

Thailand as a global wellness investment hub

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Abstract

Thailand has quickly become a top place for wellness investment worldwide, thanks to its culture, talented people, and strong support from the government. This paper looks at how Thailand became a major wellness investment spot, with a close look at wellness tourism and real estate.

Using a review of industry trends, government plans, market info, and global wellness economy insights, this paper shows what Thailand does well. This includes Thai therapies, spa and health tourism, retreats, and general wellness resources. The country is one of the best wellness places in the world and has investment chances in areas like wellness real estate, spa tourism, health tech, and training. Also, government rules, recognition of Thai massage, and marketing by the Tourism Authority of Thailand help investors feel secure.

Thailand's system such as therapies, spiritual practices, and modern resources makes it a key player in the recovery of global wellness travel after the pandemic. The study points out how important it is to have good infrastructure, develop people's skills, and work with other countries to make sure Thailand stays successful in the global wellness economy long-term.

Keywords: Thailand; Wellness Investment; Wellness Tourism; Wellness Economy; Spa Industry; Thai Traditional Medicine; Mindfulness; Global Wellness Hub; Wellness Real Estate; Health And Wellness; Wellness Infrastructure; Government Policy; Cultural Capital; Sustainable Tourism; Public-Private Partnership.

1. Introduction

Thailand is becoming a major center for health and wellness, attracting a lot of investment (Pullapalin, 2018). It's the 7th biggest wellness economy and a well-known spot for medical and wellness getaways. This research looks at where the best wellness investment chances are in Thailand, especially in tourism and property.

Wellness is getting more attention in the travel industry. Wellness tourism means traveling to feel better, both physically and mentally. This idea has been popular since the early 2000s. Usually, it includes:

- Going to spas.
- Visiting health resorts.
- Fitness trips.
- Destination spas.
- Travel for medical reasons.
- Retreats.

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Wellness is also about health, which hotels and resorts have cared about since the 90s. It means being healthy, having a good life, and being happy. Thailand is working to become a health tourism hotspot. The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau is trying to make the country the top place in Asia for health and wellness tourism. They have natural resources, skilled health workers, and many different services. From 2003 to 2005, they had 250 registered wellness resorts and spas, and the number keeps going up. Now, there are over 2,000 spas in Thailand. Tourism authorities believe this will keep growing in the next few years because of more investment and partnerships. You can find spa resorts here offering things like traditional Thai massage, Swedish massage, and aromatherapy.

2. The Global Wellness Economy

The global wellness economy, counting wellness tourism, is worth about \$4.9 trillion. It grew by 10.6% between 2015 and 2017. People want to improve their lives and escape stress from daily life. The Thai government wants more health and wellness tourists, so they're helping different businesses grow. This includes hot springs, health businesses, resorts and spas, fitness centers, wellness tourism programs, and travel agencies.

Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, the Minister of Tourism and Sports, says it's important for the government and businesses to work together. They need to create wellness tourism that is appealing, easy to get to, and gives people what they want. Their plans involve making a financial hub for health and wellness, a healthcare system that works well, a better understanding of health business models, and a trusted healthcare system. Thailand is in a good position because of its location, good healthcare, experts, success stories, and support from the government.

The entire wellness industry, which is a \$4.2 trillion market for feeling good in every way, has grown faster than the world's economy. Wellness tourism, where people travel to get healthier, is a big market worth \$639 billion. It's one of the fastest-growing parts of the travel industry, making up 17% of it. Wellness tourism is especially popular in Thailand (Clarke, 2019).

As wellness tourism becomes more popular, travel companies are doing more in this area. Other places are looking at Thailand to learn how to do it right. Experts have noticed trends in wellness tourism, which gives ideas for research. The industry includes different travelers, products, and places all over the world. Experts are beginning to study these new trends. The global wellness industry is growing fast, and wellness tourism is becoming a popular vacation choice. Chiang Mai, Thailand, is now known as a wellness destination.

3. Market Overview

Thailand's wellness tourism market is a leader in the world, ranking 6th globally. It made the most money in 2021 and is growing at a good rate (Pullapalin, 2018). In 2021, tourism started to recover in Thailand as travel restrictions were lifted in many countries, which helped both international and local tourism. Because of the pandemic, people are more interested in wellness tourism, and Thailand is hoping to recover its tourism industry as the global situation improves.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Thailand's tourism hard, with international tourists dropping by 83% in 2021 compared to before the pandemic. The global tourism sector should get better starting in the second quarter of 2022. The effects of COVID should decrease because of vaccination programs and treatments that help prevent serious symptoms. Thailand's tourism sector should recover as the world gets back on its feet. Wellness tourism is a promising part of this recovery because wellness is something Thailand already excels at.

COVID-19 changed the tourism sector and the way wellness tourism is done. Thailand's wellness tourism market value is expected to double in 2022. It will reach the same levels as before the pandemic and grow by about 14% between 2022 and 2040. People are more concerned about their health after COVID-19, so this will continue to affect travel choices. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is taking steps to promote sustainable wellness tourism and hold wellness tourism events. The government and other groups are working to improve wellness services and promote the country as a wellness center.

4. Growth Trends in Wellness Tourism

With wellness tourism going up by 60% worldwide, Thailand is becoming a top investment location. Programs focused on health are becoming big business. Rich tourists in Thailand are going to expensive resorts. These resorts feature skilled wellness experts, who invest millions in plans to improve health and extend life. Detox programs based on rice are becoming popular as natural ways to improve skin, hair, and nails. The wellness tourism market in Thailand was

worth 435 billion baht in 2021, with 5 million local trips and 80 million international trips. These trips increased by 6% each year from 2012 to 2021, which shows things are getting better despite the pandemic (Pullapalin, 2018). The sector should recover to a market value of 550 billion baht in 2022. Wellness trips in Thailand, offering natural treatments, relaxing services, and healthy food, should grow along with the global market. A lot of money is being invested in wellness tourism. Thailand could take advantage of this by getting its spas and destinations certified. The Spa Association is working to improve spa services, including setting standards for buying goods, training staff, and dealing with customers. Wellness living is a new trend with high-end brands, resorts, and hotels. There are opportunities for investment in health-themed destinations. This includes health-focused resorts, yoga retreats, and places offering plant-based meals. Luxury hotels are encouraging people to invest in their health and longevity. Asian spas are featuring secret treatments, natural products, and therapists from exotic places. As more people spend money on health and beauty, Thailand's wellness tourism is leading the regional tourism economy. Younger consumers are finding health and wellness trips, such as vegan treatments.

5. Investment Opportunities

There are many ways to invest in the global wellness economy. The areas with the best chances for returns are wellness real estate, wellness tourism, personal care and beauty, and wellness lifestyles. Spending in the USA has the greatest opportunities, while Spain, Mexico, the Philippines, and Brazil also have possibilities. Across different types of wellness assets, the segments with the greatest investments are wellness real estate, wellness tourism, personal care and beauty, and healthy dining. On a country-by-country basis, the best returns can be found in the USA. Thailand also presents an opportunity. Other countries include Brazil, the Philippines, the UK, Italy, Australia, Japan, and France. There are investment opportunities across the board in different types of wellness assets. Similarly, the segments where investments should focus for the greatest return are wellness real estate, wellness tourism, personal care and beauty, and wellness lifestyles. While Thailand has plenty of opportunity, other good opportunities can be found in Spain and Mexico (wellness tourism), the Philippines (spa and thermalism), Brazil (personal care and beauty), Italy (wellness tourism), and India (spa and thermalism).

6. Thailand's Cultural Capital

Thailand's cultural capital offers a fantastic tourist experience because of its unique geography and culture. There's always something to do, from local festivals celebrating the Goddess of Water to exploring traditional craft centers. The city's culture is a mix of Thai elements, carefully put together, that shows the evolution of Thai identities.

The growth of this political and cultural center has shaped the local way of life, letting Thai traditions thrive. The city combines science and art through its education. Located in the Ping River basin, its geography is perfect for water transportation. The basin, surrounded by mountains, has helped a unique population to grow, with its own race, religion, customs, language, and art, all contributing to a special culture.

Traditions cover all aspects of life, from ceremonies to daily customs and religious beliefs. Ideas about the universe and what makes a good life come from Hinduism and Buddhism. Stories and myths teach moral rules, and people believe in cause and effect, influencing how they act and what they believe. Art reflects these beliefs, showing the imagined cosmos and rules of life. Storytelling and composition rules control how things are shown, including perspectives and relationships, creating detailed art with rich patterns.

Thai traditional treatments, like Thai massages, spas, herbal medicines, and products, are supported by the government as complete health services. They also help to promote Thai treatments through publicity and events. They have also encouraged the creation of world-class spas and wellness centers, along with Thai Select services, with support from both private companies and government groups that are incorporated with Buddhist concepts. Thai massage and treatments are drawing wellness investment to Thailand, as both the government and private companies are involved. The Spa Development Strategy defines what a spa is and sets standards for infrastructure, products, and service quality, covering different types of spas like health resorts, wellness spas, and hotel spas, it also suggests ways to evaluate spas. Thai massage helps relax muscles and ease pain in the back, neck, shoulders, and lower back with pressure applied to energy lines. Each session takes an hour and is done on a mat.

Thailand's history of traditional health practices, linked to traditional medicine and therapies, has been recognized globally. Since 2018, Thai experts from various fields have worked together to get Traditional Thai Massage listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This is a big win for Thailand and other countries with similar traditions.

On February 20, 2018, Thai Traditional Therapy became a national priority to turn Thailand into a Wellness Hub. The National Committee on Thai Traditional Therapy for Wellness Hub Development was created to make this happen. A subcommittee, led by Thai Union and the Ministry of Public Health, was formed to push for TTM to be considered under the TW-based ICH Fund Programme.

The goal is to give benefits to all Thais, especially those who don't have access to as many services. Experts saw it as a chance to address public health, care for the elderly, economic growth, and restoring living conditions. Traditional Thai Medicine, which includes animal drugs, astrology, and divination, is also part of this.

Thailand has a lot of historical mindfulness and meditation practices, which presents a great chance to market Thailand as a mindfulness and meditation center. A survey showed that Thailand is a popular destination for mindfulness and meditation retreats. The old capital of Ayutthaya, northern cities like Chiang Mai, and beach destinations like Phuket and Koh Samui are favorites for wellness tourists.

In 2017, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports started the MIND program to attract tourists from different countries. Most trips took place in Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani, Khon Kaen, Pattaya, Hua Hin, and Prachuap Khiri Khan. Popular meditation centers like Wat Phra That Doi Suthep and Wat Umong in Chiang Mai, and Wat Mindfulness in Pattaya welcomed tourists.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health and the Public Health Foundation of Thailand, also created the Thailand's Mindfulness and Meditation Certifications project. The Tourism Authority of Thailand manages the program. It focuses on getting more tourists, raising awareness, and creating wellness events and retreats. They worked on getting the wellness industry, meditation centers, and transportation providers involved in making insightful packages, ensuring that travelers experience mindfulness and meditation practices and that most are led by Thai monks or local leaders.

7. Government Support and Policy Framework

As people get more interested in being healthy, it's natural to want ways to relax and refresh us to balance our lives. That's why we're seeing more wellness places pop up, both in communities and as businesses. The wellness tourism market is expected to increase quite a bit in the next few years, maybe around 30%, growing from about \$63.9 billion in 2017 to \$83.15 billion by 2023.

This wellness area is a chance for Thailand to get investment and create jobs. It would go well with Thailand's already popular wellness tourism offerings. Thailand could really become a central spot for wellness investments worldwide. It's already known as a great place for wellness tourism, and there have been efforts to give good reasons to invest in wellness tourism there.

Thailand also gets to host the yearly Global Wellness Summit, which is awesome for getting local people talking about where wellness is headed and getting the public, businesses, influencers, and officials involved. Thailand is liked around the world and has recognition for its public health and wellness tourism. Along with wellness tourism, wellness real estate and lifestyle are getting bigger in Thailand. More people are investing in wellness health technology in Thailand too. What's already happening can show the way for even more wellness investments in this area. The Thai government wants to see more investment in wellness education and training in Thailand because it's important to have people ready to work in this field to keep it going. People are becoming more aware of how great it is to live in a place that helps you be well and supports you. Wellness real estate is growing fast as a business worldwide but it's still new. Thailand has the right stuff, like good location and climate, to get in on this trend. The trick will be to get things going and handle it well by training people and having a plan to make a bigger impact and keep things going for a long time.

7.1. Tourism Authority of Thailand Initiatives

The Thai government wants to promote Thailand as a center for wellness investment around the world, focusing on all parts of wellness – physical, mental, social, and learning, with a special focus on experiences in nature. They call it One Wellness World with Unique Thai Identity. The Ministry of Public Health has also created a Thai Natural Wellness and SPA Standard because there's a demand for wellness and spa tourism after COVID. This standard can help tourism businesses in Thailand and other countries to show off their nutrition options.

The Ministry of Public Health in Thailand had an event called Thai Natural Wellness and SPA Standard for Nature-rich Wellness Experience It happened on March 20, 2023. The goals of this event were to get Thailand known as a great place

to invest in wellness, to introduce the Thai Natural Wellness & SPA Standard for Nature-rich Wellness Experience to tourism businesses, and to help them use this standard, which matches the government's plan to make Thailand a wellness investment center.

Because of COVID-19 and The Great Resignation, more people around the world are thinking about wellness travel. Trinity Event had a seminar on what's happening now and what's coming in spa and wellness tourism for the Asian Development Bank. The topic was Wellness tourism: A post-Pandemic strategy for recovering tourism. Wellness is a healthy tourism trend and a valuable market. The Thai Government is quite interested in developing Thailand as a Wellness Hub version 2.0. There's a chance for Spa and wellness business, given that wellness tourism is very important. The wellness business opportunities include investment, education/training & merger & acquisition, in innovative wellness products.

7.2. Infrastructure Development

Thailand needs to make sure infrastructure is modern and advanced in all areas of this plan for it to work. Some things to keep in mind would be factors that cover these ideas, operate based on the ways created by the government. There are some special parts of Thailand's culture that relate to health and wellness tourism. Thai people include being polite, friendly, natural health care, and seeing life in a holistic way. traditional Thai art, Thai traditional art and effective health promotion of Thai traditional public health. temples and Asian mindfulness. In summary, there are plan needs in ensuring good healthcare, newcomers and old. The seamlessness aimed at wellness tourism is not as well prepared as we would hope.

7.3. Regulatory Environment

The Thai government has made rules for the spa business, like needing to register your spa, get licenses for operators and therapists, and having rules about where spas can be located and what their services are like. A few groups watch over these rules, including the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce, and General Department, Ministry of Interior. If you want to open a spa in Thailand, you must register your business. Spas are service businesses, so you need a certificate of company registration from the Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand. You can get this certificate by showing the ID card of each shareholder (who can be Thai or foreign) and the work agreement between the company and the spa operator, if they're employed. You also need an employer's registration from the Department of Labor Protection and Welfare, Ministry of Labor. Spas often need permission from massage offices or local health officials, as regulated by the National Health Act B.E.2550. Also, you might need permission from city offices if you do any processing. In many places, there are local laws about what you can do in different areas of town. Local governments can also make rules about health, waste and population.

There are rules of Thai Commercial Policy for spa businesses, with four things, licenses, activities that are not allowed, locations, and standards on massage. You need two licenses to run a spa. First, you need a spa operator license from the Department of Health. You must get this before you can apply for the spa business license. The second is the spa business license, which is from the city office. The announcement says that if you want to own or run a spa, you must apply for the spa operator license before you start your business.

8. Investment Landscape in Wellness Sector

Thailand is in a good spot to take advantage of the growing wellness industry. Over the past ten years, it's become known as a top place for alternative health and wellness tourism. This boom is happening because people are more stressed from living in the digital age. As people live longer, they want to enjoy life more. They're looking for ways to stay fit, balance work and life, be happy, communicate well, improve their performance, find peace of mind, feel good about themselves, and live in a way that helps the environment.

Thailand has a lot going for it in terms of wellness tourism. It has a beautiful environment, great weather, and good wellness infrastructure. There are nice spas, resorts, and products. Besides spa and hotel treatments, wellness is offered through mantras, principles, and methods. Thailand has a lot of great wellness resources. Current wellness trends include sustainable tourism, advances in science, the use of health technology, local healing practices, complete wellness approaches, and the idea of a wellness hub. The growth of the wellness business in Thailand is very important, especially when considering the economic impact of health and wellness tourism, what tourists expect, and wellness events that promote business during and after the pandemic.

The Thai government is paying attention to wellness by supporting knowledge growth in the wellness sector, health laws, and the art of Thai massage. The goal is to become the wellness center of Asia, figuring out how to measure the money coming in from health and wellness, including expenses, spending, and investment. They also want to measure data resources and needs in tourism and create deals with other countries. Plans are in place for training programs and knowledge centers. Wellness businesses, organizations, service providers, local governments, and schools are working together to promote Thailand as a wellness hub. The government has policies and plans to make Thailand a place where people want to invest in wellness.

8.1. Types of Investments

People can invest in wellness in many ways, from hotels to financial groups. Investment types include:

- Stock Updates: For example, a hotel group dropped plans to launch a budget hotel because of stock info.
- Fundings: For example, a news source said a low-cost airline bought a share in another airline and plans to lease more planes to travel to more destinations. This would make more money while keeping prices low.
- Land Deals: For example, a resort buying land to compete with others or more housing becomes available which helps tourism, both for locals and businesses.
- Lease Agreements: For example, an IT company entering the IT market.
- Simple Agreements: Agreements in resort development, along with ideas for making use of water resources.
- Loan Agreements/Financing: For example, loans backed by property owners.
- Insurance/Guarantees: Insurance deals with operators that share in account management and risk.
- Membership Agreements: Options suitable for use all year long
- Franchising/Distribution: A forum that gives investors operative agreements for distribution. Educational tourism is worth investing in a museum.

Examples of Investments That Worked

The wellness industry's fast growth has made business chances in Thailand, like the Zero Waste Green Resort and Silo Wellness. These are two examples of local businesspeople who are passionate about business and wellness.

8.1.1. Zero Waste Green Resort

Zero Waste Green Resort is in Thailand. It changes how resorts can grow their businesses while helping the environment and tourists' mental states. With 162 million baht, ZWGR was developed as an eco-resort. It opened in June 2022 and made money in its first year, even with the pandemic. ZWGR combines lodging for wellness retreats, organic farms, and waste management systems. The resort teaches local areas about alternative methods of tourism. It hosts around 10,000 guests a year and has won awards.

8.1.2. Silo Wellness

Silo Wellness is a wellness business in the USA and Jamaica. It is the first wellness business to use psychedelic mushrooms; Silo Wellness gives businesses a different option than normal medicines for general mental problems that affect young people. A part of Silo Wellness developed a new microdosing product with psilocybin to synergistically boost wellness. The price is set at 2 per scheme, making a gross profit margin of nearly 09%.

8.1.3. Risk Assessment

Thailand has some political risks, but investors consider it a low-risk place. The evidence of this is the 2014 coup, but tourism was still successful despite. Political Risk is a type of risk created by political change or instability in a country. These risks affect how well the economy grows. The more political risks there are, the more uncertain the economy becomes, the more hesitant investors are.

The political risk in Thailand skyrocketed during the coup against Thaksin Shinawatra, from 2006 to 2008. However, only three years later, the risk went back down to the same level it was before. It is necessary to remember that a high score shows high political risk, and a lower score shows low political risk.

There are concerns about how tourism can lower these risks. The tourism industry is run by Chinese tourists; this can be a risk. This asks if it can keep up this growth with a long-term balance.

9. Wellness Tourism Trends

Investments are coming in for Thailand with a focus on nice beaches and wellness centers. About 7,000 million baht has been put aside to construct an aerodrome in the Umphang District, which is going to connect to the city's airport. Doctors and scientists are studying the wellness idea and working with companies to do work with Thai medicine. About seven years ago, the government promoting wellness tourism with technology and a biopharma foundation. The government has given a 15-year plan to improve Thailand's wellness tourism. Thailand is constructing a Wellness Industrial Estate for Wellness Investment and Development in agriculture, food, energy, manufacturing, health, medicine, destinations, spa, and tourism. Local products and services will improve tourism's wellness. New projects can enjoy joint investment opportunities and tax breaks, and they meet standards. The development of the Wellness Industrial Estate offers a chance to its wellness economy in Nakhon Phanom. Investors can access wellness industrial and service industry sectors in border provinces of Thailand and countries nearby. Top healthcare products and services of the Wellness Industrial Estate will be promoted in the region, developing more cooperation. The team focuses on management systems for tourism, destinations, health screening, transportation, cluster development, and real-time data for public health. In some attractions, central wellness for tourists is in the wellness tourism cities. The second plan is to make hotels and residences for long stay tourists. It is forecasted that wellness tourism will make money within 10 years. Since the pandemic, wellness retreats have come out. With coastlines, waters, and mountains Thailand has wellness travel locations that focuses on healthy treatment, diagnosis, herbal medicine, medical fitness, wellness diets, detox, and surgery.

9.1. Post-Pandemic Recovery

Because of the pandemic, businesses are fixing their plans to adjust to the new normal.

The success of the convention business will depend on when there is control of the pandemic, vaccine times, and travel. When the pandemic is under control in countries, it will unleash demand for MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) where can allocate budgets to event planning. Then, the no payments for value will be the competitive element for venues. Venue and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) will put money into value assets to improve value by dropping price for recovery (Rittichainuwat et al., 2020). What worries even companies are that facilities for venues are at grounds safety and air filtration system. Big venues offer health risk reductions during meetings.

The government requires trade shows and marketing help for venues transitioning into hosting events.

Before marketing Thailand, venues may need to allow distancing, COVID-19 protection standards, checkpoints and personal tracing devices. Investment in improvements of facilities will MICE industry is critical because. Large hospitals are needed during pandemic emergencies

9.2. Target Markets

Thailand calls European market as a 'careful traveler' because of the pandemic. Although people are careful with countries, they can list the ones with improving situations. It is necessary to help the tourism environment for the ones with qualifications for hosting the Congress.

The traditions with Thai Healing, make for an anti-aging destination for wellness. With retail options, Thailand has wellness products, services, experiences, and alternatives than weight-loss and solutions.

As was in the report by the National Office. A part percentage of tourists came from Chinese, Japanese, South Korean, American, and European. International demand is said to come back to the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Nevertheless, it is essential to broaden tourists to countries from South Asia for service that certified. People in tourism have worked in the recovery from the pandemic.

9.3. Consumer Preferences

There are certain customer likings of spa/wellness treatments in Thailand. These likings influence the wellness products, services, treatments, Thailand gives the edge to be the Global Wellness Investment Hub. The customer preferences have these five themes: eco-friendly, therapeutic treatment, exotic, nice service, and combination. Each theme gives examples of what consumers like.

Thailand is known for green places and lodging facilities have sections for spa. The elements of nature play a key role in facilities. These ideas add to experience to customer, and this is where Thailand has edge over many locations.

10. Holistic Retreats in Thailand

In recent years, there's been a bigger focus on wellness that takes care of your whole being – mind, body, heart, and spirit. Thailand is a great spot for retreats that give amazing care to every part of your well-being.

You can find retreats if you want to reconnect with yourself, understand the link between your mind and body better, try old herbal treatments and natural remedies, or feel more in touch with nature, something easily lost in cities. Retreats can be as short as half a day or last a few weeks. They can also be made to fit what groups want, like trying local things or working with women-run programs.

Thailand has some special things to offer because of its nature, such as healing springs, unspoiled areas, coastal life, old temples, caves, green forests, and big waterfalls. These natural gifts mix well with the skills of the Thai people, their culture, and community. Going on a wellness trip here means learning, guiding yourself, and picking healthy ways to live that blend old ways with new ideas. You can switch things up and plan experiences from 3 to 15 days. People may want different themes, like spirituality in the countryside, science-based wellness, moving meditation, enjoying the coast, or planning healthy eating.

These trips can be made just for you or for a group, with different ways to get involved. They use real Thai healing methods, local traditions, community involvement, Thai landscapes, and comfy places to stay. You can pick different types of retreats, like being in nature with yoga, learning about Thai herbs and cooking, or spending a week at a beach resort with a relaxing spa and exploring the coast. There's also an online option that lets you explore wellness themes and have a 5-day trip in Thailand with a guide.

10.1. Types of Retreats

Wellness tourism is growing fast. The market is expected to jump from \$1118 billion in 2017 to \$6398 billion by 2025, which is almost six times bigger. It's growing at about 16.3% each year, much quicker than tourism in general (which is growing at over three times the rate, reaching \$2779 billion). What people care about when it comes to health and wellness is changing fast, and so are the things offered in wellness tourism. Wellness tourism is all about bringing together travel and ways to look after your mental, social, and physical health. It focuses on staying healthy instead of just curing illnesses (M. Cohen et al., 2017).

Wellness tourism covers a lot of different things. For curing illnesses, there are medical tourism spots with all kinds of facilities, from fancy centers in Western countries that treat everything from having babies to long-term illnesses, to health camps in developing countries with older treatments like Ayurveda, Chinese Medicine, and Unani. For keeping healthy, there are luxury spas with great services, or budget-friendly centers that still give good service. You can find resorts, lodges, gyms, and centers with modern equipment for wellness. Increasingly, medical and wellness places are starting to overlap, serving people who want to get better and stay healthy.

10.2. Wellness Programs Offered

Thailand has lots of different wellness programs that cover pretty much every part of being human, like mental, sexual, heart, beauty, emotional, work, food-related, herbal, and family wellness. It's not just spa treatments anymore. Each program can be done by itself or with others, depending on what the hotel or resort chooses. They can be from 1 to 3 hours long or last all day. Hotels and spas can include places to stay to give guests full experience.

Location is key for wellness programs. It should have natural things that make it peaceful and nice to be there. Hotels and resorts could have programs on a private beach before sunrise or with a sunset view. In cities, gyms in offices or clubs can also assist lower stress.

After these programs, you should get drinks and snacks, or light meals. These should match the theme of the program. If it involves a walk in the rainforest, you could offer fruits and smoothies. Whatever it is, the food should look appealing. Light meals should help with digestion and not make you feel tired, even if you must go back to work afterwards. To promote wellness, you can use healthy or organic ingredients (Pullapalin, 2018).

10.3. Case Studies of Retreat Success

10.3.1. Mundee Wellness Retreat

Mundee is a unique wellness retreat near Chiang Mai, Thailand, that focuses on being eco-friendly and avoiding alcohol and drugs. They have programs for helping people deal with substance use issues. But Mundee is more than just a sobriety program; it's an experience for your whole well-being. It uses Asian ideas of sustainability, food, and being mindful. Treatments include yoga, meditation, detox programs, and healthy vegetarian food. There are seven tents to stay in, each named after a tree and its good qualities. Mundee is both a wellness resort and a treatment center. Good retreats put wellness first and business second. This is especially true for resorts that give healthy treatments but aren't licensed for therapy, like spas and detox centers. Businesses that focus on treatment first and second need to be licensed by the government. This allows them to keep working legally when things like cannabis become legal, offering services like addiction counseling and detox programs.

10.3.2. HARNN Heritage Spa

HARNN Heritage Spa is a spa that mixes old Asian wisdom with modern luxury to give a unique wellness experience. They know that wellness investments need to be of high quality. They offer five-star experience with treatments and products that combine local culture with luxury. Massages, body scrubs, facials, and hydro-baths provide great relaxation. What's offered changes depending on the location of the spa, but each one uses culture, bricks, stone, timber, and caring service. Location is very important. They use Asian knowledge and herbal traditions to make the experience great. HARNN Heritage has won awards and built a global reputation, attracting investors.

11. Potential Challenges

Thailand is attracting tourists, businesses, and investments, so it needs to have healthy growth plans for things like property, tourism, and transportation. It needs to think about the possible problems it might face in becoming a wellness tourism hub.

Based on how it has developed in the past, there are some things to watch out for.

11.1. Competition from Other Destinations

Thailand's main competitor is in southern China. Others include Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Thailand has advantages like culture, history, climate, and alternative medicines, but wellness tourism doesn't need much to get started, and these competitors are already investing a lot in it. With government help, they could catch up to Thailand in just a couple of years.

11.2. Sustainability Concerns

There might be worries about whether Thailand can stay on top in wellness tourism. People might be concerned about overbuilding hotels and airports and not thinking about the negative effects.

12. Market Saturation Risks

Wellness tourism is a big business, so many people want to create wellness destinations. They are turning old buildings into hotels and clinics. If Thailand doesn't act fast, it will be harder to attract the right people because there will be more competition.

These plans should focus on the market, not just making money. They should consider what Thailand is good at, what might be weaker than expected, and how things could go well or badly, either pushing tourism forward or causing it to decline.

12.1. Competition from Other Destinations

Tourism depends on how well destinations can promote themselves (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998). To get the most out of wellness tourism, Thailand needs to be better than its competitors. It needs to respond to the competition, both in the region and worldwide. Many countries in Southeast Asia are investing in wellness tourism, and other Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and the Philippines are also marketing their wellness options.

There are ways to respond to competition, like working together with other destinations on health or recreation programs, promoting festivals, or forming alliances. Each has challenges and needs cooperation, which can be difficult because of differences in governments and financial support.

Also, competition within Thailand affects wellness tourism. Investment may be needed to make the wellness experience better. Thailand needs to create different types of products within the wellness market. This can make the experience better for visitors and strengthen Thailand's position. Thailand should address these issues to benefit from the industry's growth. If successful, it will help the region recover from economic problems. Also, sharing these ideas can help other Asian destinations with similar wellness tourism systems.

12.2. Sustainability Concerns

Sustainable tourism is said to deliver benefits for everyone involved, like governments, tourists, and businesses, in terms of money, society, and the environment. As a result, people are more aware of sustainability in many countries, like Malaysia. Thailand, sustainability awareness is still not very high (Amarando et al., 2019). However, the government and tourism industries are starting to address sustainability concerns as issues like climate change affect Thais. The nation is also feeling pressure from other countries to be more sustainable.

The Thai wine industry could do a lot to promote sustainable wine tourism because it's growing and attracts tourists. Since the first winery opened in 1990, the number of vineyards has increased a lot, reaching 36 in 2018. With good weather conditions, a new cooling system has been introduced to improve the wine and the look of the vineyards. The government has also supported the industry by funding trade fairs and wine festivals. However, Thai vineyards aren't really thinking about sustainability yet, while other countries are. Paying attention to sustainability could help Thai vineyards compete better.

In addition to these things, tourism developers need to address other obstacles to promote sustainability in the Thai wine tourism sector. They can create ways for producers and policymakers to work together, like through workshops and forums. Sustainable wine tourism can support the wine industry while protecting the environment. Also, it's important to understand the local culture; successful sustainable tourism is well-planned and considers the local context.

12.3. Market Saturation Risks

One of the great things about Thailand as a wellness destination is that it's not too crowded yet. Thailand can't be a global wellness destination if it becomes too commercial with chain spas that don't offer the unique experiences found in places like Chiang Mai and Hua Hin. As new developments appear, there will be a need for destination management. Will wellness brands understand the country's culture? How will wellness be included in hotels and resorts? The property investment sector mostly involves money from China. There isn't much knowledge of the country's culture or the land's potential to deliver strong experiences. If Thailand becomes too commercial, it will lose its authenticity. The global wellness business may be big, but it's still small compared to the travel industry. Thailand can't be turned into the dreams of wealthy investors that ignore culture and place. The Thai wellness sector outside of hotels hasn't been as forward-thinking as expected. Also, many wellness hotels don't seem to understand how service can create memorable experiences, while regular hotels focus on hospitality. Most Asian wellness hotels are developed by their hotel chains, which may try to apply wellness concepts without understanding the local culture.

13. Future Outlook

The Global Wellness Institute says that even with a possible recession, wellness is likely to become more important. Tourists from developing countries and China are the most hopeful about wellness tourism spending recovering soon, followed by those from Southeast Asia and South Korea. The global wellness economy is expected to grow by 10% each year for the next 5 years, though this could be affected by the global economy.

Some top trends in wellness investments include private equity, and venture capital activity; more lifestyle hotels, wellness hotels/resorts, and mixed-use wellness communities; wellness-focused real estate projects in cities (urban wellness real estate, commercial, and mixed-use spaces); new wellness technologies (telehealth, mental health, and genomics); more wellness-related SaaS solutions; state policies and health system changes to make preventive/holistic care a part of healthcare; more wellness social enterprises; new ways to deliver technologies, products, and experiences; redefined communities, regions, and cities with more space; and new wellness projects in unusual places and for new populations.

The wellness sector in Thailand should keep expanding. Thai groups will be at events like the Global Wellness Summit in 2024, and Thai officials will be at the Global Wellness Institute. Also, the 2025 wellness investment summit will be in Thailand, and major wellness investment groups want to invest with, protect, and advise Thailand. There are many investment chances, such as healthcare tech startups, VDO health platforms, funds to support renewable energy victims, and wellness product lines and distribution networks. Thailand is good for investment since it's friendly to foreign investment, the government sees wellness investment as a top thing to do, the global wellness investment looks good, and Thailand has good wellness tourism and health industry prospects and infrastructure, wellness facilities and services, community partners and networks, and market knowledge.

13.1. Predicted Growth of Wellness Economy

The wellness economy is expected to grow fast, taking up more of the global economy. Global earnings are expected to be \$6.6 trillion in 2023 and \$9.7 trillion in 2025. The average annual growth rate is predicted to be 4.8% from 2020 to 2025, which is faster than how the overall economy is growing.

The spa and wellness area, which includes spas, wellness hotels, hot springs, and wellness tourism, should grow from about \$1.4 trillion in 2017 to \$1.9 trillion in 2023 and about \$2.5 trillion in 2025. That means an average annual growth of 5.5% for 2020-2025. The market growth for spas, wellness hotels, hot springs, and wellness tourism should be about 11.2%, 7.8%, 6.8%, and 5.8%, respectively. Spending on spas and wellness hotels is predicted to go up a lot, from \$271 to \$719 and from \$111 to \$227 in 2025. With government help, more awareness, new tech, and a desire for better health, there should be lots of chances for investment in the wellness economy. In rich countries, as long-term diseases increase, health needs like wellness tourism, digital wellness, preventive health, and special services for diseases should grow. In growing countries, rising money and city living will cause people to want to pay for wellness services. Middle-class homes will likely spend more on wellness, causing new people to join the wellness industry along with investment and funding. More acceptance of alternative medicine and knowledge of cleanliness and diets should cause investment in wellness products, wellness tourism, resorts, and online places for wellness brands.

13.2. Trends in Wellness Investments

A few economic and market things will still affect wellness investment around the world. These things will create new chances to invest in companies that work in the wellness economy. For investors, it's important to find and use those chances early on. Some key trends to expect:

How wellness is seen is changing. More awareness of wellness and its benefits is changing how people and companies see wellness. The change from lifestyle to lifestyle plus health has made people interested in health meets wellness ideas. More awareness of the importance of the wellness economy is changing spending habits. More spending on personal items and financial and family health has gone up. This is making the market join and creating chances in the market. Wellness companies will see their values double.

Older people. Older people are changing what it means to be old and finding a new way to live longer. By 2030, people over 55 will be half of the world's population. Expect more demand for wellness products and services that serve the health, beauty, and lifestyle needs of older people. Rising money issues are causing companies to rethink who they are trying to reach. Rich people are expected to want wellness experiences, leaving fitness places for places that let them network.

Working together on health. The increasing problems and cost of healthcare has caused people to want to work together on health. As a result, there will be lots of new ways to identify and update health records. People can manage their own health with these systems. The embrace of wellness, precursors of wealth based on wellness, social impact investment to gain commercial health, financial wellness as a need for economic success, and so on will contribute to wellness.

13.3. Long-term Future of Thai Wellness Sector

Making a policy for spas in Thailand is very important. Spas are a main healthcare service in Thailand that attract lots of tourists each year. So, it's important for the government to make and keep up a framework for the industry. This includes policies, plans, and standards. Content covers human resources, service, pricing, image, labor, marketing, and health promotion. Nearby competitors might cause big changes in the industry. Since investors are confident that the spas and wellness Industry in Thailand have a long-term future, it's important to understand how Thailand will make sure that the industry can keep growing. The Thai government sees spas as a healthcare sector.

Spas are a main healthcare service in Thailand that attract lots of tourists each year. This study looks at the policies, plans, groups, and standards for spas in Thailand. In 2020, there were 322 spas, about 30% of the 1,086 accommodations in Thailand (Pullapalin, 2018). Thailand is known for wellness tourism and spas. But it's possible that nearby competitors, like Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia, may have a better chance of taking those wellness tourists. So, this paper looks at how to keep the Thai spas and wellness industry strong and able to compete with others. A policy framework will be studied to decide for the long-term future of the wellness tourism industry in Thailand.

Since there is a lot of writing on wellness tourism in Thailand, people think that Thailand is a big place for spas and wellness. But, to keep the industry strong, spas are looked at financially; the strengths and weaknesses of the spa business in Thailand are looked at; and a policy plan is made. This is one of the first studies to focus on this information about the spa and wellness industries in Thailand. So, this study should be useful to teachers, researchers, and the government, as well as tourism teachers.

14. Conclusion

Wellness tourism has been booming worldwide, growing by about 9.9% each year for the past five years. Thailand is jumping on this trend with all sorts of cool offerings. Think top-notch services, strict quality control, and tons of certified pros. Thailand is already famous as a go-to place for health, beauty, and relaxation, plus it's becoming a major hub in the region.

To get an even bigger piece of the pie, the Thai government, tourism groups, local communities, and businesses are teaming up to get everything in place. They're even creating a national brand called Thailand Wellness to show the world that Thailand is serious about wellness tourism. Everyone involved is pitching in to make it happen (Pullapalin, 2018).

There are tons of wellness projects happening all over Thailand. These projects, which involve things like networking, working together, advertising, and promotions, are all about getting the word out about Thailand's wellness scene. The goal is to get people excited about wellness options before, during, and after their trips, and to encourage them to stay longer and explore more of the country. They also want to make wellness a top priority for everyone, not just in the tourism industry. Thailand is friendly, welcoming, and easy to get to, with awesome places to visit, fun things to do, cool events, and great infrastructure.

The Wellness Ready project is a brand-new effort to help businesses get ready to offer wellness services. It gives them frameworks, guidelines, checklists, and signage to make sure they're doing things right. Getting Wellness Ready isn't just about spas and tourism. It's about getting everyone involved, like hotels, transportation companies, restaurants, and local communities, to support wellness tourism in a way that's good for the environment and the local area. The whole project is divided into two parts: Wellness Ready Business and Wellness Ready Community.

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