

THE IMPACT OF FACILITY, COST, AND CONVENIENCE OF THAILAND WELLNESS TOURISM TOWARDS CHINESE CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION IN THE POST PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

This research aims to study the impact of the facility, cost and convenience of wellness tourism in Thailand on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase after Covid-19 pandemic. The quantitative method with a online five-points Likert Scale questionnaire is adopted to collect 400 responses for representing the population. The results significantly showed the following findings: 1) The cost factor is the most impactful factor on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase wellness services in Thailand. Two sub-variables of the cost factor which are affordability (Sig = 0.014, Beta = 0.141) and cost performance (Sig = 0.048, Beta = 0.150) highly show the impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention, which support the hypothesis that the cost of Thailand wellness tourism has an impact on Chinese customers' purchase intention. 2) Considering the facility of wellness service, the sub-variable of service capacity (Sig = 0.001, Beta = 0.233) shows the greatest impact, supporting the hypothesis that the facility of Thailand wellness tourism has an impact toward Chinese consumers' purchase intention. 3) The factor of convenience of travel on using wellness service in Thailand has no significant impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention, with significant value > 0.05 of all three sub-variables. The findings of this study contribute to the knowledge of the behavioral patterns of Chinese consumers engaging in wellness tourism in Thailand post-pandemic, and also serve as a foundation for more in-depth research and discussion in the future.

Keywords: Thailand Wellness Tourism, Purchase Intention, Chinese Consumer

Introduction

The Covid-19 outbreak has had adverse consequences on the global tourism and hospitality industry, including the wellness tourism industry. On one hand Covid-19 had a negative impact on almost every industry; on the other hand the pandemic brought the attention of health care to the world. Thus, the need to review Chinese consumers' behavior after covid-19 is created.

Thailand has emerged as a global leader in wellness tourism which ranked 15 out of 218 countries worldwide in industry (GWI, 2024) even after the Covid-19 pandemic. The market size of Thailand wellness tourism in 2022 compared with the year 2019 decreased -54%, but there is an increase of 35% when compared with the year 2020 (GWI, 2024). Take a closer look at the recovery progress data of Thailand's wellness tourism and discovered that, the domestic wellness trips recovered 99% compared the data of 2022 with 2019, while the inbound international wellness trips only recovered 31% compared with the same period (GWI, 2024). Among the reduced gap of international wellness tourists, Chinese wellness tourists play

a big part. According to the data from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (Thailand), the number of Chinese arrivals to Thailand is 4.1 million during January to July 2024, only recovering 60% compared with 2019. As China is Thailand's largest visitor market during the past decade and the wellness tourism industry continues to adapt to the challenges posed by the crisis, there is a growing emphasis on understanding and addressing the evolving needs and expectations of wellness tourists in the post-pandemic era.

Hu (2011) found that perceived value significantly influences customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention. Mosavi & Ghaedi (2011) have examined four main dimensions of perceived value which are monetary value, convenience value, emotional value, and social value. The research findings show a strong positive relationship with customer satisfaction, which in turn significantly influence purchase intention. This research explored the impact of factors of facility (natural resource, Thai unique therapy, and capacity), cost (cost performance, affordability, and promotion) and convenience (language barrier, travel policy, and network) of Thailand wellness service on Chinese consumers' purchase intention. This study contributes knowledge towards filling a gap in understanding about the changes and needs of Chinese tourists in Thailand wellness travel industry in the post Covid-19 pandemic era.

Research Objectives

1. To study the impact of the facility factors such as the natural environment, Thai unique therapy, and capacity on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase.
2. To study the impact of the cost factors such as cost performance, affordability, and promotion on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase.
3. To study the impact of the convenience factors such as language barrier, travel policy, and network on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase.

Scope of the Research

1. Population Scope

The population of this research is all Chinese nationality tourists from mainland China who used to visit Thailand during the year of 2024, this is because China outbound travel officially reopened in March of 2023 after Covid-19 pandemic and the latest data will be considered to use as population in this research. According to the tourism statistics data from the Ministry of Tourism & Sports (Thailand), there are 4,127,730 Chinese tourists who have visited Thailand during January to July of 2024. The sample are randomly selected from the population who purchased wellness service in Thailand to present the whole population to study the Chinese consumer's purchase intention of wellness service in Thailand. The sample size is 400 with a precision level of $\pm 5\%$ according to Yamane's sample table.

2. Variable Scope

2.1 Independent variables

2.1.1 Facility of wellness tourism in Thailand

2.1.1.1 Natural environment

2.1.1.2 Thai unique therapy

2.1.1.3 Capacity

2.1.2 Cost of wellness tourism in Thailand

2.1.2.1 Cost performance

2.1.2.2 Affordability

2.1.2.3 Promotion

2.1.3 Convenience of wellness tourism in Thailand

2.1.3.1 Language barrier

2.1.3.2 Travel policy

2.1.3.3 Network

2.2 Dependent Variable: Intention of purchase wellness service in Thailand

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

In this research, the quantitative research method will be adopted as the research method. An online questionnaire is designed to determine how facility, cost, and convenience values impact Chinese consumers' purchase intention of wellness tourism in Thailand. The sampling technique used in collecting the online survey questionnaire from the respondents is the simple random sampling from probability sampling method. The reason for the research adopting a simple random sampling method is to avoid the sample bias as the population is huge and the questionnaire will be conducted online. With this method set, the researcher collects and analyzes the numerical data systematically in order to understand and explain the research problems in a real-world context.

2. Research Steps

A five-points Likert Scale quantitative questionnaire with closed-ended, single and multiple choice questions is designed to collect 400 Chinese tourists' responses after being systematically studied through secondary research such as theories or concepts and relevant research articles that are related to this study. The English version of the online questionnaire was checked for validity and approved by the advisors, Dr. Papob Puttimanoradeekul, and has been translated to Chinese language from the English version before distribution and the translation work was verified by a Chinese TEFL professor from Dali university, China. 410 questionnaires have been distributed in order to gather 400 valid responses. The statistical software is used to analyze the results after data collecting.

3. Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed online via WJX.cn to the respondents and tested using Cronbach's Alpha in the statistical software, with a total reliability of 0.954 by a pilot test sample group of 30 respondents. There are total 50 questions divided by 6 main sections:

3.1 Screening questions: to filter valid responses (2 questions)

3.2 Demographic data questions (8 questions)

3.3 Independent variable questions of facility (10 questions)

3.4 Independent variable questions of cost (10 questions)

3.5 Independent variable questions of convenience (10 questions)

3.6 Dependent variable questions of purchase intention (10 questions)

4. Data Analysis

The statistical software is adopted for quantitative questionnaire data analysis in this research. The statistics used as two types for analyzing data:

4.1 Descriptive statistics consist of frequency, mean, standard deviation and median.

4.2 Inferential statistics consists of multiple regression analysis tests.

The 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire is measured from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The interpretation of mean and median are as below table:

Table 1: The Range of Mean and Median Interpretation

Mean Range	Median Range	Interpretation
1.00 -1.80	1	Strongly Disagree
1.81 -2.60	2	Disagree
2.61 -3.40	3	Neutral
3.41 -4.20	4	Agree
4.21 -5.00	5	Strongly Agree

Research Results

400 valid responses out of 410 total responses have been selected through the screening questions. Among 400 respondents, 62.87% are female and 36.39% are male, with 70.20% age range between 25 to 44 years old. During the trip to Thailand in 2024, the medical care and personal care are the two main wellness services that Chinese tourists purchased the most, with a portion greater than 50% of respondents used to purchase the service. 75.25% of respondents purchased medical care wellness services such as plastic surgery or health check-up, while 61.39% of respondents purchased personal care wellness services such as Spa or massage service. More than 50% of the respondents are aware of the wellness service through formal advertising from service providers (74.50%) or travel agency and tour guide (66.09%).

The following tables (table 2, 3 and 4) present the analysis results of the facility, cost and convenience factors.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Median of Facility Factor

Sub-variable of Facility	Mean	Stand.DV	Median	Interpretation
1.1 Natural resource	3.67	.936	4	Agree
1.2 Thai unique theory	3.75	.985	4	Agree
1.3 Capacity	3.69	.975	4	Agree
Total	3.71	.856	4	Agree

The result from table 2 shows most respondents agreed with the Thai unique theory ($\mu = 3.75$, S.D. = .985, Me = 4), followed by capacity ($\mu = 3.69$, S.D. = .975, Me = 4), and nature resource ($\mu = 3.67$, S. D. = .936, Me = 4). The total mean of 3 sub-variables is 3.71 (agree), the standard deviation is .856, and the median is 4 (agree).

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and Median of Cost Factor

Sub-variable Cost	Mean	Stand.DV	Median	Interpretation
2.1 Cost performance	3.57	1.019	4	Agree
2.2 Affordability	3.54	1.054	4	Agree
2.3 Promotion	3.56	1.027	4	Agree
Total	3.56	.934	4	Agree

According to the mean and median data from table 3, most respondents agreed with the cost performance ($\mu = 3.57$, S.D. = 1.019, Me = 4), followed by promotion ($\mu = 3.56$, S.D. =

1.054, Me = 4), and Affordability ($\mu = 3.54$, S. D. = 1.054, Me = 4). The total mean of 3 sub-variables is 3.56 (agree), the standard deviation is .934, and the median is 4 (agree). Meanwhile, the standard deviation of 3 sub-variables are greater than 1 which reflect greater differences among individual data points, indicating a significant divergence in the respondents' perspectives on cost factor.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and Median of Convenience Factor

Sub-variable of Convenience	Mean	Stand.DV	Median	Interpretation
3.1 Language barrier	3.57	1.034	4	Agree
3.2 Travel policy	3.50	.995	4	Agree
3.3 Network	3.53	.978	4	Agree
Total	3.54	.890	4	Agree

The result from table 4 shows most respondents agreed with the language barrier ($\mu = 3.57$, S.D. = 1.304, Me = 4), followed by network ($\mu = 3.53$, S.D. = .978, Me = 4), and travel policy ($\mu = 3.50$, S. D. = .995, Me = 4). The total mean of 3 sub-variables is 3.54 (agree), the standard deviation is .890, and the median is 4 (agree). The standard deviation of the sub-variable of language barrier is greater than 1, indicating a divergence in the respondents' perspectives on it.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and Median of Purchase Intention

Sub-variable of Convenience	Mean	Stand.DV	Median	Interpretation
Purchase Intention	3.81	.822	4	Agree

The table 5 shows the data of dependent variable, purchase intention. It result that Chinese respondents agreed with their purchase intention ($x = 3.81$, S.D. = .82).

Fisher (1925) introduced the theory of p-value and taught how to calculate it. According to him, there is a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables if the p-value is below the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). However, if the p-value is over the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), there is no significant relationship between the two variables (Biau, et al., (2010).

A variance inflation factor (VIF) value and Durbin Watson (D-W) value are used for test data model. VIF is a measure of the correlation between independent variables in a regression model. Thus, the variance inflation factor can estimate how much the variance of a regression coefficient is inflated due to multicollinearity. A VIF of three or below is not a cause for concern. The D-W value is a test for autocorrelation in the residuals from the regression analysis. The D-W value normally ranges between zero and four. A value of 2.0 indicates there is no auto-correlation detected in the sample. Values from zero to less than two points to positive auto-correlation, and values from two to four mean negative auto-correlation. The multicollinearity of test results showed all VIF values are less than three which present that there is no collinearity problem. In addition, the D-W values are all approximately equal to 2.0 which present that there is no auto-correlation in the model, and there is no correlation between the sample data. The VIF values and D-W values approved for the sample data model is valid.

Table 6: Analysis of the Impact of Wellness Service Facility toward Purchase Intention

Sub-variable of Facility	b	Beta	t	Sig	VIF	Interpretation
1.1 Nature resource	0.020	0.024	0.339	0.735	2.301	Rejected
1.2 Thai unique theory	0.074	0.094	1.282	0.201	2.366	Rejected
1.3 Capacity	0.185	0.233	3.358	0.001**	2.138	Accepted

Adjusted R-square = .098, F = 15.407, D-W = 1.962, *P≤0.05, **P≤0.001

Dependent variable = Wellness service facility

Independent variable = Purchase intention

The result data from table 6 show the facility of wellness service overall has an impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention. The sub-variable of capacity (Sig = 0.001, Beta = 0.233) shows significant impact toward Chinese consumers' purchase intention, but 2 sub-variables of nature resource (Sig = 0.735) and Thai unique theory (Sig = 0.201) are rejected.

Table 7: Analysis of the Impact of Wellness Service Cost toward Purchase Intention

Sub-variable Cost	b	Beta	t	Sig	VIF	Interpretation
2.1 Cost Performance	0.114	0.150	1.985	0.048*	2.559	Accepted
2.2 Affordability	0.141	0.192	2.462	0.014*	2.732	Accepted
2.3 Promotion	0.020	0.027	0.346	0.730	2.725	Rejected

Adjusted R-square = 0.109, F = 17.326, D-W = 1.984, *P≤0.05, **P≤0.001

Dependent variable = Wellness service cost

Independent variable = Purchase intention

Cost of wellness service shows strong impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention according to result data from table 7. The sub-variable of affordability (Sig = 0.014, Beta = 0.141) shows highest impact toward Chinese consumers' purchase intention, follow by the sub-variable of cost performance (Sig = 0.048, Beta = 0.150). For sub-variables of promotion (Sig = 0.730) is rejected.

Table 8: Analysis of the Impact of Wellness Service Convenience toward Purchase Intention

Sub-variable of Convenience	b	Beta	t	Sig	VIF	Interpretation
3.1 Language barrier	0.064	0.085	1.078	0.282	2.596	Rejected
3.2 Travel policy	0.059	0.076	1.013	0.312	2.321	Rejected
3.3 Network	0.072	0.091	1.154	0.249	2.572	Rejected

Adjusted R-square = .044, F = 7.122, D-W = 1.968, *P≤0.05, **P≤0.001

Dependent variable = Wellness service convenience

Independent variable = Purchase intention

Unfortunately the convenience of wellness service shows no impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention according to result data from table 8. The 3 sub-variables with p value > 0.05 result rejected.

Discussion

The analyzed result of 400 sample data highlight the following three findings:

1. The most impactful factor of Chinese consumers' intention to purchase wellness service in Thailand is the cost factor. Two sub-variables of cost factor which are affordability (Sig = 0.014) and cost performance (Sig = 0.048) have high impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intentions, while the sub-variable of promotion (Sig = 0.730) shows limited impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention. Meanwhile, the standard deviation of all sub-variables of cost factor are greater than 1, indicating a significant divergence in the respondents' perspectives on cost factor. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Zhao (2016) addressed the low cost as one of the most critical reasons for Chinese tourists to purchase the spa wellness services in Thailand. However, the findings in this research matched the statement from Lu, Zhu, Li, and Li (2022), they state that Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically reshaped Chinese consumer behavior, highlighting the high divergence in consumption attitudes in China after COVID-19, especially the differences in spending between frugal consumers and those more willing to spend. Price sensitivity became a critical factor as many brands adjusted their strategies to address consumer caution of the cost, and the effect of it could be global. Borbon & Pulhin (2023) explains that an increase in the number of lower-income class people after Covid-19, caused people to prioritize spending on their basic needs and saving for future needs rather than travel, or looking for a more cost-reasonable travel experience. This finding supports the perspective that there is indeed a significant disparity in the purchasing power of Chinese consumers in post-pandemic, and different industries need to conduct targeted analyses for specific consumer segments.

2. Facility factor also has an impact on Chinese consumer purchase intention. Considering the wellness service facility, the sub-variable of service capacity (Sig = 0.001) has the greatest impact, while other two sub-variables of natural resource (Sig = 0.735) and Thai unique theory (Sig = 0.201) show limited impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention. The finding supports the statement from Li et al. (2023) that the carrying capacity of tourism in the region affects the service innovation of the wellness tourism industry, which may impact consumers' satisfaction thereby affecting their purchase intention.

3. The factor of convenience of using wellness service in Thailand has no significant impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention. The sub-variables with p value > 0.05 result there are no significant impact on Chinese consumers' purchase intention.

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