

# พฤติกรรมนักท่องเที่ยวและความคาดหวังต่อการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพ: กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดภูเก็ต ประเทศไทย

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## Tourists' Behavior and Expectations in Wellness Tourism: A Study of Phuket, Thailand

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### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาพฤติกรรมและความคาดหวังของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวไทยและชาวต่างประเทศ เพื่อเข้าใจความต้องการทางตลาดและศักยภาพทางการตลาดของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพในจังหวัดภูเก็ต งานวิจัยใช้กลุ่มตัวอย่าง คือ นักท่องเที่ยวชาวไทยและต่างชาติจำนวน 434 คน ใช้การสุ่มตัวอย่างตามความสะดวก ผลการศึกษาพบว่าคุณภาพของจุดหมายปลายทาง เช่น แหล่งท่องเที่ยวชายหาด คือปัจจัยหลักที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจของนักท่องเที่ยว (23.92%) กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนใหญ่สนใจเรียนรู้กิจกรรมเกี่ยวกับอาหาร (28.10%) นอกจากนี้ กลุ่มตัวอย่างคาดหวังและสร้างแรงจูงใจในการบริโภคเพื่อสุขภาพโดยคำนึงถึงผลิตภัณฑ์หรือบริการที่เป็นมิตรต่อธรรมชาติมากที่สุด โดยนักท่องเที่ยวให้ความสำคัญกับสถานที่ที่มีอากาศดี ( $\bar{x} = 4.43$ ) รองลงมา คือ ความต้องการสัมผัสสุนทรีย์ภาพทางธรรมชาติ ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ )

### Abstract

The objective of this research was to study behavior and expectations of Thai and foreign tourists in order to understand market demand and market potential of wellness tourism in Phuket, Thailand. The sample size was 434 Thai and foreign tourists. Convenience Sampling was used as a sampling technique in this study. The results of the study showed that destination quality, namely beach attractions, was the main factor influencing tourists' choice of destination (23.92%). Most of the respondents were interested in experiencing food-related activities (28.10%). It was also found that the respondents had expectations, which created motivation for them to take into account the most nature-friendly and healthy for products and services. They also placed importance on destinations with good weather ( $\bar{x} = 4.43$ ), followed by the desire to experience natural aesthetics ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ ).

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## 1. Introduction

The health service or wellness industry is expanding steadily in many countries around the world (Callaghan et al., 2021). Such businesses typically promote and market themselves by integrating with tourism. As a result, marketing strategies for wellness businesses are frequently promoted in a way that coincides with tourism.

Wellness tourism is a form of tourism that was developed to meet the needs of a niche market and is a key selling point of long-term tourism. This also helps tourism promotion and development in several countries. At present, consumer behavior has changed in such a way that people are caring for and paying more attention to their health (Illera, 2022). This phenomenon has resulted in changing the direction of the tourism market as well. In addition, wellness tourism has grown in popularity, which is encouraging other types of tourism as well, such as cultural tourism, ecotourism, and sports tourism.

Phuket is the world-famous tourist destination which serves more than ten million tourists annually. However, by the emergence of the COVID-19 in 2020, the number of international tourists has drastically fallen to zero. It gave the local business owners opportunity to aggregate and raise the questions whether it is possible to shift the service industry from mass tourism to niche tourism which compensate the loss of international tourists. The new tourism-business model should focus on serving the quality tourists domestically and internationally to gain high income and maintain the environment of tourist attractions. For these reasons, wellness tourism has been chosen to develop as one of the service industries that has potential to be an alternative sector of tourism-related business. Phuket is believed to be a global city where health system is trustworthy due to the availability of progressive medical center and preparedness of emergency and rescue for residents proved during pandemic. Furthermore, this research aims to analyze what current business sector could be developed or extended to the domain of the wellness tourism.

According to the literature review, the form of wellness treatment promoted for tourists in each country tends to be different, depending upon the destination, local resources, or social circumstances of the destination. For example, natural health or homeopathy is most common in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, and South Pacific countries. However, in Southeast Asian countries, the focus is on healing that ties spirituality and alternative therapies (Global Wellness Institute, 2017).

The European healthcare industry grew by 12.8% between 2015 and 2017, making it one of the leading markets in revenue from spa services as shown in Table 1. The study showed that one-third of the world's spas (46,282 Spas) offering services are based in Europe, with an annual market of \$118.8 billion in 2017, growing 9.8% since 2015 (Global Wellness Institute, 2017).

**Table 1***Growth in the European Health Market*

	Market Size (US\$ billions)		Average Annual Growth Rate
	2015	2017	2015-2017
Personal Care, Beauty & Anti-Aging	999.0	1,082.9	4.1%
Healthy Eating, Nutrition, & Weight Loss	647.8	702.1	4.1%
Wellness Tourism	563.2	639.4	6.5%
Fitness & Mind-Body	542.0	595.4	4.8%
Preventive & Personalized Medicine and Public Health	534.3	574.8	3.7%
Wellness Real Estate	118.6	134.3	6.4%
Spa Facilities	98.6	118.8	9.8%
Thermal/Mineral Springs	51.0	56.2	4.9%
Workplace Wellness	43.3	47.5	4.8%

Source: Global Wellness Institute, 2017

While India is one of the countries that prioritizes wellness tourism policies, most tourists travel from the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe (Padmasani & Remya, 2015) for complex ailments, with a focus on using local knowledge such as Ayurveda and Yoga (Padmasani & Remya, 2015) to receive a thorough physical examination. The main reason for choosing India is because medical costs are inexpensive. There are also a wide variety of doctors who specialize in this field and use modern medical equipment.

India is one of the most popular destinations for those who love to exercise or practice yoga, which is a traditional integrated science from India. The Indian wellness industry has always promoted its image as a provider of traditional yoga to the global market. Yoga is promoted in the healing category which links spirituality and well-being, and it has increased in popularity in the Indian yoga market (Chen et al., 2013). In contrast to the American perception of the yoga market, Lehto et al. (2006) found that "yoga tourists are happy to visit places in the sun, ideal for practicing on the beach or in natural water areas."

However, the behavior and needs of tourists of each nationality are different. European tourists tend to enjoy massages, spas, mineral baths, and yoga. This is similar to the Americans who enjoy massages, eating local cuisine, spas, mineral baths, and healing meditations (Krajangchom & Sangkakorn, 2019).

The behavior of Chinese tourists has changed, wellness and health service businesses in many countries are interested in marketing to this group. In particular, they market Chinese spouses and other groups who may be dealing with fertility issues (Fertility Tourism). This is a new market which has enhanced income for the global tourism industry. The fertility tourists have service interests apart from the other groups, which emphasize activities on physical and mental readiness for fertility. Such activities include muscle relaxation and massage therapy in preparation for pregnancy (Angkulanon, 2018).

From the above studies, it was found that consumers in each area have different behaviors, which determine their different reasons for using health services. Research from the Global Wellness Summit (2020) found that there has been a tendency to adapt to the new normal during the outbreak of "COVID-19." What is interesting is that the expansion of a wellness business for the new generation, which is "Wellness Music" or music therapy in an online format. The wellness music consumer market is expanding more widely in the United States. To some extent, the comprehension in the consumer behavior of tourists could shed the light on what sectors of the local businesses could serve the expectations of both domestic and international wellness tourism.

To summarize this section, this research will focus on wellness tourism which improves the health and well-being of tourists through physical fitness, spiritual healing and promoting a healthy through various wellness programs and activities. Existing studies have investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global travel however this research gap has motivated the researchers to investigate the trend of changing in travel behavior and expectation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The study intends to narrow the existing research gap by addressing the following research questions and objectives;

### **1.1 Research Question**

- What are the behavior and expectations of Thai and foreign tourists for wellness tourism in Phuket, Thailand?

### **1.2 Research Objective**

- To understand the market demand of wellness tourism in Phuket, Thailand.

## 2. Literature Review

Tourist behavior is the context in which consumers purchase, use, and abandon tourist services. Özdemir and Yolal (2017) defined tourist behavior as the activities and choices made by tourists while visiting a destination, which can be influenced by several factors such as nationality and cultural background. The behavior of tourists is one of the most important predictors of future tourism industry while tourist behavior is a combination of planned, impulsive, and experiential consumption factors that influence tourists' purchasing intentions in the tourism context (Meng & Xu, 2012) and willingness to recommend the places to others.

Tourist motivation plays a significant role in tourist choices as it drives tourist's needs, feelings, and desires towards a specific goal, particularly in choosing destinations (Hoang et al., 2022). Tourists' motivation has also been affected by unpredictable factor such as COVID-19 pandemic, the external environment that affect people's demands and desires, and affect their participation in daily activities, which is the primary driver of traveling.

### **2.1 The Wellness Tourism Market**

The Asian region is one of the most popular destinations for wellness tourism (Illera, 2022). There is high-potential for the wellness-promoting tourism market with its significant strengths, including the price and service rates, which are not very high, considering the quality received. There are also beautiful sights which are able to attract and accommodate tourists as well.

According to the Global Wellness Institute (2017), the countries that play an important role in providing wellness tourism services are Thailand, Singapore, India, the Philippines and Malaysia respectively. According to a study from Chusri and Lalitsasivimo (2020), it was found that in 2017, Thailand had 38% of the Asian market share from wellness tourism. In the eyes of foreign tourists, outstanding points of wellness-tourism include Thai massage and Thai spa.

However, several entrepreneurs have adjusted their marketing and wellness tourism services and added local activities to create points of interest for tourists, such as rural herbal tours, natural agriculture tours, and herbal food tours (Wongpratum & Phumvitchuvet, 2021). In addition, entrepreneurs have learned to add value to tourism products and services by emphasizing the Thai identity through wellness tourism service activities. This includes the integration of healthy and local foods, the development of Thai herbs as dietary supplements, cosmetics, and the branding and developing of local products to be internationally known and valuable. Branding for a product or service has a significant effect on creating competitive opportunities. As Kieanwatana (2018) revealed, the strengths that make Thailand's wellness services so highly satisfying for tourists are friendly services, courteous and polite staff, and reasonable prices. However, there are still weaknesses namely security, ability to communicate in a foreign language, and lack of promotion of wellness services both domestically and internationally.

According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2021), there is a policy to develop new types of tourism products to meet market demand and help revitalize the Thai tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy is aimed at targeting specific markets, especially the medical or health tourist groups. The focus is to emphasize quality rather than quantity by focusing on three types of tourism: health or wellness tourism, medical tourism or healthcare services, and food and agriculture-based tourism. The Tourism Authority of Thailand proposes focusing on promoting local culture, food, and adding value through the improvement of tourism personnel. This includes creating a digital platform for the tourism industry together with strengthening health care (Bangkokbiznews, 2021).

According to the International Healthcare Research Center (IHRC), foreign wellness tourists traveling to Thailand are mostly from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, China, and Japan, respectively. In the year 2018, 2.5 million foreign

tourists traveling to Thailand for wellness services accounted for 6-8% of the total number of tourists (Kasikorn Research Center, 2019). Popular wellness tourism activities include Thai massage, followed by foot massage and healthy eating. Details are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2***Tourist Activities Needed in Wellness Tourism in Thailand*

Activities	%
1. Thai Massage	65.80
2. Foot massage	30.10
3. Healthy eating	29.50
4. Aromatherapy massage	26.80
5. Yoga	23.80

Source: Kienwattana et al. (2021)

For general foreign tourists entering Thailand, the In-depth Survey of Tourist Behavior Project of the Tourism Market Research Center Under the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) (2020) found that in the first half of the year 2020, more than six million foreign tourists arrived in Thailand. This is the smallest number due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of tourists who traveled to Thailand the most are from China, Malaysia, Russia, Laos, and Japan, respectively.

Studies of the Indian wellness tourism market show that India has clear Ayurvedic medicine policies at national and state levels. Ayurveda is based on the philosophy of "Pancha Mahabhuta", consisting of 1) Earth Element, 2) Water Element, 3) Fire Element, 4) Wind Element, and 5) Aether. All of these make up the universe, including the human body. Therefore, India often uses these words in branding themselves as a destination for wellness tourism.

According to a study from Jyothis and Jannardhanan (2009), India's wellness tourism management offers a wide range of services and prices to cater the diverse customer segments. Wellness Tourism in the state of Kerala in India is one example of Special Interest Tourism that has captured the attention of Indians and foreigners around the world. According to the research of Chuaysook and Kovathanakul (2015), the factors contributing to the development of wellness tourism in Kerala were the various products that focus on combining Indian therapies with natural tourism resources. Prices of wellness products are quoted in Euros according to the main target tourist groups and they are reasonable according to the European standard. In terms of accommodations, such as resorts and hotels, Ayurveda services are provided on the same basis everywhere. The price of the services is worth for the services received. Tourists get the opportunity to choose health care services according to their own budget, either 5-star, non-branded hotels or resorts.

Indonesia has promoted wellness businesses in conjunction with the identity of the city in Bali, such as publicizing health food businesses, especially organic food and raw food, yoga studios, and spas. According to the Report of Bali Tourism (2018), there was a mega-project called "Ubud Organic Market," which is a cooperative, managed by organic fruit and vegetable farmers. It is promoted as an area connecting farmers and consumers without the transactions of middlemen. This enables consumers to access healthy, fresh, clean, and good quality food at a reasonable price.

The markets of wellness tourism in Japan tried to use co-branding, which had been initiated between related operators such as hotel sectors and All Nippon Airways (ANA), to provide packages for wellness and healthcare tourism. This was to strengthen both the image of the products and enable them to expand the target group into one that is more diverse as well (Nikkei Asia, 2017).

From the studies of wellness tourism markets above, it is seen that wellness tourism services consist of several groups of stakeholders with different backgrounds. These wellness service providers include travel service providers and accommodation groups. Marketing activities need to create cooperation between each other to add value and effectively attract the target customers. That also helps distribute income to each business group as well. The creation of an image for wellness tourism services should cover all dimensions based on factors, affecting tourists' decisions. These include service quality, reasonable prices, and travel experiences in conjunction with traveling for wellness.

It could be seen that the wellness tourism is a large umbrella which potentially include various business sectors, including culture and food exploration, nature expenditure, fitness activities, spa, yoga, and meditation. For example, food industry could become healthy food services and sightseeing activities in natural scenery could become sport trips. However, the data of the tourists' expectation and behavior of the tourists in Phuket are needed to understand by two reasons: 1) Phuket has its own characteristics which initiate the expectation of tourists; 2) the expectation and behavior of tourists could lead the way to develop current business sectors in Phuket which are deteriorated by COVID-19 to the new wellness tourism.

### ***2.2 Underpinning Theories***

Tourist behavior is influenced by a complex interaction between psychological, social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors. When discussing tourist behavior, theory of push and pull factors is a widely used framework in the field of tourism to understand and explain the motivations behind tourist behavior. This theory suggests that individuals are motivated by a combination of internal factors that "push" to travel such as the desire for relaxation or adventure, and external factors that "pull" to travel towards specific destinations or experiences. The push and pull factors work together to shape the decision-making process and influence travel choices.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is also one of the underpinning theories in this study, which used to analyze the tourist decision-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on visits to destinations. Theory of Planned Behavior showed that individual characteristics of tourists drive their behavior and expectation, including their desire for engagement with tourism services.

## **3. Methodology**

This quantitative research was conducted by distributing self-administered questionnaires in both Thai & English versions to tourists in Phuket. The population of this study were Thai and foreign tourists who traveled in Phuket island, e.g. Phuket Old Town, Kata Beach, Patong Beach, Nai Harn Beach, Karon Beach

### ***3.1 Respondents***

According to Cooper and Scindler (2001), a minimum sample of size 400 is taken from an infinite population. This quantitative sample is from an infinite population, therefore the sample size number of tourists was 434. Convenience sampling was used as a sampling technique which select participants based on the research accessibility and convenience.

### ***3.2 Research Instruments***

The survey in this study was conducted in .2022-2021A Content Validity Test (Index of Item Objective Congruence, IOC) was conducted. The total value of IOC for each questionnaire item was between 0.67 and 1.00 which was over 0.5, therefore the instrument was considered valid.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part 1 contained questions on tourist demographics. Part 2 contained attributes of travel activities considered to be interesting by tourists. Part 3 were statements of perceptions of the lifestyle

behavior of tourists. Part 4 consisted of perceptions of expectations and motivations regarding wellness. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of perception from part 3 and part 4, ranging from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 5 (Very Likely).

### 3.3 Data analysis

The data were analyzed, using the “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” or SPSS. The demographic data were analyzed, using descriptive statistics such as frequencies. Mean ratings were used to analyze the items in regard to statements of perceptions.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

Table 3 shows that most respondents were male, representing 50.46%, followed by females, representing 44.24%, and 5.30% was unspecified. Most were between the age of 20-23 years old, representing 38.94%, followed by the age of 31-40 years old, accounting for 28.80%. Most or 36.40%, were from Europe, followed by local tourists from Thailand, and American tourists representing 19.40% and 12.20% respectively. The majority or 42.40% stayed less than one month, and 35.71% stayed between one and six months with regard to main factors affecting tourists' decisions, beach attraction ranked first at 23.92%, followed by tourist facilities and price, accounting for 20.95% and 14.80% respectively.

**Table 3**

*Inbound Tourist Demographics in Phuket*

Demographic Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	219	50.46
	Female	192	44.24
	Unspecified	23	5.30
	Total	434	100
Aged range	Between 20-30 years	169	38.94
	Between 31-40 years	125	28.80
	Between 41-50 years	84	19.35
	Between 51-60 years	37	8.53
	Above 60 years	19	4.38
	Total	434	100
Region of Tourists	Local Tourist (Thailand)	84	19.40
	Southeast Asia	26	6.20
	East Asia	48	10.60
	South Asia	26	6.00
	Europe	157	36.40
	Oceania	6	1.40
	Middle East	25	5.80
	Africa	9	2.10
	USA	53	12.20

Demographic Variable	Category	N	%
	Total	434	100
Trip Duration	Less than 1 month	184	42.40
	1 month - 6 months	155	35.71
	Over 6 months	56	12.90
	Undefined	39	8.99
	Total	434	100
Main Factors Influencing Tourists Decision (Multiple options)	Destination quality (Beach attraction)	338	23.92
	Destination quality (People)	172	12.17
	Destination quality (Tourist facilities)	296	20.95
	Reputation	167	11.82
	Safety reason	172	12.17
	Price & expense	209	14.80
	Flexibility to change or cancel trips	59	4.18

Table 4 below illustrates that most respondents were interested in food-related activities, representing 28.10%. This is followed by any activities with access to nature i.e., sunbathing at the beach and visiting waterfalls and spa treatments, representing 25.57% and 14.14% respectively.

**Table 4**

*Travel Activities*

Activity during their stays	%
1. Food explorations	28.10
2. Accessing nature.	25.57
3. A wide range of scheduled fitness activities.	14.05
4. Spa	14.14
5. Yoga	4.89
6. Meditation	5.58

As shown in Table 5, most respondents enjoyed learning new cultures ( $\bar{x} = 4.13$ ). They also had a healthy lifestyle regarding food and nutrition, when taking into account their daily energy needs ( $\bar{x} = 3.98$ ).



**Table 5***Lifestyles*

Lifestyle Behavior	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1. Food and Nutrition		
1.1 Consider the amount of energy that should be received each day.	3.98	0.98
1.2 Consider the proper proportion of dietary consumption each day, including vegetables, fruits, vegetable or meat proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.	3.87	0.96
2. Fitness		
2.1 Exercise regularly.	3.77	1.05
2.2 Manage a proportion of cardio exercise and weight training.	3.62	1.09
3. Cultural Diversity		
3.1 Enjoy learning new cultures.	4.13	0.89
4. Health Awareness		
4.1 Check out health information.	3.90	1.00
4.2 Apply healthy information to daily life.	3.93	1.02
5. Personal Development		
5.1 Practice new skills such as music, art, social sciences, science, etc.	3.79	1.10

As seen in Table 6, the respondents were motivated by healthy wellness service consumption and considered the most nature-friendly services. They put importance on places with good weather ( $\bar{x} = 4.43$ ), followed by the desire to experience natural aesthetics. ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ ), and pet-friendly places ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ ).

**Table 6***Expectations & Motivation in Wellness Consumption*

Expectation & Motivation in Wellness Consumption	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1. Relaxation & Pampering		
1.1 Interest in health and fitness.	3.99	0.96
1.2 Engage in sports.	3.79	1.02
2. Nature-friendly Value		
2.1 Perceived Good weather.	4.43	0.80
2.2 Experiences of natural aesthetics.	4.39	0.78
3. Physical- Friendly Value		
3.1 Child-friendly.	4.17	1.04
3.2 Medical supervision.	3.72	1.28
3.3 Pets welcome.	4.19	1.04
4. Cultural Experiences/opportunities		
4.1 Perceived variety of cultural events.	4.12	0.92

Expectation & Motivation in Wellness Consumption	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
4.2 Experience with local people.	4.03	1.03
4.3 Perceived knowledge of new places.	4.15	0.83
4.4 Experience in historical/cultural sites.	4.06	0.88
5. Sales Promotion		
5.1 Receive free gifts.	3.75	1.21
5.2 Receive free trials.	3.64	1.28
5.3 Offer coupon.	3.56	1.34
5.4 Join in prize drawing.	3.36	1.44
5.5 Offer VIP program.	3.38	1.50

The results of the expectation and motivation in wellness consumption are clustered by five dimensions among tourists found in Phuket following the analytical method of Dimitrovski & Todorovic (2015): relaxation and pampering, nature-friendly value, physical- friendly value, cultural experiences/opportunities, and sales promotion. The study also found that the tourists had expectations which created motivation for healthy consumption, while considering the most nature-friendly products or services. The tourists focused on the importance of places with good weather, followed by the desire to experience natural aesthetics. The present circumstances regarding tourism are the result of changing tourist behavior combined with the trend of eco-friendly tourism or ecotourism. This finding supports that of a study by Luekveerawattana (2018) who found that the attitudes of tourists are the main factors affecting tourists' decisions to use the services of nature-friendly hotels. In addition, it is also discussed by Lim et al., (2015) that various event-based programs can be designed to enhance novel experiences for visitors. The forms of program should create immersions, namely, guided touring, education on environment, and special exhibition. In Phuket, there are several hotels turning naturally-friendly as a part of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with the aim of decreasing environmental damage.

As this study reveals, experiences with food were found to be the most popular activity among tourists during their stays in Phuket. Food tourism or gastronomy tourism can be an important tool for hospitality and tourism businesses. This is consistent with the recent study of Chunkajorn and Na Thalang (2021), who found that gastronomy tourism is an interesting tourism trend and is increasingly popular. Tourists who travel abroad are spending a great amount in the category of food and beverages, accounting for 1/3 of the total cost. Tourists tend to try local foods in each location visited, and view food as a part of their travel experiences (Chen et al., 2023).

In Thailand, gastronomy tourism has had a great impact on the tourism industry, which has a nearly 4% share of the global gastronomy tourism market, which is a massive volume (Future Market Insights, 2023). This has led the Thai government to recognize the importance of the gastronomy industry. Therefore, various initiatives and projects have been launched to support its growth. Some examples include the Amazing Thailand Culinary City project, "Muslim Friendly & Gastronomy Tourism Routes, Amazing Thai Taste, and so on.

Moreover, several studies found that tourists' reactions to travel risk perception directly influenced their changes in travel behavior influenced by COVID-19 pandemic. As the study of Yu et al. (2022) showed, tourist behavior in China changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with local tourism in Beijing increasing after the pandemic and certain groups experiencing slower recovery after the first wave. Similarly, the study of Šerić et al. (2022) revealed that tourist behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted towards home-based activities and a preference for consumption habits that

promote a healthy lifestyle. Wellness tourism become famous among tourists due to their needs of rehabilitation after a long home-isolation. Thus, the study by Kessler et al. (2020) pointed out that the social wellness related to the social connections in the new settings, cultures, and natures should be considered to integrate in the wellness-related activities.

Wellness tourism has multifaceted domains which could meet the expectations of tourists under the local context. Focusing on Phuket, the findings of this study show that foods, cultures, and environments are prioritized in the perception of the tourists. Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) postulated in their research that less tourists choose to participate in wellness tourism by the cultural means. However, this study suggests that among business owners in Phuket, the culture could be included in the wellness tourism and become novel services, such as, sauna and massage with local herbs, healthy foods with local ingredients and wisdoms, and mental treatment in the local environment. In the real context, business owners and local people can develop wellness services by utilizing their culture as a resource. This could be included in the wellness tourism criteria and create specific form of the wellness tourism particularly in the locality of Phuket.

## 5. Research Implications

Research on tourist behavior has numerous implications for several stakeholders in the tourism industry, including destination marketers, policymakers, especially tourism service providers. Specifically, the results of this paper have implications for hotel management and authorities in Phuket. It is critical for firms to get to know tourists well in order to better meet their needs and to exploit the market potential for enhancing accommodations and wellness services. The results of the study highlight areas for improvement in tourism services, helping providers enhance the quality of offerings and meet the evolving needs of tourists and also help destination marketers create targeted advertising and promotional campaigns based on the specific preferences, motivations, and behaviors of different tourist segments.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

This research explores tourists' behavior and expectations using the concept of "healthy lifestyle." The results reveal that experiences with food were found to be the most popular activities among tourists during their stays in Phuket. The study also showed that tourists had expectations and were motivated to pay for health and wellness services while considering the most nature-friendly products and services. The tourists focused on the importance of places with good weather, followed by the desire to experience natural aesthetics. The findings suggest that a growing number of consumers' value wellness tourism as a holistic experience that does not only include products and services specifically related to health and wellness treatments, but also leisure and cultural activities. As wellness tourism has grown significantly in the tourism industry, the researchers strongly believe that an opportunity to integrate wellness into any tourists' activities will help hotel owners gain benefit from the increasing numbers of both domestic and international tourists.

The percentage of each wellness-related activities could reveal the network of current businesses which has potential to be recovered if the owners develop their business conforming to the wellness tourism. Foods and environment of the Phuket tends to be most valuable resources for the industry recovery. The current business owners need to gain more knowledge on wellness tourism. It is found that food-related activities, good environment, and aesthetic of the nature becomes the main expectation of tourists who visit Phuket.

In addition, tourist behavior is a multifaceted understanding, while there are also opportunities for future research to improve the understanding of this phenomena. It is recommended that future research should strive to incorporate a

more diverse range of cultural perspectives to better understand how cultural differences influence tourist behavior. Nevertheless, this research is cross-sectional study of tourist behavior at a specific point in time. Longitudinal studies observing over time could provide insights into the evolution of behavior and factors influencing changes in behavior.

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