less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$) for all three

factors. Among these factors, natural tourism resources demonstrated the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.296$), followed by cultural factors ($\beta = 0.238$) and environmental and safety factors ($\beta = 0.184$), respectively. In contrast, health-specific factors, expertise and staff factors, economic factors, infrastructure, amenities, and regulatory factors, as well as sports activity factors, were found to have no significant influence on wellness tourism travel decisions among affluent tourists, as indicated by p-values greater than 0.05.

Qualitative Research Finding

The qualitative research finding was used to address Objective 3. The interview findings revealed that the primary key informants consisted of both male and female participants aged 40 years and above, holding bachelor's and master's degrees. The other informants were male and female participants



aged 45 years and above, with educational attainment at the bachelor's degree level or higher. The qualitative data obtained from interviews with stakeholders regarding the wellness tourism potential in Chonburi Province to accommodate affluent tourists were analyzed.

The findings indicated that Chonburi Province demonstrates readiness in multiple dimensions, including tourism attractions and wellness destinations, accessibility to tourist sites, amenities, environmental conditions of tourism destinations, community-based management, local community participation, and promotion and communication of wellness tourism destinations. In addition, Chonburi Province possesses several strengths, including a diversity of tourist attractions, convenient transportation accessibility, an international airport, sufficient tourist facilities, relatively affordable prices, and widespread recognition among both domestic and international tourists. The province also offers destinations suitable for physical recovery and relaxation. However, several weaknesses were identified. Despite the diversity of attractions, wellness tourism is not among the top associations tourists have with Chonburi Province, and the province lacks strong recognition as a wellness tourism destination. In addition, insufficient marketing and promotion and inadequate enforcement of laws and regulations were noted as key weaknesses. Regarding opportunities, Chonburi Province has the potential to accommodate diverse tourist segments and a wide range of tourism activities. Furthermore, strong government support for wellness tourism development aimed at positioning Thailand as a

global wellness tourism destination along with increasing interest from external investors in wellness tourism, presents significant opportunities for further development. In contrast, several threats were identified, including a low level of tourist awareness of wellness tourism, insufficient enforcement of laws and regulations, and limitations in public transportation systems, which do not provide comprehensive access to all tourism destinations within the province.

At present, government agencies and relevant organizations have an emphasis on the continuous development of tourism destinations, accommodation, and wellness tourism activities in order to promote income distribution to provinces and local communities. These efforts aim to strengthen the grassroots economy, generate employment, increase community income, and attract health-conscious, affluent tourists. Accordingly, key factors essential to the development of wellness tourism potential in Chonburi Province include collaboration among public, private, and community sectors, marketing and promotional strategies, economic, social, and political conditions, government policies, and community participation. In addition, approaches to tourism promotion development include destination improvement, planning, conservation, and continuous development, which create awareness and encourage active participation from local communities and relevant organizations throughout the entire destination development process, from the initial planning stage to project implementation and subsequent evaluation.

Overall, the qualitative findings are consistent with the quantitative results, indicating that Chonburi Province possesses substantial wellness tourism potential to accommodate affluent tourists. This potential is reflected in several key dimensions, including tourism attractions and wellness destinations, accessibility to tourism sites, amenities, environmental conditions of destinations, community-based management, local community participation, and the promotion of wellness tourism destinations. In addition, Chonburi Province demonstrates notable strengths in terms of diverse tourism attractions and activities, convenient transportation with an international airport, adequate tourist facilities, relatively affordable prices, strong recognition among both domestic and international tourists, and destinations suitable for physical recovery and relaxation. Furthermore, natural tourism resources, cultural factors, and environmental and safety factors were identified as key determinants influencing tourists' decisions to participate in wellness tourism. However, despite the diversity of attractions and tourism resources in Chonburi Province, wellness tourism is not perceived as a primary tourism focus by tourists. Moreover, the province lacks a clearly defined wellness tourism identity, which remains a significant challenge for positioning Chonburi Province as a distinctive wellness tourism destination.

Discussion

The findings are discussed based on the research objectives as follows.

1. The first objective of this study was

to investigate the influence of affluent tourists' motivation on wellness tourism potential in Chonburi Province. The findings of this study indicate that both push and pull factors have a positive influence on the wellness tourism potential of Chonburi Province among affluent tourists. This result is consistent with the study by Damijanić (2020, pp. 879-884), who examined the push and pull travel motivation theory and found that push factors, including health trends, relaxation and self-reward, and interest in new experiences, serve as key motivations for wellness tourists. Meanwhile, pull motivational factors encompass wellness tourism products such as intangible wellness and enhanced wellness, which are closely associated with destination attributes such as cultural and natural heritage, entertainment and recreation, and destination landscapes. Similarly, Azman and Chan (2010, p. 21) emphasized that motivation refers to individuals' needs and attitudes that direct behavior toward tourism-related activities. Their findings revealed that spa and wellness tourists' motivations are closely linked to leisure and relaxation-oriented travel, where self-satisfaction functions as a push factor, while spa attributes serve as pull factors. These factors act as key drivers motivating tourists to visit spa and wellness destinations. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Gan, et al. (2023, pp. 12-13), who found that wellness tourists are a heterogeneous group driven by multiple motivations simultaneously, and that tourism motivation significantly influences travel behavior. In addition, an important reason prompting tourists to initiate travel is the increasing level of stress



in contemporary life, including work-related, family-related, and other personal pressures. Wellness and beauty tourism, as well as travel to comfortable, relaxing, and pleasant environments, enable tourists to escape from their routine surroundings, enhance their physical and psychological well-being, and effectively fulfill their personal needs.

2. The second objective of this study was to examine the wellness tourism potential factors influencing the wellness travel decisions of affluent tourists in Chonburi Province. The analysis included eight dimensions: natural tourism resources, health-specific factors, professional expertise and staff, economic factors, cultural factors, infrastructure, amenities and regulations, environmental and safety factors, and sports activity factors. The findings revealed that only three factors which consist of natural tourism resources, cultural factors, and environmental and safety factors had a significant influence on affluent tourists' decisions to participate in wellness tourism in Chonburi Province. These findings are consistent with the study by Phatcha, Phetchanchai, and Kaosaard (2020, p. 87), which indicated that consumers increasingly prioritize health and well-being in order to maintain physical strength, longevity, desired body image, youthfulness, and social appearance. Such concerns have led to changes in lifestyle patterns, greater attention to well-being and preventive behaviors, increased environmental awareness, and a growing inclination toward wellness tourism. Moreover, tourism destinations characterized by natural beauty, attractive environments, traditions and cultural activities,

adequate tourist information centers, and accessible health-related services were found to significantly influence wellness travel decisions in the eastern coastal provinces of Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat. Tourists primarily travel to these destinations to relax, relieve stress, and explore new attractions, with preferences for accommodations located close to tourist sites and, importantly, destinations that offer a high level of safety. Supporting this view, Chaemchamrus and Phuanpoh (2023, pp. 44-45) found that attraction-related factors, transportation and accessibility, and wellness tourism activities have varying effects on wellness tourism decision-making. Before undertaking a trip, tourists systematically consider these factors when evaluating and finalizing their travel decisions. In addition, studies by Panyo (2020, p. 182), Pawchit, Jaemjamrat, and Thampasit (2021, p. 174), and Suwannaphong (2023, pp. 322-325) highlighted that tourism activities, destination attractiveness, service quality provided by hosts and staff, cleanliness, accessibility, transportation services from airports or accommodations, comprehensive transportation networks, diverse travel options (road, air, rail), and the availability of sufficient and varied accommodations play a crucial role in motivating tourists to travel. Furthermore, effective promotion of wellness tourism destinations through official websites, social media platforms, and tourism service networks enhances destination visibility and facilitates easier access for target tourist segments.

3. The third objective examined the readiness of wellness tourism potential in Chonburi. The finding indicated that Chonburi

demonstrates strong potential across several dimensions, including wellness attractions and destinations, accessibility, amenities, destination environment, community management, local participation, and promotional activities that enhance awareness of wellness tourism. These findings are consistent with Anuruskakornkul, Kokong, and Photihung (2023, p.115), who noted that the post-COVID-19 era has increased tourists' health consciousness, leading to greater demand for wellness tourism focused on relaxation, preventive healthcare, rehabilitation, and holistic well-being.

Wellness tourism today extends beyond traditional spa and massage services by integrating physical and mental well-being through diverse wellness programs tailored to tourists' needs. The development of wellness tourism for affluent tourists requires collaboration among the public sector, private sector, and local communities, particularly through investments in infrastructure, transportation, healthcare services, and tourism facilities within the EEC. In addition, Chonburi's natural, cultural, and culinary resources contribute significantly to destination competitiveness. However, Chonburi is still perceived as lacking a clear and distinctive identity in relation to wellness tourism, which may limit its ability to position itself as a recognized wellness tourism destination in the competitive tourism market. Furthermore, destination image building, service quality, safety standards, and community participation play important roles in strengthening wellness tourism competitiveness and supporting sustainable tourism development. These findings support the study by Chirakit-

nimit, Chetianukornkul, and Sandthong (2023, p.292), which emphasized that local community participation and collaborative tourism management are key factors in attracting tourists and achieving sustainable tourism development.

Recommendations

Chonburi Province offers a wide range of tourist attractions, well-developed amenities, diverse wellness tourism activities, and is popular with both domestic and international tourists. However, tourists' perceptions of the diversity of attractions and the reputation of Chonburi Province as a wellness tourism destination remain relatively low. In addition, Chonburi Province still lacks a clearly defined wellness tourism identity.

Therefore, public sector agencies should allocate marketing and public relations budgets to enhance awareness of wellness tourism in the province. Promoting through multiple channels, accompanied by systematic monitoring and evaluation, may identify challenges and refine communication strategies in order to effectively reach tourists interested in wellness tourism. Moreover, relevant stakeholders should identify and promote a clear wellness tourism identity for Chonburi Province to elevate its positioning as a wellness tourism destination among both domestic and international markets. Furthermore, businesses related to wellness tourism should collaborate closely with public sector organizations to develop and offer innovative and diverse wellness activities. Such collaboration should focus on building integrated service networks and developing wellness tourism routes that



may connect tourism enterprises with local communities, thereby enhancing the overall wellness tourism experience and supporting sustainable tourism development.

Recommendations for future researchers

Future studies should conduct comparative analyses between domestic and international tourists, as well as among wellness tourists across different age groups to identify differences in motivations and travel behaviors related to wellness tourism in Chonburi. Such studies would provide valuable insights for designing wellness tourism activities that address

the preferences and satisfaction of diverse tourist segments. In addition, future research should expand the geographic scope beyond Chonburi to neighboring provinces in the Eastern region to reduce geographic limitations and enhance regional destination competitiveness. Researchers are also encouraged to employ longitudinal approaches to overcome the limitations of cross-sectional data and adopt more diverse sampling strategies to minimize potential sampling bias and improve the generalizability of the findings.

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