

Research on the high-quality development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi Province

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Abstract: The rapid aging of the population and the increasing number of sub-healthy individuals have propelled the rapid development of the wellness tourism industry, highlighting the inevitable trend of deep integration between wellness services and the tourism sector, thus meeting the societal demand for a healthier lifestyle. China, endowed with vast geographical and population resources, provides excellent conditions and strong demand for the development of wellness and tourism. Focusing on the development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi Province, this study explores the factors and challenges of its development, and proposes several paths for high-quality development tailored to local conditions: integrating related industries to activate the wellness sector; establishing industry standards for the wellness sector; enhancing brand recognition and pursuing distinctive development paths; and strengthening the construction of talent in the wellness field. These efforts aim to inject new vitality into the economic development of Jiangxi Province and the growth of wellness tourism.

1. Introduction

The rise of wellness tourism is closely linked to the implementation of China's "Healthy China" strategy. According to the 2016 "Healthy China 2030" Outline Plan, there is a strong emphasis on promoting the integration of wellness with elderly care, tourism, fitness, and leisure activities to foster new industries, new formats, and new models. Specifically, the strategy aims to develop internationally competitive wellness and medical tourism projects and vigorously promote Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) health tourism. This policy direction has guided the development of wellness tourism, fostering its vigorous growth and promoting deep integration between the wellness industry and tourism sector, thus providing crucial support for achieving the national wellness objectives[1]. As an integral part of the wellness industry, wellness tourism possesses significant development potential and vast prospects[2]. In response, various measures have been introduced at both the national and local levels to support the development of wellness tourism. With the guidance of the national development plan for wellness tourism, local initiatives have been actively pursued. Jiangxi Province has explicitly aimed to establish local standards for wellness tourism promptly, playing a positive role in regulating, enhancing quality, and improving

efficiency in the development of this sector. Therefore, exploring the pathways for high-quality development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi is of great practical significance and represents a critical initiative towards achieving the goals of the Healthy China strategy.

2. Analysis of the elements of Jiangxi's development of wellness tourism

2.1 Social needs

Wellness tourism is a new type of tourism that integrates tourism with wellness, aiming to promote various tourism activities that enable people to achieve a state of natural harmony and excellence in physical, mental, and spiritual aspects through means such as beauty enhancement, physical fitness, nutritious diet, self-cultivation, and environmental care. It is considered the advanced stage of tourism leisure vacation and represents the new trend of development in China's cultural and tourism industry. Wellness are the goals, and tourism is the means. "The purpose of wellness tourism is to enable people to learn to take the beauty of heaven and earth to nurture their bodies[3]." Undoubtedly, the actual demand of the general public for wellness has driven the rise of health and tourism, which conforms to the basic logic that demand determines supply. Currently, there are several manifestations of the public's demand for wellness. On the one hand, with the improvement of people's material living standards, their attention to their own health is also increasing. In recent years, "sub-health" has become a hot topic, referring to a state where the body is between health and disease, particularly prominent among urban white-collar workers, IT professionals, and other groups. Faced with reminders of "sub-health" issues, the general public has begun to pay attention to preventing and treating sub-health problems through health tourism activities, eager to heal their minds and relieve stress through travel, which undoubtedly expands the consumer demand for wellness tourism. On the other hand, considering special populations, mainly the elderly, population aging is a challenge faced by many countries around the world, including China. Of particular concern is that the rapid increase in the elderly population will become a new normal in China in the future. In many areas of China, the elderly have financial resources and leisure time, and their demand for elderly care is more urgent. The pursuit of a comfortable and free late-life has gradually replaced the traditional concept of "raising children to support old age". Therefore, more and more elderly people choose to travel north in summer and south in winter to nourish their hearts, health, and retirement through wellness tourism.

2.2 Policy Drivers

At both the national and local levels, various policies actively introduced provide strong guidance and support for the development of wellness tourism industry. As early as January 2016, the former National Tourism Administration issued the "National Wellness Tourism Demonstration Base Standards," aiming to promote the integration of tourism and wellness industries and create a series of comprehensive and exemplary wellness tourism destinations. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the implementation of the "Healthy China Strategy," placing people's health at the foundation of realizing a better life. The State Council outlined in the "Healthy China 2030 Planning Outline" the need to accelerate the integration of health with elderly care, tourism, diet, the internet, fitness, and leisure, among five major areas[4]. In March 2023, the Health China Action Promotion Committee issued the "Key Points of Work for the Health China Action in 2023," further improving the work mechanism of the Health China Action through organizing monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of the Health China Action in 2022, annual special action workgroup evaluations, and regular work scheduling meetings.

The local government of Jiangxi Province has implemented measures to strongly support and

develop wellness tourism. The "Opinions of the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government Office on Promoting the Development of Wellness Tourism" proposes that by 2025, the province will nurture a group of large-scale health and tourism enterprises, establish a number of national wellness tourism demonstration bases and leading projects, incubate a batch of wellness tourism products with independent intellectual property rights, and cultivate a group of high-end applied talents in health tourism. The proportion of wellness tourism revenue in the total tourism revenue will significantly increase, becoming a strategic new growth point for the tourism industry in our province. The Jiangxi Provincial Government has identified the development of the wellness industry as a key project during the "13th Five-Year Plan," proposing to construct multiple demonstration bases across the province, forming a preliminary pattern for the development of wellness tourism.

2.3 The advantages of wellness resources

Jiangxi Province, as a traditional cultural hub in China, boasts abundant natural and cultural resources, offering unparalleled advantages for the development of wellness tourism. Firstly, its advantageous geographical location hosts numerous hot spring resources such as Lushan and Longhushan, renowned for their therapeutic effects, attracting a large number of visitors seeking relaxation. Secondly, with a rich historical heritage, Jiangxi features sites like Jinggangshan and Sanqingshan, significant revolutionary landmarks, as well as scenic spots like Lushan and Longhushan, blending natural beauty with profound historical and cultural significance. Additionally, Jiangxi showcases unique folk customs and traditional medicine culture, exemplified by the Hakka culture in Gannan, the Tengwang Pavilion in Nanchang, and the tea culture in Jiujiang, providing diverse experiences and options for health and wellness tourism. In summary, Jiangxi Province offers exceptional natural and cultural resources, presenting vast opportunities and rich potential for the development of wellness tourism.

3. The challenges encountered in the development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi Province

3.1 The integration level of the wellness industry development is not high

Despite the abundant natural and cultural resources in Jiangxi Province, the level of integration between the wellness tourism industry and other related industries is relatively low, hindering the comprehensive development of wellness tourism. The wellness industry encompasses various fields such as hot spring wellness preservation, cultural rehabilitation, and traditional Chinese medicine health preservation. However, effective promotion and realization of the synergistic development between these fields and related industries such as cultural tourism, ecotourism, and the wellness industry have not been achieved. Firstly, the wellness tourism products are single and lack service experience. Currently, the effective integration and utilization of hot spring resources, cultural heritage, traditional Chinese medicine culture, etc., in various regions of Jiangxi Province have not been realized, resulting in a lack of diversity and comprehensiveness in wellness tourism products. Tourists often find it difficult to enjoy a rich health tourism experience in the same area, limiting their choices and satisfaction. Secondly, the supporting facilities and service level of health tourism need to be improved urgently. Currently, there is a significant gap in Jiangxi Province in terms of the construction of wellness tourism supporting facilities, improvement of service levels, and construction of management systems. Some facilities in hot spring scenic spots, rehabilitation centers, etc., are aging, and the service levels are uneven, affecting the quality of tourists' experiences and sense of security. Furthermore, the development of the wellness industry lacks scientific planning and overall coordination. Health tourism involves multiple fields and

departments, requiring cooperation among governments, enterprises, experts, etc. However, the synergistic development among various parties is still not close enough. Lack of unified planning and overall coordination can easily lead to problems such as resource waste, fierce competition, and unbalanced development.

3.2 The products lack distinctive features and have a single design

In the development of wellness tourism products in Jiangxi, there are issues of homogenization and a lack of innovation. Traditional wellness programs such as hot spring health preservation, cultural rehabilitation, and traditional Chinese medicine health preservation are the main products of Jiangxi's wellness tourism. However, the design and experience of these products are relatively uniform, lacking personalized and distinctive features. Tourists often struggle to find unique experiential projects at wellness tourism destinations in Jiangxi, leading to decreased interest and attraction in wellness tourism. At the same time, as competition in the wellness tourism market intensifies, products with uniform designs also lead to increased homogenization in competition, reducing the competitiveness and appeal of Jiangxi's health tourism industry. Therefore, to promote the comprehensive development of Jiangxi's health tourism, it is necessary to enhance innovative design, explore and integrate Jiangxi's rich cultural and natural resources, develop diversified and personalized health tourism products, and enhance the brand image and market competitiveness of Jiangxi's health tourism.

3.3 There is a lack of talent in wellness, and insufficient management capabilities.

The development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi Province is facing challenges due to a lack of talent and inadequate management capabilities, directly impacting the quality and sustainable development of the industry. Despite abundant natural and cultural resources in Jiangxi Province providing a solid foundation for wellness tourism, the scarcity of professional talent hampers innovation and growth in this field. Wellness tourism encompasses multiple sectors such as healthcare, cultural tourism, and eco-wellness, requiring specialized knowledge and skills. However, Jiangxi Province currently lacks sufficient talent in these areas, resulting in subpar quality of health tourism products and services that fail to meet the demand for high-quality wellness experiences from tourists. Additionally, inadequate management capabilities are a significant concern. Some health and tourism institutions and enterprises exhibit deficiencies in operational management, service quality control, and market promotion, lacking scientific management strategies and effective execution capabilities. This not only affects customer satisfaction and reputation but also risks instability in the overall development of the wellness tourism industry. Therefore, to address the challenges of talent shortage and insufficient management capabilities, Jiangxi Province should intensify efforts to cultivate and attract wellness talent, provide more training and educational opportunities, and enhance the professionalism of practitioners. Meanwhile, the government and industry associations should strengthen guidance and supervision of wellness tourism enterprises, facilitate capacity-building in management, formulate scientific development plans and strategies, and ensure the healthy and sustainable development of the wellness tourism industry in Jiangxi.

4. Path to high-quality development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi Province

4.1 Optimizing integration to activate the synergy of wellness with related major industries

The integration and activation of wellness tourism development in Jiangxi Province necessitates fully leveraging the interconnections with related major industries to achieve resource sharing and

complementary advantages, thereby promoting the organic integration of wellness tourism with other industries. Firstly, deep integration between wellness tourism and the medical health industry can be achieved by consolidating medical resources and health services to create rehabilitation and health check-up projects, providing tourists with comprehensive health management services. Secondly, wellness tourism can draw on the cultural and creative industries, tapping into Jiangxi's rich cultural resources to create wellness products with cultural connotations, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine wellness experiences and traditional crafts experiences, enhancing the cultural taste and appeal of wellness tourism. Moreover, the integration of wellness tourism with the ecological and environmental protection industry represents an important development direction. Activities like ecological wellness and ecological tours can be promoted to merge ecological conservation with wellness needs, achieving a win-win situation in both economic and ecological benefits. Additionally, wellness tourism can also collaborate deeply with the sports fitness and leisure entertainment industries to develop fitness and vacation projects that meet the wellness needs of various groups and expand the market space for wellness tourism. In summary, the integrated development of Jiangxi's wellness tourism needs exploration and practice in multiple fields, continuously expanding cooperation models with related industries to achieve resource sharing and complementary advantages, and promoting the healthy and rapid development of the wellness tourism industry.

4.2 Developing industry standards for wellness industry

Developing industry standards for the wellness tourism sector is a crucial initiative to promote its sustainable growth. Firstly, establishing quality standards for wellness products and services is essential, delineating requirements for product functionality, ingredients, manufacturing processes, and ensuring product quality and safety. Secondly, it is necessary to formulate service standards to standardize the content, processes, and operational procedures of wellness services, thereby enhancing service quality and standards. Additionally, instituting management standards for health and wellness facilities, including organizational structure, staffing, facilities, equipment, and safety protocols, is vital to ensure their compliant operation and service levels. Furthermore, establishing evaluation criteria and oversight mechanisms for the wellness tourism industry is essential to assess and monitor products and services, promptly identify and address issues, and promote the healthy and orderly development of the industry. In conclusion, developing industry standards for the wellness tourism sector is an inevitable choice to promote its standardized and regulated development, contributing to enhancing the overall quality and competitiveness of wellness tourism, meeting consumer needs, and fostering the healthy and rapid growth of the industry.

4.3 Adhere to brand building and pursue a path of distinctive development

Upholding brand enhancement and pursuing a path of distinctive development are crucial strategies for promoting the healthy growth of the wellness industry. Firstly, it requires delving into local culture and resources, crafting wellness products and services with regional characteristics to highlight Jiangxi's unique wellness culture, attracting more tourists and investors. Secondly, emphasis should be placed on elevating brand image and visibility through active publicity, marketing efforts, shaping influential and competitive wellness brands, and establishing a positive image for Jiangxi's wellness industry. Additionally, fostering collaboration with other industries such as tourism, healthcare, and culture to achieve resource sharing, complementary advantages, and build unique competitive advantages for Jiangxi's wellness industry. Lastly, prioritizing the enhancement of service quality to continuously meet diverse consumer needs, improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, thereby fostering positive word-of-mouth and brand effects, and promoting

the healthy and sustainable development of the wellness industry. In conclusion, only by adhering to brand enhancement and pursuing a path of distinctive development can Jiangxi's wellness industry progress towards a brighter future.

4.4 Strengthening the construction of the wellness talent team

Strengthening the construction of the wellness talent team is an urgent need to promote the healthy development of the wellness industry. Firstly, it is necessary to establish a sound system for nurturing wellness talent, including the establishment of relevant professional courses, the implementation of training programs, and the establishment of internship and training bases to cultivate more professionals with theoretical knowledge and practical skills in wellness. Secondly, there should be increased policy support and financial investment in wellness talent, improving the treatment and benefits of wellness practitioners to attract more talent to the wellness industry. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on the evaluation and certification of wellness talent, establishing a talent evaluation system for the wellness industry to encourage talent to continuously improve their own quality and abilities. Furthermore, it is essential to enhance the exchange and cooperation of wellness talent, promoting the sharing of experiences and resources both within and outside the industry, creating a favorable talent ecosystem and driving the healthy development of the wellness industry. In conclusion, only by strengthening the construction of the wellness talent team can the talent needs of the wellness industry be met, and the wellness industry in Jiangxi propelled towards a more prosperous and sustainable future.

5. Conclusion

Jiangxi boasts unique wellness tourism resources and immense potential for development in this sector. To fully capitalize on these advantages, it is crucial to harness the collective efforts of the entire city by integrating industries, establishing standards, building brands, and providing talent services. This collaborative effort aims to create an international wellness tourism destination, craft wellness tourism products with distinct Jiangxi characteristics, and shape a vivid image of wellness tourism in Jiangxi. By promoting the close integration of wellness tourism with other industries, extending the industry chain, and enhancing the value chain, we can establish a comprehensive standard system to ensure service and product quality, thus fostering internationally competitive wellness tourism brands. Simultaneously, increasing investment in talent training and services will cultivate high-quality wellness professionals, providing solid talent support and intellectual backing for the high-quality development of wellness tourism in Jiangxi. Through these concerted efforts, Jiangxi will emerge as a leader in wellness tourism, injecting continuous vitality into regional economic development and the improvement of people's quality of life.

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