

# **YANCHENG REBORN FROM WITHIN: HEALTH TOURISM AS A Catalyst FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

China's rapid economic development has significantly improved living standards, but it has also brought to the forefront the challenge of an aging population. The aftermath of the 2020 pandemic has exacerbated concerns about suboptimal health among the populace, leading to a collective desire for a more tranquil and health-focused lifestyle. This shift is particularly pronounced among middle-aged and elderly individuals, who increasingly prioritize their well-being and seek to enhance their happiness through healthy living.

As of the end of 2019, China's population aged 60 and above had reached 254 million, and projections indicate that by 2050, this demographic will surpass 480 million. Notably, the "China Better Life Survey" has revealed that the top preferences for elderly individuals over the past two years have been related to health preservation and tourism. This heightened awareness of the elderly population's needs has garnered attention from various sectors of society, with health tourism now integral to the national strategy of "Healthy China."

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**Keywords:** Aging Population, Suboptimal Health, Healthy Lifestyle, Elderly Well-being, Health Tourism

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## **Preface**

With the rapid development of China's economy, people's living standards have been greatly improved, but the aging of the country's population has gradually emerged. After the epidemic in 2020, the problem of people's Suboptimal health has become increasingly serious. More and more people have slowed down the pace of life, seeking peace of life, physical and mental health, and quality improvement. Especially for middle-aged and elderly people, they attach great importance to health and aspire to increase their sense of happiness through a healthy lifestyle. As of the end of 2019, the population of China aged 60 and above was 254 million. It is expected that by 2050, the population of China aged 60 and above will exceed 480 million. The "China Better Life Survey" found that in the past two years, the items that elderly people are most willing to consume are health preservation and tourism. The needs of the elderly have received attention and attention from all sectors of society, and health tourism has become an important part of the national strategy of "Healthy China".<sup>[1]</sup>

### **1. Domestic Health tourism**

#### **2.1 Literature statistics**

When searching for "Health tourism" on CNKI, a total of 2,700 articles were found as of June 1, 2023. After excluding newspapers, duplicate journals, and policy documents, a final selection of 1,151 articles

was made. Among these, 169 were dissertations. The literature search indicates that the primary research focus and content revolve around the current development of destination health tourism. Out of the selected articles, 36 specifically discuss the development of health tourism products, while the remaining articles explore the characteristics and significance of health tourism, as well as tourists' perceptions and satisfaction with such projects. However, it is worth noting that there is a limited number of documents addressing the research on the health tourism service chain, innovative and distinctive development approaches, and the integration of local healthcare and medical services.

## **2.2 Concept characteristics**

"Health tourism" is a form of behavioral activity that aims to enhance individuals' physical and mental well-being by integrating the external environment and striving for an optimal state. It extends beyond a simple translation of "health + pension" and encompasses a deeper meaning. Its purpose is not only to prolong participants' lifespan but also to facilitate their spiritual growth and development, improve their overall quality of life, promote physical and mental cultivation, delay aging, and prevent diseases. "Health tourism" combines the aforementioned activities and approaches with enjoyable tourism experiences. In 2016, the National Tourism Administration defined health tourism as "the sum of various tourism activities that enable people to achieve a natural and harmonious state of body, mind, and spirit through healthy bodies, nutritious diets, a caring environment, and a compassionate heart." It serves as a significant means to meet the increasing demand for health services among the public. The development of domestic "health tourism" has undergone practical exploration followed by theoretical advancements. Chinese scholars hold diverse perspectives and propose different ideas on the subject. Foreign academic research presents three theories concerning the concept of "health tourism": the "purpose theory," the "function theory," and the "result theory." These theories analyze the distinct stages of health tourism and other tourism activities based on the unique characteristics of "health tourism." While China's cultural background differs significantly from that of foreign countries, the research approach to conceptualizing the characteristics of health tourism is generally similar. However, domestic experts and scholars prioritize China's national context, social customs, and existing resources, emphasizing the feasibility of health tourism in China.<sup>[2]</sup> Nonetheless, the precise definition and elaboration of health tourism still require further study and resolution by scholars both domestically and internationally.

## **3. The significance of Health tourism service in Yancheng rural revitalization strategy**

### **3.1 Promote the development and upgrading of the rural vitalization strategy**

Industrial revitalization is the foundation and the key of the rural comprehensive revitalization. How to better promote the revitalization of rural industries through urban-rural integration has become an important issue of The Times. We should attach great importance to the enabling role of integrated urban and rural development, and inject strong impetus into the comprehensive promotion of rural revitalization. The rural service is relatively single. The Health tourism service covers pension, health, medical care, culture, sports, tourism, leisure and other aspects, with a wide industrial coverage, a high degree of industrial integration, and the industrial chain can be extended. Developing Yancheng rural Health the development of tourism service, can boost urban and rural economic benefits, promote rural

health, tourism service, effectively combined with traditional service, develop rural culture, healthy diet, Chinese medicine physical therapy health projects, effectively improve the utilization of agricultural resources, strengthen the industrial added value and service toughness, and drive the comprehensive development of Yancheng rural areas, Health tourism service become rural revitalization strategy "booster".<sup>[3]</sup>

### **3.2 Promote the development of urban and rural service and economy**

The development of Health tourism service can integrate the overall economic circulation of urban and rural areas, and achieve the comprehensive integration of society, life and economy. And health tourism can combine a number of industries to integrate medical and health, improve the added value of the service, and create a multi-chain development. The development of service can attract talents to the urban and rural areas, at the same time, capital, knowledge, skills, to produce a large number of jobs. Take high-end customers who pursue quality life experience as one of the target customer groups, attract the consumption of people in demand group, drive the improvement of local income, economic growth, and promote the improvement of the overall living environment quality of urban and rural areas in Yancheng.<sup>[4]</sup>

### **3.3 Promote the formation of urban and rural cultural connotation**

Urban and rural health tourism is based on this regional characteristics, according to the regional cultural connotation and local characteristics, Health tourism service, Yancheng as the largest coastal wetland city, livable appropriate, combined with the city rich cultural background and cultural characteristics, is the value of publicity and window, comfortable cultural inner ring and atmosphere, are important factors to attract people travel to relax.

## **4. Research on the development of health and health tourism in Yancheng**

### **4.1 Ecological health and health tourism**

Ecological health tourism is a specific type of health tourism project that is developed for tourism purposes, utilizing local resources such as hot springs, forests, and coastal areas. Its primary objective is to promote health preservation and enhance physical and mental well-being. The Yellow Sea Forest Park, located in Yancheng, is the largest artificial ecological forest garden in East China, situated in a north subtropical monsoon climate zone. The park primarily consists of artificial deciduous broad-leaved and evergreen broad-leaved forests, with a remarkable forest coverage rate of 66.6%, making it a natural oxygen-rich environment. In March 2020, it was designated as the National Forest Health Base. Hot springs are also a prominent feature of the coastal city of Yancheng. The classification and evaluation of national hot springs and health tourism projects, as outlined by the state, highlights that hot spring and health tourism are centered around the utilization of hot spring resources, which possess health and therapeutic effects. The primary function and distinguishing characteristic of this type of service is rehabilitation and recuperation, in addition to engaging in health tourism activities. Current research conducted by domestic scholars on hot spring health tourism primarily focuses on the status quo of hot spring tourism, resource development, and destination construction strategies. Moreover, scholars emphasize the importance of incorporating local ecological characteristics into the development of health tourism, facilitating in-depth discussions and planning in this field.<sup>[5]</sup>

## **4.2 Medical insurance, health and tourism**

Health tourism refers to the tourism that tourists promote their physical and mental health by receiving advanced medical services or characteristic medical culture in the health destination. Yancheng area has a number of grade three a general hospitals and traditional Chinese medicine hospitals, serving local and northern Jiangsu residents. The participation of the medical system has laid a solid foundation for Health tourism. It gives priority to the implementation of traditional Chinese medicine resources, substituting the advantages of Chinese medicine into Health tourism, and further combines the development as the focus and highlight of Health tourism.<sup>[6]</sup>

## **4.3 Sports, leisure and health tourism**

Sports, leisure, and health tourism involve utilizing sports resources and facilities in the surrounding environment of a tourist destination. Yancheng has successfully hosted several large-scale sports events, including an annual marathon that attracts numerous sports enthusiasts from both domestic and international backgrounds. In recent years, city leaders have increased investment in national fitness project facilities, aiming to encourage more citizens to engage in sports and fitness activities. Research on sports, leisure, and health tourism primarily explores the development trajectory of health sports tourism services. The investigation and analysis of the city's health sports tourism market can rely on the diverse range of existing health sports products available.

## **4.4 Leisure, vacation and health tourism**

Leisure vacation health tourism refers to the leisure activities that individuals engage in during their free time to promote health, connect with nature, nurture their emotions, and enhance the enjoyment of life through vacation tourism offerings. When targeting customer groups, such as those seeking a slow-paced and relaxed lifestyle, it is important to select suitable leisure activities and prioritize leisure and vacation experiences. Additionally, it is essential to develop and design resort areas that align with the principles of self-cultivation, enabling tourists to access the necessary services within the resort. By focusing on these aspects, leisure vacation health tourism can provide a fulfilling and enriching experience for travelers.<sup>[7]</sup>

## **4.5 Cultural health preservation and Health tourism**

Cultural health health tourism refers to the rational exploration and utilization of local traditional health culture and health service tourism resources. The health culture of the Chinese market is very rich and colorful. Religious culture, tea culture, painting culture and so on are diverse. Priority can be given to investigating the preferences, cultural pursuit and accomplishment of health tourism intentions, putting forward the planning and design concept, and combining the communication of common lovers in health tourism can achieve the spiritual relaxation and pleasure, and more love and trust the health tourism.<sup>[8]</sup>

# **5. Improvement Path for the Development of Yancheng Health Tourism**

## **5.1 The government should strengthen planning and management**

The government should do a good job in planning and management. The development of health tourism is a complex, comprehensive, and systematic project that involves multiple departments and industries. Without a comprehensive guidance document that covers the entire situation, it will be difficult for

health tourism to develop for a long time, and various problems will also be encountered in the later implementation. Yancheng Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism should, under the overall policy of national development of health tourism, combine the actual situation of Yancheng, make full investigation and research, and learn from experience, as soon as possible, issue guidance documents on health tourism. In the later implementation process, it is necessary to strengthen management, clarify the market positioning and development direction of health tourism, and do a good job in overall layout and functional zoning<sup>[9]</sup>. And clarify the responsibility subject, do a good job in division of labor and responsibility division, avoid situations where responsibilities are unclear or unclear, and make timely modifications to unreasonable and impractical areas in the subsequent implementation process.

### **5.2 Promote and shape the brand image of "Healthy Salt City"**

First of all, we should strengthen publicity to increase the popularity of health care tourism in Yancheng City. In the Internet era, people have various ways to receive information and various ways of publicity. If there is no creative means of publicity, the effect will be greatly reduced. Now is not the era of "wine is not afraid of deep alley". If we want to improve the popularity of health care tourism in Yancheng City, we need to increase publicity efforts and adopt a variety of publicity methods, Let the health image of Yancheng deeply ingrained in people's hearts. Firstly, it is necessary to establish a brand image of "Health tourism in Yancheng". Once the brand image is determined, it is not easy to change. Then, by launching the "Health tourism in Yancheng" series of short films, we can deepen our impression and highlight the brand effect. Secondly, we should make good use of the network platform to continuously launch promotional films, short videos, VLOG and other film and television materials on Tiktok, Kwai, Weibo, official account and other platforms with a large number of users, and along with advertising in TV, stations and other places, make Yancheng's health image known to the public and improve its popularity. Finally, we need to use festivals for brand promotion, taking local characteristics as the starting point, holding competitions such as "Homesickness Photography" and "Celebrating Harvest Together", introducing diverse gameplay, and combining local characteristics to form a strong attraction. Secondly, it is necessary to highlight marketing, expand influence, fully leverage marketing, establish a good reputation, and continuously improve service quality and level during peak seasons, so that tourists can truly feel the uniqueness of health tourism. In off-season, health tourism promotion activities can be launched, such as free experience of health tourism, accommodation and scenic spot packages, to attract potential tourists. Enterprises can also be encouraged to come here for health group building, Allowing employees to relax and continuously improve their reputation can also drive the development of accommodation and catering, thereby expanding the influence of health tourism.<sup>[10]</sup>

### **5.3 Attracting Financing Participation**

We should attract private resources to invest in the health and wellness service through government subsidies, tax exemptions, financial support, and other means, guide social capital, financial institutions, and professional operation teams to enter the health and wellness service, encourage private capital to cooperate with platform companies in the area to jointly build health and wellness service facilities and bases, and create a large-scale and specialized industrial chain. Secondly, we should use preferential policies such as rent reduction and land acquisition to attract high-end brand



health care institutions to join the development of health care tourism in Yancheng, use our brand advantages and comprehensive strength to form brand highlights as soon as possible, and build a health care tourism demonstration project.

#### **5.4 Taking multiple measures to expand the health tourism product system**

First of all, we can use health care equipment to carry out physical examination, Chinese medicine pulse diagnosis, acupuncture and moxibustion, massage and other activities. Home stay and farmhouse recreation can be used as a base to introduce health care equipment, so that tourists can carry out massage, photo beauty and other activities in their own yards. As an important bearing point for the development of health care tourism in Yancheng City, home stay and farmhouse recreation can fully integrate health care and accommodation, and more activities focusing on relaxation, leisure and sports can be designed. And different health tourism projects should be developed in different seasons. In spring, you can experience farming and planting, in summer, you can listen to streams and fish, in autumn, you can climb, ride, and pick, and in winter, you can ski. There are different harvests in each season, which can increase the revisiting rate. For the elderly, we need to vigorously develop living and elderly care, effectively activate idle resources, utilize existing idle collective houses, sanatoriums, school buildings, etc., and scientifically formulate plans for health and elderly care service facilities. Firstly, we will solve local health and elderly care problems. Secondly, we welcome elderly people from other places to stay here for a long time, recuperate and recover their health. We need to achieve the goals of "nurturing young people, nurturing middle-aged people, and providing elderly care".

#### **5.5 Clustering Development Accelerates the Construction of Health and Tourism Bases**

At present, the development of health tourism in Yancheng is relatively scattered and the agglomeration effect is not strong. Firstly, it is necessary to utilize existing resource advantages and tourist attractions to create a health and wellness tourism base or a health and wellness characteristic town, forming a "big health and wellness scenic spot" effect, such as an ecological health and wellness base or a hot spring characteristic town, with the health and wellness tourism base as the center and continuously developing outward to form a point-to-point radiation effect. Moreover, it is necessary to integrate high-quality resources, integrate homestays, well-known scenic spots, and Hobby farm to form a cluster effect. Similar tourism resources in the vicinity can be divided into the same area, creating an overall image of health tourism, and achieving large-scale development. For example, the adjacent characteristic villages can jointly develop health tourism. Design joint routes between different scenic spots to achieve linkage between them. And vigorously develop "health and wellness+", gradually forming a series of tourism products such as "traditional Chinese medicine+health and wellness", "forest+health and wellness", "sports+health and wellness", and "hot springs+health and wellness". Upgrading health tourism to a clustered level will elevate the development of health tourism to a new level, and it will continue to be explored in the future to better achieve a clustered health model.

#### **5.6 Strengthen professional training and establish a health tourism think tank**

Professional talents and advanced theoretical support are very important for the long-term development of tourism. Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen training and introduce professional talents. Generally, the comprehensive quality of scenic area staff is not high. Firstly, for professional

services, regular training should be conducted to encourage all types of personnel to participate in skills training such as health care and management, such as massage, massage, and equipment operation. Practical exercises should be conducted to continuously practice and improve service levels, And it is necessary to encourage operators to participate in relevant training, understand the functions of health tourism, and continuously enrich their skills, in order to provide better services. In addition, we can also develop a long-term training mechanism for health care talents, communicate with nearby vocational schools to open relevant professional courses, combine theory with practice, cultivate reserve talents with professional background and high comprehensive quality, alleviate the current situation of the shortage of health care tourism talents, provide talent support for the development of health care tourism, and lay a foundation for the long-term development of health care tourism. Secondly, it is necessary to establish a Yancheng Health Tourism Think Tank, accelerate brand building, and assist in the rapid realization of "Health Yancheng" without intellectual support, and the subsequent development and adjustment of health tourism require theoretical support. It can be seen from this that it is very necessary to establish a health tourism think tank, which can be jointly participated by relevant government departments and experts in the cultural and tourism service to establish an expert consultation and regular exchange mechanism, provide decision-making and intellectual support for the development of health tourism in Yancheng City, and promote the development of health tourism in the whole city.<sup>[11]</sup>

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

Health tourism is indeed a relatively new concept in China. The Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee introduced the concept of innovative, coordinated, green, open, and shared development. Innovation, listed as the foremost of the "five concepts," is regarded as the primary driving force for development. Health tourism services, as a more precise, refined, and personalized subdivision of tourism services, combine tourism and health services to meet people's aspirations for a better and healthier life.

This article focuses on the characteristics of tourism, the significance of tourism services in the Yancheng rural revitalization strategy, and the development of health tourism in Yancheng. It draws upon various references and analyzes the current state of tourism development, offering targeted suggestions for project development. It proposes fostering an innovative entrepreneurial class in health tourism by cultivating an innovative spirit, providing purposeful training, and encouraging local leading enterprises to establish business platforms. The aim is to nurture a group of entrepreneurial entrepreneurs, professional experts in technology innovation, and marketing experts, forming a team of international professionals with expertise in health, tourism, and management. Active participation in the new development model is encouraged. Health tourism should seize the opportunities presented by modern society's development, particularly focusing on the needs of middle-aged and elderly consumers. By leveraging the comprehensive advantages of Yancheng and aligning with its unique characteristics, related tourism brands should be established, enhancing the quality of health services and actively engaging in the domestic market. By doing so, local health tourism in Yancheng can

become a leading example of green development and a healthy lifestyle in the new era, contributing to the "Healthy China" development strategy.

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