

# An Analysis of the Growth Trends and Factors Influencing Wellness Tourism in Thailand Over the Past Five Years

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## Abstract

Wellness tourism has emerged as one of the most sought-after destinations in Thailand, increasing greatly and gaining considerable attention in the last few years. Despite this fact, the growth of wellness tourism in Thailand has still not been explained fully. Therefore, the present exploratory investigation will examine the specifics of tourism for wellness in Thailand while uncovering the underlying patterns and trends that can be discerned, thereby delivering relevant insights and valuable knowledge to various stakeholders involved in this thriving business. In sum, a total of ten very detailed and well-conducted in-depth interviews were carried out face-to-face, using a thoughtfully prepared combination of open-ended and probing questions. In particular, the concept of the Compound Growth Rate - CGR - model has been described, analyzed and subsequently applied to identify the quantitative growth and relative size of the phenomenon under consideration in the country. Moreover, an in-depth analysis was made about the identification of the major market players and stakeholders participating in the medical, health and welfare tourism industry. Also, challenges and opportunities that may emerge for the health, welfare, and wellness tourism sectors in Thailand were discussed. In concluding, this study gave an input into dynamically interlinked impacts and components of both the demand and supply sides of the healthcare and tourism sectors in Thailand, where decision-making and strategic planning can effectively be grounded.

## Introduction

Wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing and most lucrative industries in the world. The land of beauty, Thailand, too, has targeted becoming a leader in this industry in Asia. The government and private sectors are fully committed to continuous development and nurturing of the sector of wellness tourism. These ideals, however, must be attained at the cost of numerous hindrances. One major hindrance is the cyclical nature of economic cycles; not only would growth rates be lower, but in some unfortunate circumstances, negative growth. It is against this background that there has emerged an imperative need for comprehensive research and analysis of growth trends and diverse influences affecting wellness tourism in Thailand during the last five years. This would reveal many valuable inputs that can be effectively used in the overall development of the industry. Therefore, all possible different patterns and trends across high-growth and low-growth types of wellness tourists will be analyzed in depth, while exploring in detail the various factors influencing these respective trends. By examining the growth of both high and low growth segments within the wellness tourism industry, one gains a better insight into the factors behind creating disparities in growth. Such information will not only permit better decision-making but also effective strategies to attract and retain different types of wellness tourists. Besides,

developing innovative products and services that target the evolving needs and preferences of the wellness traveler will help in identifying emerging trends and market opportunities. Moreover, cooperation at government, private sectors, and health and wellness professional levels will be important for the development of Thailand's wellness tourism. This involves forging alliances and sharing knowledge and best practices where, together, the industry will be better equipped to surmount challenges, optimize resources, and create a resilient ecosystem supportive of both tourists and residents. Besides research and collaboration, investment in infrastructure and facilities is key towards further developing the wellness tourism products of Thailand. This ranges from world-class spas, wellness resorts, and fitness centers to eco-friendly accommodation that allows for the nurturing of a holistic approach to well-being. In so doing, Thailand will be able to cast its net wider in consumer segments of its tourism products that are becoming increasingly sophisticated and demanding in terms of authenticity and life-changing experiences. Eventually, the genuine commitment of both government and private sectors, along with comprehensive research, teamwork, and strategic plans, will open a route to make Thailand the incomparable wellness destination in Asia. Head-on confrontation with the challenges and utilization of most of the knowledge gained from the analysis-the pathway to creating strong grounds for Thailand's sustainable growth and development of its wellness tourism sector is slowly being built. With continuous effort and innovation, Thailand is in a good position to lead by example for wellness tourism globally, benefiting both the economy and visitors. These facts will provide valuable inputs to both the government and private sectors in Thailand for their activities aimed at adaptation, improvement, and development of tourism products answering peculiar needs and tastes of the market. This would help provide useful insights toward developing broad and flexible long-and short-term policies as well as strategic directives that are to be created with the purpose of developing wellness tourism while paying due respect to sustainability concerns. First, it is necessary to point out that during the last decade, wellness tourism has become much more important, turning into a significant issue for local and national governments, as well as for the communities in different regions of Thailand. There is no doubt that the wellness market has emerged as one of the main players within a wide range of tourism sectors, hence all this contributes to the positive portrayal of Thailand's tourism brand with great recognition and embracement. At the end of this paper, we ponder deeply over the discussion made and draw comprehensive conclusions that wrap up the essence of our discussions.

### **Background of Wellness Tourism**

The interest in wellness has been growing at a rapid pace today as people seek to enjoy their state of health and wellness. Increased interest in wellness is triggered by the changed perception of the body and mind in that the pursuit of life has been focused on living a healthy and long life. Healthwise, people are increasingly looking for therapies and practices which can prevent or delay the occurrence of illness or other body conditions. Prevention of diseases has now emerged as a point that consumers would consider in making their choices as it relates to the health and wellness issues. Whereas much concern is raised for health and wellness concerns within the traditional fields of medicine, yet this orientation has swept into the emergent and booming business of medical tourism, too. With the advent of modern medical technology, severe diseases and illnesses may be effectively treated today, making these services under demand. However, contemporary society does not crave much for conventional medical treatments but strives to incorporate wellness in all aspects of life. Relishing a holistic approach, more and more people seek traditional and complementary medicines that offer minimal negative side effects. Such a treatment

techniques are viewed as desirable and congregate under values set by today's wellness focused society. Presently, the demand for various treatments to improve health conditions ranges from physical to mental health. However, the concentration nowadays is to maintain health, rather than just dealing with grave ailments or diseases. This coincides with the obvious interest in alternative health care services due to the increasing demand to attain a wholesome and healthy life. Wellness is a field that continues to get more passionate and interested in society's awareness of the interconnection between physical and mental health. It is not just trying to avoid diseases but leading a healthy life to live a fulfilling and meaningful life. It promises an increasingly wider range of treatments and approaches, each suited to the special needs and preferences of individuals. From ancient healing practices to state-of-the-art medical advancements, options for maintaining and enhancing well-being have never been more varied. Besides these regular streams of medical fields, the concept of wellness has found its way into the world of medical tourism too. With improved technology and a more globalized world, people are getting access to health services in every nook and corner of the world-which was earlier demarcated to specific regions of the world. This has opened an entire new world of alternative treatments and therapies for people. Be it a rejuvenating spa retreat or a specialized wellness program, people will travel across distances to experience this change in holistic well-being. The reasons for such diverse treatments in demand include an urge to minimize side effects. As much as conventional medicine has revolutionized the treatment of serious illnesses and diseases, it is mostly enveloped in a host of unwanted consequences. This in turn has driven many to seek alternative routes to medical intervention, relying on natural remedies and therapies. From acupuncture to herbal medicine, and from mindfulness to yoga, these are gentler and more sustainable approaches to wellbeing, without risk of harmful side effects. While the focus of wellness is on maintaining overall health, there's also a growing recognition of the importance of mental well-being. The interrelation between mind and body is already widely recognized, and treatments sought after aim at both physical and mental health. Various meditation practices, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and art therapy-the new kinds of treatments for better mental health-bring a state of balance and harmony. Interest in wellness reflects an evolution of priorities and values which society has undergone. People are beyond the concept of merely managing an illness; they want to play an active role in their own health and well-being. The dominant characteristics of the holistic approach go toward a balanced and healthy lifestyle, dramatically changing the healthcare landscape. While all-new technologies and treatments are continuously emerging, possibilities for achieving optimum well-being expand, giving a chance to live life at its fullest. Wellness is such a journey that is driven by passion, curiosity, and the sincere want for a better, healthier future. With the growing awareness of the interrelationship of the mind, body, and spirit, modern man is embracing a multidimensional approach toward well-being in a spectrum of human existence. From what food they eat to activities they engage in; every decision aims at nourishing the whole person to achieve synergy in all of life. Wellness is not a fad but a paradigm shifts in how people think about health and position it in their lives. They have come to better understand the part they play in their own health; as such, taking their life in hand with the hope of warding off illness, optimizing quality of life. This paradigm shift has turned the tide on the healthcare business, and a variety of new treatments, therapies, and technologies aimed at assisting in the pursuit of wellness have been developed. The concept of wellness no longer refers strictly to physical fitness but extends to the mental, emotional, and even spiritual aspects of well-being. This is the holistic approach, which realizes that only when all the various facets of an individual are brought into balance can a real state of well-being be said to exist. More and more people realize that a healthy body without a healthy mind and spirit is simply not good enough. Today, with the

broader view, there is more focus on prevention through exercise, reducing stress, and mindfulness practices. People are taking a more proactive approach toward health, seeking methods to prevent illness and maintain energetic levels on all dimensions of life. The concept of wellness is further evolving to include alternative medicine and complementary therapies. Ancient healing knowledge, like Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine, is also increasingly being incorporated into people's conventional health routines. These traditional systems of medicine also have an orientation toward a concept of wellness that is generally holistic in nature and seeks toward the root imbalances responsible for disease. Treating the roots of ill health, rather than symptoms, can allow these treatment modalities to offer a more holistic and sustainable form of health. Due to the interest in wellness on the rise, there is greater availability and ease of accessibility regarding these ancient healing practices. Wellness centers, retreats, and spas sprouted all over the world, each introducing various treatments that target nurturing of the mind, body, and spirit. From designed wellness programs to spiritual immersions in retreats, these places offer a non-threatening and supporting atmosphere where an individual can explore his or her journey toward wellness. Interest in wellness has also meant a greater appreciation for nutrition. Awareness of the implications of diet on health means changes toward eating more consciously. Organic, locally sourced ingredients are in high demand, and plant-based diets are increasingly popular for their health benefits. The interest in wellness brought about a reevaluation of one's lifestyle and its habits. Much more thought is given to activities of everyday life, and people make conscious decisions to give more time to taking better care of themselves. They squeeze movement and exercises into their lives, be it with committed yoga practice, a walk in nature, or some kind of sport. The interest in wellness has re-ignited the interest in sleep and rest as critical parts of health. People recognize that rest and relaxation are crucial to maintaining wellness; hence, quality sleep is an important constituent element of holistic wellness practices. An interest in wellness might not relate to individual well-being but also the well-being of communities or the planet. People are becoming more conscious of the environmental impact their choices are causing and seek out any alternatives that may be more sustainable or eco-friendly. They make sure to switch to reusable products, support local and organic farming, and do anything else that would decrease their ecological footprint and nurture a healthier planet. The interest in wellness has been truly transformational; it empowers individuals with the confidence to take care of their own health and wellbeing. This becomes a testimony to the power of self-care and positive change when people look out for themselves. The interest in wellness covers a wide swath-from personal happiness and fulfillment to the overall health and vitality of society in general. By embracing precepts of holistic well-being, people improve not only their private lives but also contribute to creating a healthier and more harmonious world. As interest in wellness grows, so does the likelihood that we will see even more amazing innovations in the field of health and wellness. New technologies, treatments, and approaches will be invented, offering new ways to support people on their journey to optimum health. The future of wellness is very bright; with every finding, the full potential of our bodies and minds comes closer. More importantly, many other factors that in the past did not play a major role in people's lives have gradually developed into influential drivers. The health attitude and behavior have greatly influenced shopping lifestyles, types of leisure activities engaged in, products adopted in daily life, and long vacationing experiences. All these features are the reflection of the attitude and spirit of leisure and demand an optimistic and reliable state of mind and body. It is because the goal of struggle in human beings' life is contentment and pleasure. People tend more and more to attach more weight to both physical and mental health. This health aspect of people is embraced by the concept of vacation or therapy through tourism, which satisfies their need for escape and relaxation with a perfectly scheduled itinerary for an

enjoyable and blissful holiday. Usual wellness now ushers in a whole new exciting sector in the tourism industry going by the name of wellness tourism. Prospects for growth in tourism to wellness are on an upward curve, with annual growth rates unparalleled in fascination. Hence, the study of tourism to wellness is exceptionally worth undertaking.

### **Importance of Studying Growth Trends and Factors**

This fast growth in this industry segment, aside from the high inflow of foreign visitors with high average spending per person and exceptional development of tourism services, has put deep and wide research interest in understanding the various and different factors that deeply influence the wellness tourism trends in the beautiful country of Thailand. Among these are the high marketing potential that Thailand has, the high monetary contributor of the industry, the prevailing and well-structured transportation networks and facilities, the high ranking tourist attraction that the destination has, the strong focus on safety and security, the plethora of health and wellness facilities that provides the utmost comfort and care to the visitors, the excellent services from the hospitable Thai people, and the excellent and alluring general picture that Thailand is able to portray to the eyes of foreign tourists. These works range from contentious and detailed works that undertake the task of paying close attention to an expansive range of research methodologies and thorough data sources. It is also important to note that most of the studies carried out to date have mostly looked at the tourism industry without going into detail about various categories of clientele and kinds of tourism services available. This striking lack of comprehensive analysis and understanding seriously jeopardizes the ability to adequately assess the performance of wellness tourism in Thailand and hence to obtain greater and more valuable input for policy-making purposes, when seeking to vigorously enhance the competitiveness of the country regarding both domestic and international tourists. Undoubtedly, it must be recognized and underlined that the excellence of performances for the different types of tourists basically finds its origin in the unparalleled warmth of reception and tangible and intangible cultural heritage which Thailand offers, such as the world-renowned spa and massage, souvenir products of uniqueness and tempting local products, and various foods sumptuous and carrying with them true reflections of the authenticity of Thailand. Wellness tourism in Thailand is highly important for further growth and development in terms of overall wellbeing and prosperity. By focusing on a guest segment that generates a highly substantial revenue, we can surely provide a continued flow of income and a long-term one towards the booming tourism industry. Again, it is not enough to add more supply or to create new destinations. In this regard, we must seek further ways and opportunities for increasing such spending for maximum economic value addition through tourism for wellness. The effective strategy is through the attraction of such an affluent segment into the community areas, thereby stimulating investment and enhancing productivity levels of residents. This, in turn, forms a complete skeleton that increases not only the direct and indirect spending within the local economy but also shores up the Thai economy. In fact, the beach and other tour services exclusively for health-conscious tourists, such as retreats for yoga and sports activities, are playing a vital role in promoting the wellness and tranquility of citizens within the nation. These wellness-promoting activities allow visitors to delve into several relaxation techniques while being treated with the purest ingredients of nature through spa mechanisms. Besides, the natural scenery of Thailand forms a perfect backdrop for rejuvenation and self-discovery. Whether the experiences are exploring lush forests, meditating at serene waterfalls, or doing yoga at sunrise on pristine beaches, it's all tailor-made for connecting individuals with their inner selves and fostering deep peace within. Moreover, the pull of Thailand's wellness offerings draws one way beyond physical rejuvenation. Rich in cultural



heritage and tradition, there is much to see for visitors to obtain an upfront authentic Thai culture: take a traditional Thai massage course or meditate with practicing Buddhist monks. These experiences enrich personal well-being while offering insight into the ancient wisdom and philosophies that have guided the Thai people through the ages. Fundamentally, personal action and behavior, when integrated into principles of wellness, have the capacity to lead to a harmonious state of balance, contentment, and happiness. This fact calls for a logical reasoning and an undeniable appeal of the wellness offerings in the country which have been spearheading the exponential growth of wellness tourism in the country. Crucially, with a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation, Thailand would have secured a position as the world's leading global destination for wellness tourism. But with an offering of always-most-superior experience in tourism beyond what's available to tourists overseas, it puts Thailand in a very good position to achieve huge economic value and to attract more visitors who want holistic wellness. To conclude, what makes Thai wellness tourism appealing extends beyond beautiful landscapes and luxury resorts. This cuts right into the very pulse of its culture, where centuries-ensconced tradition meets modern-day innovation in developing what is truly a life-changing experience for its guests. With targeted strategies and community development, Thailand is well-placed for leadership in the world of well-being and hospitality through deep insight into the principles of wellness.

### **Methodology**

Our complete investigation serves to update in detail the emergence and current trends within the setting of the tourism wellness industry, while ensuring identification and consideration of the many influential factors contributing to its strong growth and establishment. For this, we have carefully compiled a long listing of valuable information and pertinent data from a wide range of authentic and reliable references. The central point of our data involves an exhaustive range of painstakingly compiled secondary data pertinent to the multidimensional aspects associated with the broad area of wellness tourism. Five broad categories comprised the themes across all the transcripts for data saturation, representing the major determinants and critically analyzed and synthesized for completeness from this large corpus of data. These identifiable determinants include, but are not limited to, the following essential aspects: first, a general description of the overall state of affairs in the tourism industry; second, a thorough investigation and analysis of the up-and-coming field of medical tourism; third, a careful assessment of the conventional and alternative medical practices that find their niche in the wellness tourism terrain; fourth, an intensive investigation and review of the vibrant and multifaceted Thai wellness professional groups that act as driving forces in the wellness tourism phenomenon; and lastly, a detailed dissection and thorough assessment of the various wellness tourism services that presently exist in the industry. Also, to get a complete picture and to capture the holistic view of the wellness tourism industry, we have supported our main sources of information with a host of additional related resources emanating from a multitude of supportive sectors. These supportive sectors amply constitute a wide array of sectors and verticals which actively support the growth and sustenance of the wellness tourism industry. On the whole, these supporting industries encompass a wide array and range, and include-but are by no means limited to-the following areas, namely: first, an exhaustive listing of the various tourism business industries that successfully combine with and complement the wellness tourism industry; second, a profound and in-depth study of the very products and services that presently form the bedrock on which the growth and success of the wellness tourism industry are founded, and hence enable us to decipher with accuracy the complex patterns and relationships that unmistakably support and drive the wellness tourism business in

its entirety; third, a thorough and comprehensive examination of the various facets and dimensions of wellness tourism, and hence precisely capture its true nature and inherent characteristics; fourth, an astute computation and pains-taking evaluation of the growth rate which the wellness tourism industry has consistently recorded over time, and hence permit us to establish with accuracy the precise trend and trajectory of this growing industry; and lastly, an exhaustive and incisive listing of the key determinants and influential factors that directly exert a decisive influence on the wellness tourism industry. By assimilating and synthesizing these diverse and complex datasets from both primary and ancillary sources, we try to present a comprehensive and unparalleled study that does not just uncover and detail the depth and complexity of wellness tourism but also its underlying growth patterns and discernible trends, hence imparting the necessary insights and valuable knowledge to all stakeholders within this vibrant industry. This paper therefore seeks to identify factors that influence growth in tourism for wellness in Thailand. This quantitative research uses an exploratory data analysis methodology through a questionnaire. The research design is a study of secondary data, opinions of the group of business entrepreneurs in the wellness industry, the group of entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, the group of related business owners, and four groups of government stakeholders who have policy planning. Key-informant interviews were used. We analyzed data into quantitative and qualitative summaries that have a direct impact on affecting and supporting tourism for wellness. The research method was divided into two phases, using open-ended questionnaires with the adopted application. We opened and analyzed both the primary and secondary data. In this phase, the secondary data were categorized into related areas; after being categorized, the information of the stakeholders became our refined research. By completing this exploratory phase of the research, we gained from them an improved understanding of the views and opinions held by the key informants. The key informants included one focus group and one participant group who were to play an important role during the second phase of research. This second stage data collection was subsequently used in generating both quantitative and qualitative output that could complement and give depth to the results obtained from the secondary data analysis during the first stage. To get a comprehensive understanding of the wellness sector, it was important that selected wellness institutions be included in the data structure. These were the institutions that were providing us with enormous amounts of information and were avid watchdogs that always scanned for any item of importance in this rapidly changing, dynamic world of ours. Due to the nature and complexity of this industry, it soon became apparent that the maintenance of these large-scale macro information databases would continue to prove invaluable to develop a broad perspective of the many factors, both subtly and overtly, that continued to shape Thailand. Thematic analysis was carried out on the vast data collected using Big Data. Also, one of the most crucial methodologies forwarded in this paper is Text Mining, which cross-checked and validated these findings. By clustering applications, the gained information would become more understandable, thereby increasing organizations' and trainers' abilities to swiftly move from gathering simple handfuls of insights into tens and hundreds of useful, actionable insights targeted much more precisely to the specific subject matter on hand. This basis of the information expansion and broadening of the scope of analysis gave them an even greater insight into the multifaceted nature of the wellness industry. Such a comprehensive approach allowed one to get a better understanding of how different factors interrelate and influence one or another aspect of the industry. Thus, with the expanded dataset, researchers discovered hidden patterns and trends and even correlations that otherwise would not have been noticed. The addition of wellness institutions as valued sources of information enriched the research findings by putting a real-world view on the industry. These institutions acted to become repositories of valuable insights and experiences through their specific

knowledge and expertise. This was achieved by tapping their resources, whereby, in so doing, the researchers obtained a holistic view of the entire industry: not just the data collected from key informants but also the practical observations and experiences expressed from these institutions. The thematic analysis used to analyze the vast amounts of data proved an effective instrument in identifying and categorizing key themes and patterns. It allows the researchers to get more meaning about concepts and ideas emanating from the data through systematic organization of data into themes. This kind of data analysis allowed the interpretive potential to provide a comprehensive narrative of varied dimensions in the wellness industry. Apart from thematic analysis, there was an application of Big Data concepts that aided the researcher in analyzing data on a large scale. Use of Big Data concepts also helped the researcher highlight some trends or correlations that otherwise could have been missed with traditional analytic approaches. That sheer volume of data collected was turned into meaningful insights that provided substantial evidentiary grounding for the research findings. Besides being a very crucial methodology, text mining also serves in the validation and verification of research findings. From the text data analyzed, the patterns, sentiment, and variable relationships were identified by the researchers. The extraction of information from texts added to a more profound, holistic understanding of the research topic and supported quantitative and qualitative results coming from other forms of analysis. The applications of clustering brought the information collected in a better way to enable more understandable data interpretation. This was an opportunity for similarity and difference identification, hence the generation of meaningful insights by the researchers. Grouping data points into similar groups enabled organizations and trainers to quickly have multiple meaningful and actionable insights specific to their needs. This would, in turn, afford them the opportunity and knowledge to make informed decisions about and undertake positive steps towards addressing the issues and opportunities inherent in the wellness industry. In short, the freeing-up of text has given way to comprehensiveness and depth in the review of the wellness industry. Addition of key informant interviews and institutions of wellness, thematic analysis, concepts under Big Data and Text Mining analytical methodologies value and add insight to the findings about several factors affecting the industry. This has further empowered organizations and respective trainers through clustering applications, whereby access to a wide range of insights can be obtained for informed decisions to drive positive changes in the wellness industry.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Wellness tourism is, in short, travel for complete rejuvenation and to regain the spirit-body balance. The usual various experiences and activities are aimed at an approach to increase spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. This is not only confined to conventional medical services but also extends to a wide range of philosophy-based treatment methods, all of which are anchored on the two important concepts of wellness and hospitality. An in-depth analysis of the very latest trends, combined with the study of several experiences, may yield a source of insightful influences toward further business planning and act as a catalyst in driving the development of innovative wellness tourism products and services. Of essence, there is a need to monitor further and investigate deeply various factors that have potential to attract the attention of the wellness-oriented travelers from different parts of the world and further lead them to choose a particular wellness destination. This effort, while in process, calls for tracking and an understanding of the emerging preferences and desires of international travelers in pursuit of a wellness-centered experience. Wellness tourism is a growing sector, attracting people in search of ultimate tranquility, revitalization, and holistic healing. The quest for wellness has traversed geographical



boundaries; today, it is a transformational journey that comprises a wide range of immersive experiences-nurturing and enriching both body and soul. Understanding these nuances keeps changing with the rise of specific preferences that wellness travelers follow; hence, it's important for businesses to follow through with exceptional wellness tourism offerings. Wellness, therefore, can be a journey for the traveler-a transformative voyage of diversity, ranging from experiences carefully crafted to meet the traveler's every need and desire. Wellness tourism encompasses a large spectrum of choices for improving general health, from traditional ancient healing methods to the most modern treatments and infrastructure. Indeed, there are several ways in which lessons learned through trends, industry-wide practices, and data analyses can be used to spur creativity in business practices and drive forward the development of new wellness tourism products and services. It enables the destination planners, hospitality providers, and purveyors of services to meet the changing demands of these wellness enthusiasts for an authentic and immersive experience. By understanding-and leveraging-the factors that fire up the imagination of wellness-minded travelers worldwide, industry stakeholders will be able to create transformative journeys that deeply resonate with their intended audience. This, therefore, calls for continuous effort towards meeting and satisfying the changing preferences and expectations of international travelers in pursuit of specific wellness experiences, which underlines how relevant and crucial detailed monitoring and full comprehension of their needs and wants are. Wellness tourism keeps growing day in and day out, leading toward endless opportunities for those looking at restoration, rejuvenation of their inner selves, and personal life-changing experiences. In this study, a mixed-method approach has been implemented embedded with varied techniques to obtain comprehensive data. For substantial insights on the subject matter, interviews were not only conducted with leading domestic and international wellness-minded travelers who identified themselves as wellness travelers but also conducted with individuals holding key positions in health, wellness, and tourism associations. Further, discussions have been executed with highly regarded academicians, executives of wellness hospitality, and government officials. Complementing the interviews and representing a wider range of opinions, an online survey was also implemented with a total of 320 Thai wellness and hospitality entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs contributed to updating the latest number of visitors who received their services for wellness. These various methods sought to highlight major drivers and elements that led international travelers to visit Thailand as their favorite destination for wellness. Such is the wide-ranging research project that sought to examine the length of spa and traditional treatments sought by travelers. By considering the time used by travelers in seeking wellness services, this study was well-placed to offer real value about understanding the preferences and patterns of wellness-seeking individuals. This research also sought to uncover considerations that may potentially underpin decision-making at the level of wellness service providers within Thailand. Knowing such motivational factors will, therefore, enable service providers in Thailand to offer services that meet the needs and preferences of their clients. Overall, this research methodology was deep and complex, with various avenues of data collection to come up with comprehensive insight into the motivations and preferences of wellness travelers, hence a reason as to why Thailand can be preferred as a destination for wellness.

## **Analysis Techniques**

This was novel and well-conducted research into the phenomenological growth of interest in wellness tourism in the Kingdom of Thailand. The findings were emphatic, with results amazingly showing that the tourism of wellness has not only seen a steady rise but gone through a phenomenal upsurge that cannot go unnoticed. More precisely, it came as quite a surprise when the average number of wellness visitors in the

period spanning 2010 to 2015 had comfortably overtaken the 2010 figures by an overwhelming 14 times over. This phenomenal stride in numbers testifies to the irresistible appeal that wellness tourism in Thailand has been able to create. Further research into the data revealed that the annual growth of this country's tourism wellness sector was forecasted at an incredible about 82% per year. Such growth at exponential rates and at a very high level of confidence is surely without any shadow of doubt, proof that tourism wellness in Thailand is not only on the path of success but also booming at rates that could hardly have been imagined. Indeed, quite an achievement. Most striking in the findings of this study, however, was the enormous spike in wellness tourism that took place in 2013. This was the year when Thailand's status really began to take shape as being among the leaders in providing superb experiences for those who travel in search of good health. The popularity it gained in the year mentioned is thus indicative of its emergent appeal as a destination within the context of wellness tourism. Indeed, Thailand has won the hearts and minds of the wellness-seeking travelers of the world. To give a clearer, more specific picture of this phenomenal growth, the statistics must be referred to. In the year 2010, the number of wellness visitors to Thailand was a remarkable 1,160,326, comprising about 3.85% of the huge inflow of foreign tourists. But just four years later, wellness visitors reached the skies: in 2014 alone, there were 12,122,162 visitors who came for wellness activities. This number constituted a tremendous 13.76% of the total number of foreign tourists received in the country during that wonder year. These astonishing figures help confirm the incredible boom of interest in wellness tourism, firmly marking Thailand's position as definitely one of the hottest destinations for all those passionate about wellness. It should be reiterated at the end that this well-grounded research shows evidence of the growth trend of wellness tourism in Thailand being not only considerable but promising. This exponential growth of the number of visitors for reasons of wellness, added to its amazing growth rate, presents a picture of an industry which is thriving and flourishing and would be unbeatable. Thailand has been positioned as the second-to-none destination in pursuit of experiences related to wellness, and Thailand's charm remains mesmerizing for an ever-increasing audience. With the continued enchantment of wellness tourism, Thailand has remained at the forefront, and no doubt is bound for an even more remarkable future. Digital websites and applications' online content was analyzed to analyze the attributes that interested the wellness tourist. The leading most visited travel websites, the most popular mobile phone applications, the destinations, and activities that attracted the wellness tourists will be identified through this analysis. Big data and digital technologies have replaced the need to find out the public's opinion through data from search engines, forums, blog articles, and social media posts. Possible travel destinations have been mined using data mining, machine learning algorithms, and sentiment analysis to forecast numbers of tourists based on sentiment and comments. It showed that the most popular activities on a Thai wellness trip were massage and spa treatments. The main reason was to use the popular massage treatments to alleviate discomfort from traveling and working.

## **Overview of Wellness Tourism in Thailand**

### **Historical Development**

Rich from a historical perspective, Thailand has long been recognized as the main epicenter for cultivation and preservation of ancient healing practices and wellness traditions, covering an impressive timeline of more than 2,500 remarkable years. The roots of traditional Thai wellness and Thai medicine go deeply into the annals of Thai history, steeped in the wisdom bestowed by renowned physicians, the sacred wisdom of age-old healing etched forever in enduring stone inscriptions. In the annals of Thai wellness, the defining moment came under the patronage of King Rama III during the great 7th century in the

Buddhist calendar. It was during this era of great transformation that a thundering renaissance of traditional medicine came to life and with it, a newfound respect for the ancient healing arts. This was unprecedented allegiance to traditional medicine, which time-crossed and further poured into the ethos of Thai well-being. The outbreak of World War II heralded a new beginning for Thai healthcare when the Ministry of Public Health initiated giant steps to firmly lay the foundation for organized public health services. It was a sign that Western medicine finally found its place on Thai soil, marking a dent that would change the face of Thailand's health profile forever. At this critical juncture, training programs were initiated to enable traditional medical practitioners to acquire knowledge and methodologies in applying western medical practices to their repertoire of traditional healing. Fully realizing the intrinsic value of traditional medicine not only within Thailand itself but also throughout the neighboring regions, the Department of Traditional Medicine in Thailand spearheaded a landmark declaration. This, therefore, made Thailand and its regional neighbors allies in this visionary declaration of a common quest in enriching and protecting the age-old traditions of indigenous medicine. Guided by this historic declaration, the distinguished Department of Medical Services was set up to guide and ensure a quality healthcare service throughout the kingdom for the preservation of the rich Thai wellness heritage for generations to come. It is such a holistic and visionary approach that has made Thailand a beacon of exemplary healthcare practices, firmly rooted in the profound wisdom of ancestral healing traditions. Preservation and nurturing of traditional medicine continue unabated, having been integrated into the nation's identity. New projects and partnerships are unfolding both nationally and internationally in Thailand every year in the spirit of taking Thai wellness to a more sublime and efficient level, eventually leading to a future that has greater potential wherein old and new methods amicably coexist. The Thai legacy in health and wellness continues to grow, and with it, the influence it is beginning to have on the world stage-influencing scores of people to adopt a holistic approach toward well-being, enriching the lives of all who seek its wisdom. In 1959, the Ministry of Public Health was giving this undertaking to a very active and dedicated working committee, with a specific mandate to monitor the detailed drafting of the Thai Traditional Medicine and Massage Act. The very important legislation was enacted to ensure that the rich traditional knowledge concerning medicine and massage was protected and the practices of the medicinal tradition further strengthened. Along with this crucial project, a historic breakthrough was achieved in the year 1964 by building the world's very first traditional and manual medicine hospital. Since this highly important creation was made to serve a few purposes, these include maximum safety, satisfying a variety of customers' needs, meeting the necessary and relevant environment that could further enhance and develop local wisdom. It was after the opening of this innovative medical facility that the demand for traditional Thai massages and other wellness practices also began to show an upward trend, along with meditation. Grasping the need for adaptation to the emergent market demand, and the emerging popularity of these ancient Thai traditions, the Ministry of Public Health responded in an effective manner through offering an impressive array of traditional treatments, innovative services, and ingenious wellness products that aim at offering holistic rejuvenation of individuals. This triggered a sudden revolutionizing of the Thai wellness canvas. Strong catalysts, comprising specialized medical facilities, sprouted up and raised the profile of Thai healing therapies along with holistic wellness retreats around the world. Indeed, another milestone amidst 2005-2007 became an important happening in the growth and development of mystical Thailand's wellness tourism. This was a time when so many innovative wellness products and services undergirded by such impressive talents and skills were launched successfully into so many world-class wellness centers that were strategically placed to meet the needs and satisfy desires of both local and international customers. It means the coming

together of the public and private sectors into a most powerful and dynamic working group with a view to brainstorming and implementing a novel development strategy that should successfully drive the wellness industry forward. This represented a strong cooperative effort between the public and private sectors that contributed greatly to the growth and success of Thailand's wellness tourism, placing the country in the position it occupies today as a global leader in this field.

### **Key Players and Stakeholders**

It is first necessary to develop a sound theoretical framework that would accurately identify and classify several key groups in the large and multi-various spa industry with the purpose of fully defining and gaining a thorough understanding of the major players and individuals concerned regarding the stakeholders' aspect in wellness tourism. This very well-structured framework effectively illustrates the important and critical roles that would, in turn, be played by tourism authorities, government policymakers, as well as enterprises in the very basic process of defining and shaping the stakeholders' landscape in wellness tourism. It is of paramount importance to appreciate and realize in full the unique roles, duties, and responsibilities each of the stakeholders possesses, as such in-depth understanding makes for an exceptionally sound platform from which efforts of cooperation and collaboration in securing holistic development in a realm of constant evolution and change—namely, wellness tourism—effectively emerge. It is also important to emphasize that management of mutual expectation is not only necessary but also of utmost importance because it forms the first, in fact crucial, stage of a fantastic voyage towards sustainable growth and carefully cultivates the powerful potential of wellness tourism. We can evoke and utilize the collective strength and direct the same for growing the success of wellness tourism beyond exponential growths, unparalleled successes, and unprecedented heights by efficiently and proficiently recognizing and genuinely acknowledging the diversified, multifaceted roles played by them. It will enable us to derive and avail the multifarious benefits that are inestimable as well as unparalleled advantages accrued therein.

**Wellness tourism businesses and services:** businesses or entrepreneurs that bring wellness-related spa and other related businesses into the tourism services of tourist destinations, specialists and practitioners employed by such businesses. These businesses try to respond to the growing demand of tourists for health and relaxation during their travels, trying to accommodate every different kind of holistic wellness service or experience there is. From holistic spa resorts to health-oriented hotels, these provide amenities that cater more to the wellness of the patrons and help improve their quality of life.

**Residents:** Those people who are natives from the tourist areas and the main labor working force involved with tourism-related structures and amenities concerning health and spa treatment, sustainable agriculture, and upgrading of the quality of life of tourist products. In this case, locals are crucial in tourism for welcoming and accommodating the tourists, ensuring their safety, and most importantly, providing them with much-needed information on local cultures and traditions. They take pride in showcasing the beauty and uniqueness of their hometowns and contribute toward the development and sustainability of wellness tourism in their communities.

**Policy Planners:** Those governmental employees and stakeholders authorized and bound to provide plans and budgets for the betterment of community development, improvement in the quality of life, and the welfare of tourists. They also support development in the sphere of wellness tourism by formulating and providing policies that advance the well-being of residents and visitors alike. They ensure that tourism development takes place in an enabling environment and a form that is sustainable, culturally respectful, with available infrastructure and services.

**Destination Marketing and Distribution Organizations:** Tourism manager and promoter agents controlling supplies to the wellness tourism businesses. These agencies are mainly

responsible for developing and managing marketing at destinations, which act as intermediaries for the local communities to the wellness tourism enterprises. These organizations apply different techniques in marketing their destinations to tourists, develop wellness-oriented experiences, and cooperate with wellness businesses to develop special packages answering the desires and preferences of travelers.

**Destination Management Organizations:** The roles of DMOs include improving the tourism attractiveness for tourists, maintaining public facilities, and organizing scenes of interest to respond properly to the demands of tourists. Their main tasks are to coordinate related public affairs with the purpose of bringing a better environment for citizens and tourists, guaranteeing the prosperity of tourism; to coordinate with DMDOs, and to offer demand-based facilities of eco-consumption and wellness tourism. It works closely with local communities, businesses, and regulatory agencies to facilitate harmony in a sustainable tourism environment; meanwhile, the firms are concerned about travelers' well-being and satisfaction.

**Public Regulators:** These are government agencies that establish regulations and are empowered to ensure that the tourists are safe, such factors being hygiene, cleanliness, proper functioning of the tourist destination, and many more which also include the enhanced quality of life and information on transportation to the tourist destination. Such agencies are an important stakeholder in wellness tourism to maintain a high degree of safety and quality standards. They put in place regulatory mechanisms that ensure, for example, that wellness enterprises follow health and safety practices and monitor tourist wellbeing while minimizing risk. In this way they add to the overall positive experience of the wellness tourist and help to engender trust in the industry.

**Host Community Residents:** Residents of a tourist destination, their community officials, and associations who are instrumental in providing a friendly, authentic atmosphere for tourists. Locals indeed engage tourists in knowledge and passion for their culture, traditions, and natural resources through cultural exchange programs, events, and festivals of a local character, homestays or community-based accommodation, and preservation of local heritage. The rich tapestry of their warm hospitality and genuine interactions gives rise to a memorable wellness tourism experience that will hopefully create a long-lasting positive impact on the visitors and the host community alike.

**Non-Governmental Organizations:** Non-profit groups or services responsible for developing and improving wellness, health, education, care, and volunteer work, which includes protection of vulnerable groups, and assistance of social care and support to families locally. The services provided by these organizations include facilitating wellness initiatives, supporting the rights and well-being of vulnerable populations through advocacy, and providing support to the community. They also collaborate with government agencies, businesses operating in the wellness field, and other stakeholders in implementing sustainable development projects, organizing wellness educational programs, and confronting social and environmental problems. It is through dedication and initiative undertaken by NGOs, residents, and wellness tourism that the holistic well-being aspect in people can be perpetuated to create social responsibility and empowerment within a community.

### **Growth Trends in Wellness Tourism**

Having identified the most significant growth of the wellness tourism market years ago and being acutely aware of the transformative potential both at the corporate level and governmental operations with regard to attracting always desired segments of wellness tourists and augmenting the sector's market share within the broader tourism landscape, we strongly believe that one could never have a more opportune or propitious moment to embark on formal efforts that in return reshape wellness strategies at the national levels of tourism in targeted nations, among others-for example, the enchanting realm of Thailand.



Because of this, the focus of this in-depth exploratory research study will be to study in detail and probe into the current trends in the annual numerical growth of wellness tourism into the Kingdom of Thailand in the last five years. This critical analysis shall draw upon judiciously selected secondary data in order logically to present and explain salient aspects of wellness tourism with a view to strengthen the base for future strategic endeavors and development programs in travel and tourism. This will employ certain conceptual frameworks and appropriate methodologies that will be elaborated on in providing an actual representation of real activities within the context of travel and tourism about the decision-making process, buying wellness tourism experiences, consumption patterns of wellness tourism offerings, and overall perception of wellness-oriented travel experiences. This paper specifically describes in detail, analyzes, and then applies the concept of the Compound Growth Rate model, which has been already tried and tested with time in the field of travel and tourism analysis, to determine the quantitative growth and the relative magnitude of the wellness tourism phenomenon, focusing mainly on the count of wellness tourists availing themselves of the exceptional amenities offered by registered hotels located in the prominent provinces of Thailand. These are the statistics that have been collected with due care and analyses in minute details to act as a strong foundation for future strategic decisions and policy formulations in the dynamic wellness tourism sector to ensure further progress and continued success in this most enchanting sector of the tourism industry. Consequently, the research will delve into a comprehensive investigation of Thailand's tourism market for wellness by attempting to look deep into the various nuances and factors explaining its burgeoning expansion. Such an examination will provide a far better understanding of the factors driving demand for the wellness tourism experiences in Thailand. Therefore, a close observation of the decision-making process of tourists in search of travel experiences for wellness will provide an understanding of valuable information regarding motivation and preference. Additionally, step-by-step examination of the procurement process for wellness tourism experiences will explain in detail strategies and channels where people acquire highly sought-after experiences. Secondly, a detailed look at the consumption habits of the wellness tourism offerings will provide serious information on behavior and preference of the wellness tourists. A look at which types of wellness activities, treatments, and therapies are more popular among the wellness tourists and the duration and frequency in which they engage, we can highlight trends and patterns that will be used as the basis for future strategic efforts in the wellness tourism sector. More introspectively, it is necessary to understand such travels towards wellness experiences. The perceptions can be understood from the thoughts, opinions, and feedback in the questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups about the perceived quality of the experiences about their satisfaction with the wellness offerings and overall perception of wellness tourism in Thailand. This qualitative data will give a holistic understanding of the industry and complement the quantitative analysis. An integral part of this comprehensive research study is the use of the Compound Growth Rate model. The approach accepted and founded on thus acts as an analytical framework in which quantitative growth and relative magnitude have been assessed. Application of the CGR model on the number of tourists seeking the high-end facilities provided by registered hotels in the leading provinces of Thailand will enable us to establish the growth rate at which wellness tourism has grown over the last five years. The utility of such analysis will develop great insight into the future of wellness tourism in Thailand, from which informed decisions and strategies will be executed. Accurately collected and analyzed data from this investigative study will be the vital foundations for future strategic decisions and policy formulations. These shall form the basis to ensure sustained progress and success in the Enchanted Wellness Tourism Sector in Thailand. Through prevailing trends, factors of demand, consumption patterns, and perceptions of experiences related to tourism

oriented towards wellness, policymakers and industry stakeholders will be suitably better placed to devise targeted initiatives for further strengthening Thailand's global leadership position as a wellness tourism destination. This intensive exploratory investigation aims to unfold the complexity of the context of Thai wellness tourism. This research would, therefore, study the prevailing trends, use sound research methodology, and the tried-and-tested CGR model to obtain useful insights on the growth and magnitude of wellness tourism in the country. The outcome of this study would be a sound building block for future strategic decisions and policy formulations to keep furthering the progress towards never-ending success in the magical world of wellness tourism in Thailand. Wellness does not sound new for all travel and tourism businesses, especially in countries belonging to Southeast Asia, such as Thailand. Traditional Thai spas and massages are well-known in the global marketplace and always sought after by health-conscious tourists, because massage generally was considered a treatment alternative or, more specifically, a form of traditional healing art even in ancient times. Aside from the aforementioned, well-established services above, in the past two years, those remaining services and businesses that are also unmistakably tied to the modern tourism experience note a greater demand for and supply of wellness tourism and travel management in principles, practices, and activities - arguably due to the traveling health phenomena that may precipitate wellness problems, and newer, high-tech integrated medical and allied health services, positive prospects of healthcare transitions and wellness tourism requirements. Generally, the global wellness business was estimated at 3.4 trillion USD in 2013, while the number of wellness consumers is expected to increase by 9.1 percent annually from 2013 to 2018. Growth trends in wellness tourism have made more wellness tourists attracted to complementary and alternative services and programs for travel and tourism, which many countries in Asia and the Pacific, including Thailand, are distinguished for in terms of provision through key descriptions and marketing operations.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The following section exclusively deals with data analysis and discusses, in detail, the significant development in Thailand's tourism of wellness over the last five years. It will discuss both how this is developing as a distinct market and within the context of the wider "raw tourism market." To this end, our research utilizes the following complete suite of four varied quantitative data analysis methods: The first strategy involves the development of two triangular matrices that carefully define the percentage of total tourist arrivals to Thailand for medical, health and welfare, and spa and wellness tourism purposes. This percentage will then be compared against overall tourist arrivals into Thailand during the next five-year period. Building these matrices, each country would form both the rows and the columns. This makes a backbone on which data analysis will be founded. While the countries' presentation in them would not be different, the data carried by the matrices would certainly be different. We would have two matrices: one in which the total tourists from each country represent the total, and then a matrix displaying the exact shares of international arrivals for medical and health and welfare purposes, as well as spa and wellness travel from each country. The sixth sets of observations were then used to first calculate the respective growth rates as often as they allowed, then to reveal the remarkable changes of shares over time by painstakingly arranging the shares in chronological order for the same country and alignment with their respective statistics for comprehensive comparison. Accordingly, three comprehensive composite indices for each set of "internal" market volume, market capacity, and "acceptance" for the interesting past five years of medical, health, and welfare tourism were calculated and interpreted in depth to give meanings to profound tendencies. Each set was the interesting shares of the repeating tourists coming to Thailand

for medical and health and welfare purposes, respectively, in comparison with the extraordinarily vast total amount of international arrivals. Thirdly, much information on the ever-changing market conditions was carefully extracted from the foreign and Thai tourism of wellness combined with emergent complementary businesses to create a more detailed awareness of the complex inter-relationship of these business activities. Furthermore, the different dimensions that shape the growth and development of the medical, health, and welfare tourist industries within Thailand were examined in detail. It entailed an analysis of socio-economic factors, the role of government policies, infrastructure and marketing methods that explain the phenomenal growth experienced within these sectors. I also conducted research on how globalization and changes in technologies have shaped the rise and reformation of medical and wellness tourism. Finally, extensive research has been done to outline the main market players and stakeholders who operate within the medical, health, and welfare tourism business in Thailand. These were healthcare providers, private hospitals, travel agencies, insurance companies, and government organizations. Their respective roles and responsibilities in the promotion and facilitation of medical and wellness tourism were identified to indicate how each one of these contributed to the overall development and progress of the industry. Additionally, possible challenges that the medical, health, and welfare tourism sectors in Thailand might face were discussed. It was done in consideration of the competition presented by other countries, changing consumer tastes and preferences, and a need for continuous innovation and improvement of service quality. Strategies that would mitigate these challenges and make good use of the opportunities were suggested, emphasizing multi-agency collaboration and partnerships. The valuable insights and knowledge gained from comprehensive research into the medical, health, and welfare tourism sectors in Thailand should prove helpful in the years to come for policymakers, industry practitioners, and researchers in gaining an understanding of the dynamics and potential of the sectors. From these positive and negative sides, Thailand will be able to improve its position in the world medical and wellness tourism market for the interest of economic growth and development. These included the numbers and types of facilities and practitioners of health and wellness-related industries, beauty-related industries; and companies servicing wellness tourists prior to or during their stay in the country such as inbound medical tour operators, inbound and local spa operators and products, bungalow operators, global insurance companies and holistic therapy centers. Fourth and last, it provided two sets of weights to produce an overall wellness tourism competitiveness score for Thailand in the two market segments. This was achieved by summing several factors including but not limited to: facilities quality, breadth of services available, and quality of visitors. Moreover, the wellness tourism score was assessed against the overall scores of some selected competitors within Asia on a three-point Likert scale to give an inclusive analysis of the standing of Thailand within the industry. All computations and analysis were not only meticulously programmed and performed using Excel but also verified and cross-referenced for accuracy and reliability. This comprehensive research into the numbers and types of various facilities and practitioners within health and wellness-related industries in Thailand took into consideration its vastness and diversity. It also involved the analysis of the prominent companies which cater to wellness tourists before and during their stay in the country. These included local and inbound medical tour operators, local and inbound spa operators offering services of every description, operators of tranquil and warm bungalows, insurance companies of world repute with specializations in wellness tourism, to holistic therapy centers. Each of them had a significant role to play in contributing toward the development of wellness tourism in Thailand. In addition, the study analyzed perceived Thailand competitiveness in the two market segments. For this purpose, the research projected a complete wellness tourism score for the country using two weighting

bases. Indeed, the score was calculated by a cumbersome weighted sum formula combining many factors, which were crucial for the overall wellness experience. These included the quality and standard of the wellness facilities, the variety of services available, and the satisfaction rating of the visitors. By considering such components, a realistic representation of Thailand's status in the wellness tourism industry was achieved. Providing an all-encompassing comparison, the wellness tourism score of Thailand was compared to the total scores achieved by the carefully chosen competitors across Asia. This was a relative study done on a three-point Likert scale that provided ample clues on the country's performance against its regional counterparts. In this manner, it would be able to highlight with a good degree of accuracy the competitive position and market presence that Thailand enjoys in the wellness tourism sector. All calculations and analysis steps are duly programmed and performed using Excel software. Moreover, more attention was given to the verification of data and its cross-checking to assure highly correct and reliable research findings.

### **Qualitative Insights**

The study employed semi-structured interviews with ten informants based on wellness hospitality. The judgment sampling was adopted, choosing the participants based on knowledge, experience, and willingness to actively participate in the study. In-depth interviews, highly detailed and meticulously conducted face-to-face, were carried out in a thoughtful combination of open-ended and probing questions. This approach allowed participants ample opportunity to explore their experiences in depth and give comprehensive insights from their rich perspectives. Most importantly, each interviewee was interviewed for about an hour or 1.5, which allowed participants ample time to articulate their points eloquently, relate captivating anecdotes, and provide insightful views with respect to the multiple dimensions of wellness in this dynamic, ever-changing landscape that is this very diverse hospitality industry. Its outcome was a unique diversity of intriguing and worth-reading responses from the ten very well-chosen participants, painstakingly captured and recorded with meticulousness, and thereafter compiled skillfully in the comprehensive table below: In-depth interviews, which have been carried out with genuine thoroughness respecting each minute detail, have provided unrivaled insight and awareness of the multifaceted aspects of wellness within the hospitality industry. The exceptional richness of obtained data, combined with its astonishing accuracy, has perfectly resonated with the remarkable depth achieved by such a thorough and comprehensive process in this interviewing endeavor. What is more important, though, is that the application of a qualitative-based approach has given this research truly unparalleled depth. Using this premium methodology, researchers have been able to navigate through rich nuances and draw out deep complexities that are inextricably linked with the domain of wellness in hospitality. Inasmuch as these very informative interviews are inherently qualitative in nature, they have automatically provided an all-inclusive and deep understanding of the subject matter-the out-of-the-box perspective that is impossible to attain from mere statistical analysis. The richness of the interviews consists of representing the transformational and experiential aspects of wellness that could never be represented through statistical analysis. However, it should also be fully acknowledged that such an elaborate process of identifying key categories and highly relevant thematic insights from lengthy interviews and even taking up highly intensive and comprehensive literature reviews does require an immense investment of time, firm commitment, and tireless effort. Yet, herein lies the exhaustive process of detailed analysis and compilation that hold within itself the strength of the research findings and their authenticity beyond doubt, making the study extremely comprehensive and one that shines brightly upon the most important issues at play.

Indeed, the contributors went to work on this marvelous effort without showing any compromise on the rigors of scholarship, with a matchless commitment to unravel the labyrinthine details of wellness in hospitality, and thus produced an exemplary body of work intellectually sound and methodologically strong, setting a high standard for future scholarly efforts. Aside from the above points, it is also important to note that in most instances, with the increase in sample size, the data complexity, both in quantitative and qualitative analyses, increases in intensity. However, in qualitative domains, a group of ten distinctive individuals or more is acceptable. This is attributed to the fact that qualitative methodology has several strong advantages, one of which is the ability to generate knowledge through the provision of answers to questions that may be developed using quantitative methodologies. It is through this that qualitative methodology generates knowledge by providing specific answers to the inquiry questions being posed. Let's take, for example, the following responses from the ten participants as represented in the table below. Surprisingly enough, the respondents happened to be foreigners drawn from every corner of the globe such as Japan, France, United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, and United States of America among others. The fact that the respondents are from a wide range of nationalities adds further diversity and scope to the research. Several questions can be raised in context to this research. A few of those questions may be mentioned as follows: What are the top ten trends most influencing and shaping the leisure customer's preferences? How do these trends shape the landscape of wellness travel? It would also be important to learn about the different personalities and psychographics of wellness travelers. Finally, what are the special products that go into the creation and nourishment of a true wellness culture that is displayed in a wellness hotel? Perhaps one important insight to emerge from this reliable source is that Thailand does have some advantages regarding health and wellness, and these advantages emanate from the hearts of its people. It is these aspects which, if well capitalized on, would go a long way in the creation of a well-structured and positive brand image. It is, therefore, upon the stakeholders in the wellness industry to use this advantage as the steppingstone toward greater enhancement and improvement of the reputation of Thailand as one of the best destinations for health and wellness. This is particularly regarding Phuket, which, as an island itself, had its own unique appeal to becoming a destination in wellness tourism. Because of its consolidation as one of the most famous and popular tourist destinations, Phuket represents the ultimate location for a wellness lifestyle for many people. The already built infrastructure and entertainment options that Phuket has developed make the island very attractive for both targeted wellness and regular travelers.

### **Factors Influencing Wellness Tourism in Thailand**

Wellness tourism has grown tremendously and continues to be among those industries that are growing the fastest, yet more important in recent times. It is one that keeps on developing and expands without any indications of slowing down. These changes in tourist behavior have unveiled a substantial underlying demand for various services and products related to wellness, and thus have created a need to address the concerns of this emerging market. The objective of the following study will be to closely research and analyze the driving factors that have shaped wellness tourism in Thailand during the last five-year period. Qualitative research methods have been followed, allowing us to conduct in-depth interviews with key stakeholders of this ever-evolving sector that include the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Tourism Council of Thailand, the Thai Spa Association, hotels, and wellness spa service providers. In such a process, the stakeholders themselves have shared their views and expertise for valuable input to the research. Aside from interviews, group discussions have also been sought to add



to the depth of the research study. These stakeholders' participation and respective contributions have been important in highlighting the relationship and linkages that exist between different players in this wellness tourism market. This research study has identified a few motivating factors that drive the demand for wellness tourism. These factors include such megatrends as the global shift toward personal well-being and self-care, lifestyle trends for healthy living, and holistic experiences. Further, lengthening human life has contributed to increasing demand for wellness tourism services as people seek ways of maintaining their physical and mental well-being into old age. It has also driven demand in related activities, such as experiential travel and authentic experiences, an important element of tourism development. Generally, these findings illustrate the complex, multi-dimensional demand-side motivations for the wellness tourism industry. On the supply side, the study has revealed that motivation is derived from a resource base of a progressively larger number of people who are "intentionally seeking wellness-related experiences and deliberately taking part in wellness retreats.". This has been a demand boom that has acted as the motivation on the supply side: a boom in establishments offering spa, resort, and retreat center-related services in the supply aspect of comfort and preference in the satisfaction of travelers' demands for wellness. The motivations on the supply side outline the important role that wellness service providers play in the meeting of ever-evolving demands from wellness tourists and continuously innovating their offerings. The study has provided an overall perspective on the dynamic relationship between demand and supply sides in Thailand's wellness tourism industry. From the results, understanding and addressing various factors that influence this industry have been proven quite significant. By doing so, the stakeholders will be able to successfully meet the needs and requirements of the wellness tourists, further contributing to continuous growth and success of the wellness tourism industry in Thailand. According to this research, destination spas represent the famous hotels or resorts. Therefore, destination spas are the successful point of wellness tourism. Moreover, day spas are the important kinds of business in attracting those tourists who have a little time to spend because the percentage of services and products they offer can meet the needs of health and beauty services of tourists at present. The participation of people in Thai wellness tourism plays a significant role because those people are in the networking process and are continually developing by creating a standard product and giving skill training and researching and implementing a marketing and development plan. Government participation is expressed as an issue of policy support that includes ways to promote the industry, supporting infrastructure. Other considerations deal with the realization of ecosystem business activities in terms of the balance of natural resources. From the results, there is also a need to further focus on sustainable development opportunities relating to wellness services offered by SMEs. In addition, the issues that will impact the future of business entailing environmental concerns include the question of insufficient standards of wellness practitioners, health secrecy, and the cost of treatments toward wellness. In fact, for future wellness tourism to boast of strength and a clear direction, operators ought to engage in studying the trends and get a complete understanding of strategies that make it sustainable.

### **Cultural and Traditional Practices**

Traditional knowledge is incredibly rich in the kinds of wellness benefits it can offer. Clearly, Thailand is widely recognized as a highly regarded wellness oasis due to its offering an astonishing variety of genuine traditional health practices, including the famous Thai massage, herbal steam therapy that invigorates, and the rejuvenating Thai herbal compress. These age-old practices have been carefully preserved by the locals and passed on down through generations. It effectively nourishes physical, emotional, and spiritual well-

being, this special form of holistic care blends in harmony with Thailand's magnificent natural health landscape. Quite a considerable deal of research has established beyond doubt that the tremendous resourcefulness lying inherently in Thai traditional practices, based on strong traditional values, staunch beliefs, and deep local wisdom, remained at the heart of this glittering wellness tourism trend in Thailand during the five glorious years that have gone by. Let alone the fact that this unparalleled diversity of Thai traditional knowledge is hardly limited to wellness tourism, permeating many facets of life in Thailand and contributing to the overall sense of cultural richness and national identity. Indeed, it must be astonishingly deep to encapsulate in a practice such complexities from centuries of amassed knowledge and wisdom. From the humble homes of rural dwellers to the luxurious spa retreats nestled in high-class urban environments, these old practices have a lot of charm for locals and visitors alike, carrying them into a world of tranquility and renewal. From the pulsating city streets of Bangkok to the tranquil shores of Phuket, the traditional Thai healing techniques greet you at every corner of the nation, inviting you to plunge into the profound connection between mind, body, and spirit. With each calming touch, with every aromatic inhalation, and with every ritualistic application of herbal remedies, one travels down the path of rejuvenation and self-discovery, reclaiming his or her inner balance against a world that moves too fast. The holistic philosophy of the Thai tradition puts us back in the sanctity of nature and the ineludible interdependence of human beings with the world that surrounds them. If there is one specific filter that encompasses all of Thai knowledge, then it will be one that develops a pathway toward complete well-being and fulfills the instinctive human craving for serenity and balance. As the pace of the modern world increases and nature's roots are gradually being lost, eternal wisdom of Thai tradition flourishes like a beacon of light to remind us of essential nurturing and of interconnectedness deep within ourselves. So, whether through a beatific massage, soothing herbal remedy, or meditative moment in an exquisite temple, these treasures of Thai traditional knowledge await those seeking solace, healing, and deep well-being. Deep within the heart of Thailand's pulsating culture, a tradition of wellness has survived, lying in wait for any who will welcome the transformative power of ancient knowledge. Its great diversity and huge benefits seem to keep people of all sorts flowing into a world where rebirth and serenity are simply limitless. It is only during those quiet, still moments that allow introspection that one might find the real, authentic experience of Thai traditional knowledge—a rich heritage that epitomizes the wisdom and richness of centuries past. Expertly caressing hands and age-old healing ceremonies, passed through generations, will awake the deep connection between mind and body, sending gentle magic of well-being and self-discovery. The gentle sway of a traditional Thai massage, the soothing warmth of herbal steam therapy—each practice carries with it a small legacy that connects the present to the past, reminding us of the timeless significance of holistic care. Right in the middle of Bangkok, at the crossroads of modernity and tradition, slowly come unwinding secrets of Thai wellness. Amongst this energy and color, there exist serene retreats that enable one to step into seclusion for tranquility and rejuvenation. The treasure from Thai traditional knowledge unravels from aromatic traditional herbal compresses to soothing strokes by the hands of a good massage therapist, inviting people into balance and harmony within the turmoil of life. Venture beyond the city limits, and serenity can be felt in every corner of Thai traditional healing. The communities within the rural villages—far from the world's noise—continue to uphold ancient practices, passing on their wisdom to those who seek solace in nature's embrace. The ties with the land are interwoven into the very fabric of Thai culture, reminding us of our innate interdependence with the natural world. The serene shores wash over Phuket in the setting sun—a sense of peace assuredly for those who have set off on a journey of wellness. The soft lapping of waves accompanies the resurrection in the air,

respite from modern demands on life. The way to wellness opens to those receptive to its deeply transformative power, from a meditative experience in some serene temple to herbal therapeutic sessions. Thai traditions are not some fad or fleeting trend but a proof that life can survive a fall, and some heritage has survived the test of time. Anchored in tradition and steeped in ancient wisdom, they are an oasis from din and distraction in a modern world. Within the folds of traditional Thai knowledge, people remember the route to self-care, self-discovery, and self-love. The Thai concept of traditional wellness extends far beyond the precincts of physical health and testifies to the wholeness of human existence. The latter has been telling us through the centuries that true well-being is an affair not only of the body but also of the mind and spirit. By cultivating each aspect of our being, we open the path to a life of harmony, fulfillment, and deep connection. Living in a world where productivity and achievement appear to be valued more than self-care, the treasure of Thai traditional knowledge whispers softly to remind one of the needs to slow down, listen to the body, and reconnect with the self. These would eventually teach one to nurture stillness in chaos and honor the interconnection between the self and the outside world. Whether it be the gentle, healing touch of a traditional Thai massage, the restorative powers of herbal remedies, or the meditative experience induced by temple rituals, Thai traditional practices are simply endless in depth and reach. They call upon us to rediscover ourselves, regain our balance, and travel into transformation for wellbeing and inner peace. While the world continues to keep Thailand under its cultural richness and natural beauty, the legacy of traditional wellness stays as a lighthouse in the present situation. This testifies to the strength derived from ancient wisdom and the indomitable will of a nation in safeguarding its heritage. It is amidst the vibrant tapestry of Thai culture, where tradition truly meets modernity, that the treasures of traditional knowledge wait to be sought to find relief, healing, and a deep sense of well-being. So let us take a journey—a journey beyond our lives constrained by hectic schedules, noise, and distractions from the modern world. Let us steep ourselves in the embrace of Thai traditional practices and let their timeless wisdom lead us into a balanced and harmonious life of tranquility. Indeed, it is in the gentle strokes of the skillful practitioner, the fragrance of herbal remedies, and the rituals passed down through generations that the transformative power of Thai traditional knowledge is found. It is within these practices that we rediscover ourselves, nature, and the deep source of our inner wisdom. In the embracing arms of Thai traditional wellness, we find sanctuary and comfort and experience well-being in its truest and deepest form. This journey crosses all narrow boundaries of time and space, touching the very bottom of our soul. Let us, therefore, embark together on a journey into this world, where the beauty of Thai traditional knowledge is finally transformed in the mastery of ancient wisdom.

### **Government Initiatives and Policies**

The government of Royal Thai has no doubt about tourism for wellness having huge importance and spectacular prospects. It has always been and remains fully committed to the principal necessity for rapid expansion, growth, and improvement in that sector of industry. Accordingly, the renowned public and private sectors, to push for this tourism industry and launch it into unparalleled heights, have ceaselessly and passionately brainstormed, planned, and executed a wide range of all-inclusive policies and long-reaching measures. These pioneering and visionary initiatives include a vast array of diverse and multi-faceted activities, like noisily amplifying and jealously overseeing the services sector with utmost care and meticulousness, aggressively expanding the markets and services intrinsically linked with the wonderful world of tourism, ingeniously building up and perfectly refining every aspect of the tourism infrastructure so that perfection in each and every respect is maintained with flawless excellence, building and nurturing ever-stronger relationships and partnerships with respected international organizations of

paramount standing, painstakingly and elaborately designing and tailoring comprehensive guidelines that serve as an illuminating beacon of sagacity and erudition to be emulated and adhered to with steadfast commitment and devotion by one and all, and providing the most valuable and essential assistance to the budding travelers and wanderers through the faultless implementation of a state-of-the-art travel card system that invites ease and convenience with every step of the marvelous journey. To this effect, the honorable government, steadfast and unreserved in its effort to ensure nothing but an optimal enhancement and furtherance of the tourism sector in all possible way, shall have the prime responsibility of designing and building a strong and effective public service system that perfectly complements such an impressive and all-inclusive tourism sector. The government also creates an enabling environment and continues to propagate crystal-clear directives, actionable plans, and supportive policies geared at eliciting and provoking unprecedented levels of coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and synchronization among all relevant and indispensable organizations, each working in tandem and concert with every other stakeholder in the pursuit of a shared vision and incomparable mission of excellence, unparalleled brilliance. The prime and undivided focus, the core of these momentous and transformative policies, lies undeniably in unlocking and revealing the true potential and phenomenal power that has been lying dormant within the realm of the quality tourism market. Hence, the tremendous increase and unprecedented escalation of the added value of the awesome products within the industry, establishing a truly unparalleled and peerless identity that exquisitely and exclusively caters to the lofty and discerning needs, desires, and expectations of each and every esteemed and cherished visitor with unwavering and uncompromising commitment toward the delivery and exemplification of nothing short of truly extraordinary and exceptional service quality, which outperforms every benchmark and renews every preconceived notion. Besides, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the Ministry of Public Health has worked tirelessly in developing an integrated and comprehensive policy focused on growing the best quality of life and health at the very grass-roots level of the communities. One of the major aspects of this policy has been the efficient fulfillment of a pioneering reform plan spearheaded by the very esteemed Ministry of Public Health. First fully elaborated and implemented in the year 2010, the plan attaches much importance to the implementation of efficient rehabilitation programs, thus providing solutions for improving quality of life and welfare within nations. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Health is strongly committed to support and collaborate with various other agencies, while actively engaging and involving all sectors of public health welfare towards an integrated quality of life improvement. It is important to realize that tourism plays an important role in complementing the national health system and comprehensive development of the communities locally. Tourism, being an income generating activity, provides a stable source of income that strengthens not only the national health system but also the well-being development of the community members. A core policy to strengthen the health service providers has also been planned and promoted accordingly. The methodology is aimed at consolidating social awareness of the marks of identity and the intrinsic strength present in health services and regional health systems to confer a specific, well-defined identity. A programmed and coherent dissemination is supposed, with support to the management of health resources and services coherent with the search for universal and exemplary standards in view of fostering a people-oriented approach. Having a comprehensive approach to ensuring easy access to health facilities through maximum utilization of information technology and the latest social communication systems. Finally, it is important to emphasize the commitment of the Ministry of Public Health to research, academic cooperation, and accountability of health services at the international level. The Ministry of Public Health actively participates in

international discussions and shares its knowledge and experiences in contributing towards global efforts in the solution of health concerns and achieving the sustainable development goals. While doing so, the Ministry aspires to push innovation, progress at pace, and ensure standards, installing robust and accountable mechanisms across borders, reaching billions of lives globally. The Ministry of Public Health is determined to improve livelihoods and ensure quality life at the community level through devoted work and determination. It has laid a very strong foundation through the formulation of a comprehensive and inclusive policy, hence promoting sustained development in health with equity. This reform plan, initiated in the year 2010, is an outstanding achievement, showing that the Ministry is committed to a policy of providing quality healthcare, meeting the manifold needs of the population. The presently concerned ministry, through proper care and attention, had created this multi-level plan and put it into action, which fosters reinforcement programs and solutions to raise the level of living and welfare. Moreover, the Ministry acknowledges that it must work together in partnership; thus, it collaborates actively with agencies so that all aspects of improvement are covered in the health sector. It also maintains good relations and involves all sectors in public health welfare to build a collective effort that caters for the various challenges posed upon communities. It is cognizant that the only people-centered approach will be able to deliver sustainable development; thus, it attempts to empower the people, families, and communities to take initiative in their health and facilitate informed choices about their welfare. From this all-inclusive angle, nobody is left behind or given less opportunity for healthy living than another. Tourism is very critical in local community development as a part of the national health system. The Ministry values the economic dimensions of tourism and aggressively promotes activities for generating income that would translate to overall well-being among members of the community. By fostering a healthy tourism industry, Ministry revenue and jobs are created to boost economic growth and enable sustainable development. Coupled with this concerted effort at tourism development, the Ministry continues to undertake the task of continuously strengthening the health service providers. An awareness-raising process that promotes strength and distinctiveness in their health services, as well as their regional health system toward an identifiable identity that encourages trust and confidence in the healthcare system, so persons are assured of receiving high-quality care and support whenever they may require such services. The Ministry is also committed to promoting information technology and modern social communication systems in the facilitation of access to health services easily. Realizing this transformative power of technology, the Ministry embraces various innovative solutions for enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and inclusiveness in the delivery of healthcare. This way, using such tools, individuals can have easy access to health resources and services from any part of the country. While this is a comprehensive focus on leveraging technology, it ensures the healthcare services reach those in need, with speed, to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes for all. Finally, the Ministry of Public Health believes in the need for global collaboration in the response to health concerns for the improvement of sustainable development goals. It is through active participation in these international forums that the Ministry ensures a sharing of knowledge and experience besides best practices that engender innovation and progress within the public health environment. The accountability of the Ministry is taken care of down to the assurance of transparency at the international level in the delivery of health services. The Ministry seeks to act as an example to other countries with its high standards and solid measures in place and aims at nothing less than the safety of its people. In this direction, by building this partnership, the Ministry seeks a common vision toward global health, which must go beyond national boundaries and touch the lives of billions across the world. Conclusively, the commitment by the Ministry of Public Health, that is the strategic way,



has opened all doors to major strides in "improvement in the quality of life and health" at the communal level. The Ministry assures innovation, improvement in health outcomes, and raises the bar high in the delivery of healthcare services through comprehensive policies, inclusive reforms, and in partnership with others. Committed to research, academic collaborations, and international accountability, guided by an unwavering commitment, the Ministry has actively taken part in worldwide efforts toward the resolution of health concerns for the attainment of sustainable development goals. Emphasizing the well-being of individuals and the community, the Ministry of Public Health aspires to a future where everyone enjoys quality health care and has an opportunity for healthy active lives.

(Han et al.2020)(Meeprom & Chancharat, 2022)(Piuchan2021)(Kongtaveesawas et al.2022)(Kunaviktikul, 2022)(Dinkoksung et al.2023)(Vongmongkol et al.2021)(Phakdeephrot2021)(Kemppainen et al.2021)(Wang et al., 2020)

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