

# Evaluation of the Development Potential of Health and Wellness Tourism in Bozhou

Qing Gong, Han Zhang, Jingjing Zhou, Ao Wang, Rui Ke, Jingjing Li\*

HuaiBei Normal University, Huaibei, Anhui, 235000, China  
\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** Assessing medical tourism development potential is key to regional industrial upgrading. Taking Bozhou as an example, this study explores its health tourism potential evaluation methods and optimization paths. Based on the DPGT framework, it builds a 4-dimension evaluation index system (medical resources, tourism services, traffic, economic support), establishes an evaluation model using the coefficient of variation and weighted sum methods, and conducts empirical analysis with Bozhou's 2014-2023 data. With TCM culture as the focus, the study puts forward several specific suggestions: we need to coordinate the "medical + tourism + wellness" industries, upgrade relevant infrastructure and intelligent services, optimize the layout of medical resources, enhance the promotion of the "North Huatuo" brand, and push forward the differentiated development of the three-level potential areas. It provides a replicable paradigm for TCM-featured health tourism and supports regional industrial upgrading and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** health and wellness tourism; development potential; Bozhou City

## 1. Introduction

Population aging and growing health demand have promoted the rapid development of wellness tourism, which has become a key force driving regional economic transformation<sup>[1]</sup>. In China, the Healthy China strategy and TCM integration policies provide strong support. With abundant TCM resources, Bozhou is striving to become a world capital of traditional Chinese medicine.

However, China's wellness tourism is troubled by scattered resources, insufficient services, weak industrial synergy, and inadequate cultural connotation, which restrict the transformation of local advantages into competitiveness.

The concept of health tourism was first proposed by Hall and colleagues in 1992 and later expanded<sup>[2]</sup>. Yang Hongying and Yang Shuran explored new development paths<sup>[3]</sup>. Li Li and Chen Xuejun built an analysis framework<sup>[4]</sup>. Shen Weili researched tourist place perception<sup>[5]</sup>. Song Na et al. established a forest wellness evaluation system<sup>[6]</sup>. Jiang Zehui et al. analyzed TCM wellness tourism with SWOT<sup>[7]</sup>.

Existing research has formed a theoretical system but still has deficiencies: fragmented evaluation systems, lack of multi-dimensional frameworks, over-reliance on static qualitative analysis, and insufficient empirical research on TCM-featured regions, leading to unclear synergy mechanisms and homogeneous development.

This study takes Bozhou as an example to fill the gap in the systematic evaluation and empirical research on wellness tourism potential. Based on the DPGT framework, a multi-dimensional evaluation system is constructed. The coefficient of variation method and weighted sum method are used for quantitative analysis. It reveals the development laws of TCM-related wellness tourism and proposes a three-level synergy path, providing reference for similar regions<sup>[8]</sup>.

## 2. Empirical Research

### 2.1 Overview of the Study Area

The Bozhou City Land and Space Master Plan (2021-2035) arranges the city's spatial development, including ecological conservation, urban construction and historical heritage protection. It proposes a

"three zones, four corridors and four centers" pattern and emphasizes ecological protection in implementation. Bozhou's health tourism covers Guoyang, Mengcheng, Lixin Counties and Qiaocheng District. For TCM health tourism layout, the local government has adopted a "one core, one belt, eight zones" plan, forming multiple TCM tourism clusters to drive the tourism market.

Three main reasons support choosing health tourism as the research field. First, it is representative. Bozhou has a large-scale health tourism industry; its Chinese Herbal Medicine Professional Market is one of China's earliest TCM markets, with an annual transaction value over 50 billion RMB (nearly one-third of the national total for similar markets). The city's modern TCM industry output hits 150 billion RMB, with many top pharmaceutical enterprises settled, and the "Northern Huatuo" brand influence is expanding.

Second, Bozhou faces typical industry problems: insufficient theoretical research, underdeveloped industrial chain, and inadequate resource integration and product development. Solving these is necessary for further development.

Third, there is policy support. Anhui Province proposed building Bozhou into a world-renowned TCM capital in 2017, and the 2020-2030 construction plan was issued in 2020.

**2.2 Construction of the DPGT Analysis Framework**

To build a feasible analytical tool, this paper draws on existing health tourism studies, considering two core features of the tourism system: experience orientation and heavy reliance on environmental conditions. Incorporating three potential dimensions (resources, ecology, socio-economy), we propose the DPGT (Development Potential of Health Tourism) framework. This framework splits overall potential into three interrelated parts—health tourism resources, ecological, and socio-economic potential, forming a structured evaluation system to measure a region's overall health tourism potential.

First, health tourism resources are developed based on health principles, covering medical facilities, professional medical personnel and services. Unique destination therapeutic methods are also key health tourism resources<sup>[9]</sup>. Yet these resources are fragile; once damaged by natural disasters, policy shifts or market fluctuations, their specialized nature makes short-term recovery difficult<sup>[10]</sup>. Such recovery challenges not only weaken the resources' inherent potential, but also indirectly affect health tourism's ecological and socio-economic potential. Thus, health tourism resources form the foundation of the DPGT framework.

Second, health tourism ecology includes environmental capacity, resource carrying capacity, and environmental quality, providing the basic physical environment for tourism development<sup>[11]</sup>. It is thus a prerequisite for the DPGT framework, protecting resources and socio-economic potential.

Finally, health tourism socio-economic potential is the core of the DPGT framework. It promotes health service development, drives industrial ecology through micro-level technological innovation, achieves coordinated economic and resource-environment growth, and boosts regional quality at the macro-level, providing impetus for resources and ecology potential.

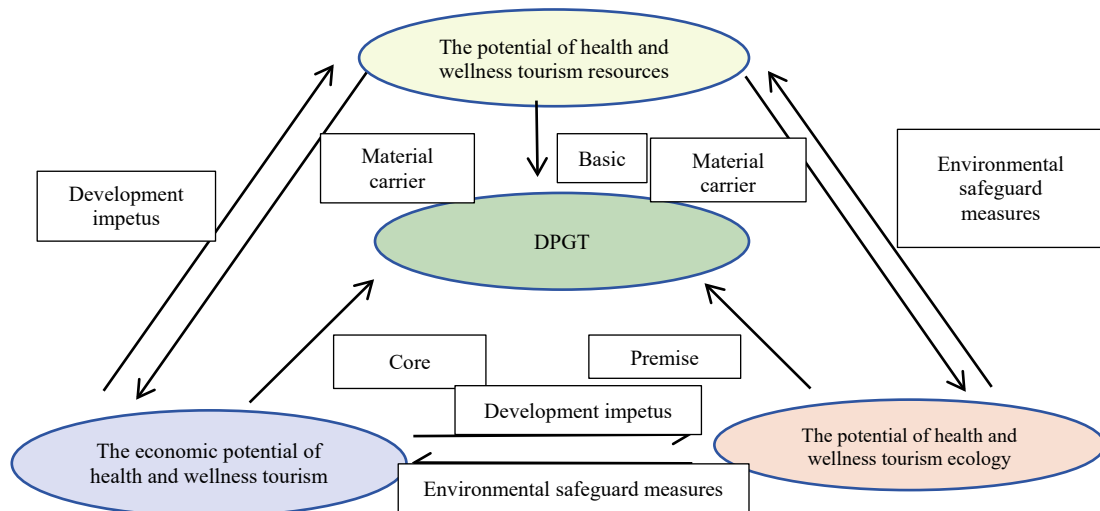


Figure 1: DPGT Analysis Framework

(Based on the analysis, the author constructed the DPGT analysis framework as shown in Figure 1.)

[Note: The original text contains a diagram description for Figure 1, which is conceptually translated here. The diagram shows a triangle or circular flow with "Potential of Health Tourism Socio-economy" at the top (Core), "Potential of Health Tourism Ecology" on the left (Prerequisite), and "Potential of Health Tourism Resources" on the right (Foundation), with arrows indicating "Development Power", "Environmental Protection", "Material Carrier", etc.]

### 2.3 Health Tourism Evaluation Index System Based on the DPGT Framework

To begin with, we systematically reviewed literature on health and wellness tourism, medical tourism and international health tourism, in order to grasp its current development status, challenges and opportunities. Next, following the principles of comprehensiveness, systematization, hierarchy and feasibility, we constructed a preliminary indicator system covering wellness tourism potential, services and benefits, based on relevant theoretical frameworks and local tourism conditions. We then carried out two rounds of consultation with 20 experts from healthcare, tourism, health economics and related industries. In the first round, we added the indicator of the proportion of wellness tourism professionals in the local population and removed the number of wellness tourism enterprises. In the second round, we included wellness tourism service satisfaction and excluded investment in wellness tourism facilities. The final evaluation index system was thus established, which focuses on resource protection, medical service quality, service satisfaction and tourism benefits<sup>[12]</sup>. Compared with traditional systems, this one pays more attention to service quality and includes government-related indicators, making it innovative, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation Index System for the Development Potential of Health and Wellness Tourism in Bozhou City

Target layer	Criterion Layer	Indicator Layer	Organization
The potential for urban health and wellness tourism	The economic potential of health and wellness tourism	Regional Gross Domestic Product	Billion yuan
		Per capita regional GDP	yuan
		Disposable income of urban residents	yuan
		The proportion of the tertiary industry in GDP	%
		Value added of the primary industry	Billion yuan
		Value added of the secondary industry	Billion yuan
		Value added of the tertiary industry	Billion yuan
		Passenger traffic volume	Ten thousand people
		Railway passenger traffic volume	Ten thousand people
		Passenger traffic on highways	Ten thousand people
		Passenger traffic on highways	Ten thousand people
		Civil aviation passenger traffic volume	Ten thousand people
		The actual number of public bus (trolleybus) operating vehicles at the end of the year	A vehicle
		The total passenger volume of public buses and trolleybuses for the entire year	Ten thousand people
		The actual number of taxis in operation at the end of the year	A vehicle
	The potential of tourism medical resources	Number of hospitals and health centers	Several
		General Hospital	Several
		Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital	Home
		Specialty Hospital	Home
		Number of hospital and health center beds	Pieces
		The doctor counted	people
		Pharmacist	
JIC-certified medical institution	People		

		The number of hospital beds per thousand people	Pieces
		The number of doctors per thousand people	people
		Practicing (Assistant) Physician	people
		Registered Nurse	people
		Professional health technicians	people
		Center for Disease Control and Prevention	Several
		Maternal and Child Health Care Hospital	Several
		Medical research institute or university	Several
	The potential of health and wellness tourism resources	The number of inbound tourists received	Ten thousand people
		International tourism foreign exchange earnings	Billion yuan
		Total tourism revenue	Billion yuan
		Total number of tourists	Ten thousand people
		The number of domestic tourists	Ten thousand people
		Domestic tourism revenue	Billion yuan
		Number of star-rated hotels	Several
		Number of 5A-level Scenic Areas	Several
		Number of 4A-level Scenic Areas	Several
		The number of scenic spots in A area	Several
		Five-star hotel	Several
		Four-star hotel	Several
		Number of travel agencies	Several
		The number of travel agencies with the qualifications for outbound tourism	Several
		Total tourism revenue	Billion yuan
		Total number of tourists	Ten thousand people
		The number of tourism colleges	Several
		Number of people employed in the tourism industry	Ten thousand people
		The proportion of total tourism revenue in the GDP	%

Note: The structure includes Target Layer, Criterion Layer, Indicator Layer, and Unit. The table has been translated below. Due to the extensive list, the translation provides the categories and selected examples for brevity, but the full translated table is included later in the formatted text.)

[Detailed Table 1 is presented later in the full translation]

Note: JCI Accredited Institutions: JCI is a globally recognized symbol of hospital safety and quality management. It is an affiliate of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) for accrediting medical institutions outside the United States.

### 2.4 Research Methods

This study uses the coefficient of variation method and the weighted sum method to build a wellness tourism evaluation model.

The coefficient of variation method decides indicator weights by data dispersion, reduces subjective effects and shows real regional differences. The weighted sum method works out comprehensive scores with standardized and weighted indicators. Combined with the DPGT framework <sup>[13]</sup>, these two methods fit multi-dimensional evaluation. They help analyze wellness tourism potential in Bozhou and offer support for industrial layout optimization <sup>[14]</sup>. The steps for constructing the health and wellness tourism measurement model are as follows:

First, standardize the health and wellness tourism indicators using the range method and the average method.

For positive indicators, the standardization formula is:

$$y_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij} - x_{ij\min}}{x_{ij\max} - x_{ij\min}} \quad (1)$$

For negative indicators, the standardization formula is:

$$y_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij\max} - x_{ij}}{x_{ij\max} - x_{ij\min}} \quad (2)$$

For neutral-point indicators, the standardization formula is:

$$y_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij} - \bar{x}_{ij}}{x_{ij\max} - x_{ij\min}} \quad (3)$$

Where  $y_{ij}$  is the standardized value of indicator  $j$  in region  $i$ ,  $x_{ij}$  is the actual statistical value,  $\min(x_{ij})$  and  $\max(x_{ij})$  are the minimum and maximum values of indicator  $j$ , and  $\bar{x}_{ij}$  is the average value of indicator  $j$ .

Second, calculate the coefficient of variation (CV) for each indicator, which reflects the relative dispersion. The formula is:

$$v_j = \frac{\sigma_j}{\bar{x}_j} \quad (4)$$

Where  $v_j$  is the coefficient of variation for indicator  $j$ ,  $\sigma_j$  is the standard deviation of indicator  $j$ , and  $\bar{x}_j$  is the average value of indicator  $j$ .

Third, determine the weight  $w_j$  for each indicator. The weight can be determined using the coefficient of variation method, with the formula:

$$w_j = \frac{v_j}{\sum_{j=1}^n v_j} \quad (5)$$

Where  $w_j$  is the weight of indicator  $j$ , and  $n$  is the total number of indicators.

Fourth, calculate the potential value  $Q_i$  for health and wellness tourism using the weighted sum method. The formula is:

$$Q_i = \sum_{j=1}^n y_{ij} \cdot w_j \quad (6)$$

Where  $Q_i$  represents the potential value of health and wellness tourism in region  $i$ .

### 2.5 Data Sources

Data in this study are mainly collected from official statistical documents and public reports of Bozhou. Resource potential data are obtained from Bozhou Statistical Yearbook and the Bozhou Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism. Ecological potential data are collected from the Bozhou Municipal Bureau of Ecology and Environment and relevant official bulletins. Socio-economic potential data are derived from Bozhou Regional Statistical Yearbook and the Statistical Bulletin of National Economic and Social Development.

A small number of indicators are unavailable due to statistical caliber changes. Missing data are supplemented by the average and median methods to ensure data integrity.

### 3. Results Analysis and Development Suggestions

After calculations using formulas (1) to (6), the potential values for medical tourism across various indicators were obtained, with results shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation Index System for the Development Potential of Health and Wellness Tourism and Corresponding Weights

Object level	Primary indicator	Secondary indicator	Organization	Atri	Weight	The potential value of medical tourism
Data processing program	The potential of medical tourism to drive economic development	Regional Gross Domestic Product	Billion yuan	+	0.0358387	0.244964096
		Per capita regional GDP	yuan	+	0.036370283	0.242990812
		Disposable income of urban residents	yuan	+	0.030268958	0.227886238
		The proportion of the tertiary industry in GDP	%	+	0.025296175	0.237725351
		Value added of the primary industry	Billion yuan	+	0.027277036	0.225125962
		Value added of the secondary industry	Billion yuan	+	0.032847077	0.235097786
		Value added of the tertiary industry	Billion yuan	+	0.042102841	0.263895889
		Passenger traffic volume	Ten thousand people	+	0.004759852	0.051364678
		Railway passenger traffic volume	Ten thousand people	+	0.034177442	0.251178437
		Passenger traffic on highways	Ten thousand people	+	0.005585971	0.060081614
		The actual number of public bus (trolleybus) operating vehicles at the end of the year	Ten thousand people	+	0.05267884	0.313189161
		The total passenger volume of public buses and trolleybuses for the entire year	Ten thousand people	+	0.027882765	0.243947696
		The actual number of taxis in operation at the end of the year	Several vehicles	+	0.033661741	0.291014429
	The potential of tourism medical resources	Number of hospitals and health centers	Several	+	0.026052343	0.236432015
		Specialty Hospital	Several	+	0.058814602	0.411702214
		Number of hospital and health center beds	Several	+	0.033298879	0.235827173
		The doctor counted	Several	+	0.03678349	0.242212539
		The number of hospital beds per thousand people	Several	+	0.033819131	0.235579822
		The number of doctors per thousand people	Several	+	0.037569026	0.241102462
		Practicing (Assistant) Physician	Several	+	0.038196651	0.250311065
Registered Nurse		Several	+	0.041157242	0.251577354	
Professional health technicians		Several	+	0.036209384	0.240807464	
The potential of medical	The number of domestic tourists	Ten thousand people	+	0.034863693	0.220653806	

tourism resources	Domestic tourism revenue	Billion yuan	+	0.0374007	0.220903076
	Number of star-rated hotels	Several	+	0.024881932	0.243290006
	Number of 4A Scenic Areas	Several	+	0.028296283	0.235802359
	The number of scenic spots in A area	Several	+	0.026352368	0.234775639
	Five-star hotel	Several	+	0.024603913	0.246039133
	Four-star hotel	Several	+	0.026567451	0.239107058
	Number of travel agencies	Several	+	0.015569282	0.124330342
	The number of travel agencies with the qualifications for outbound tourism	Several	+	0.025748169	0.226011708
	The number of tourism colleges	Several	+	0.025067781	0.236751266

(Detailed table with indicators, units, attribute "+", weights, and potential values.)

Note: "+" indicates a positive indicator.

### 3.1 Overall Potential Value Assessment

The total potential value of health and wellness tourism in Bozhou is 7.607. Socio-economic potential ranks first with 3.0335, accounting for 39.9%. Tourism medical resources potential is 2.3455, making up 30.8%. Health tourism resources potential stands at 2.2277, sharing 29.3%. Bozhou's overall potential is at an upper-medium level. Its socio-economic foundation is solid, but major tourism resources such as scenic spots and accommodation need further development<sup>[15]</sup>.

### 3.2 Comparative Analysis of Hierarchical Potential

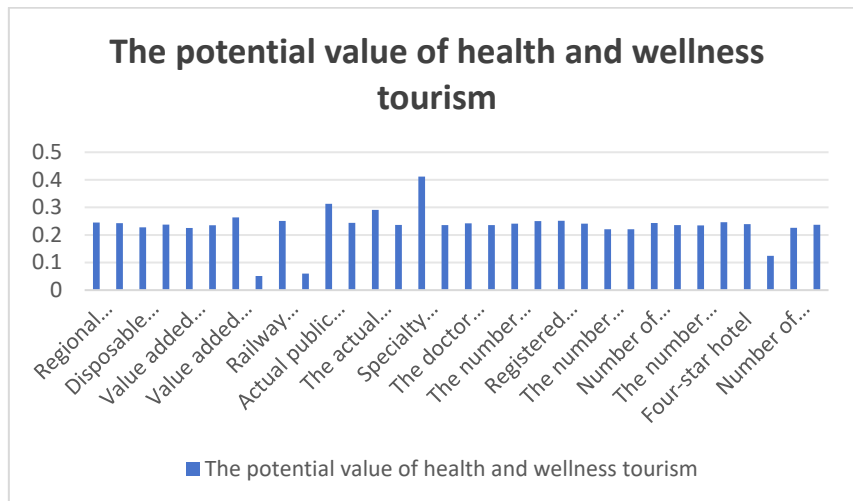


Figure 2. The potential value of health and wellness tourism

As shown in Figure 2 and Table 3, transport conditions have a notable impact on the development potential of health tourism. According to indicator weights, enough taxis improve travel flexibility and further enhance the appeal of medical tourism. A higher tertiary industry share upgrades medical and tourism services, while industrial added value reflects economic vitality and provides stable support, proving Bozhou's sound economic and transport foundation. However, the two indicators of road passenger traffic and travel agencies only score 0.0601 and 0.1243, and such low results have directly reduced the convenience and professional level of local tourism services.

Bozhou's tourism-related medical resource potential ranks second with an overall score of 2.3455. The city performs well in specialized hospitals and registered nurses, with scores of 0.4117 and 0.2516 respectively, which reflects its obvious advantages in professional medical resources. In addition,

complete medical institutions, beds and professional personnel have laid a stable foundation for the development of medical tourism. Yet weak basic indicators, including beds per thousand people (0.2356) and licensed physicians (0.2503), indicate an imbalance in local medical resource allocation.

*Table 3: Hierarchical Analysis Table of Potential Value for Health and Wellness Tourism*

Level 1 Indicator	Potential Value	Ranking	Key Drivers(Level 2 Indicator)	Weaknesses(Level 2 Indicator)
Potential of Medical Tourism in Socio-Economic Development	3.0335	1	Buses and Trolleybuses(0.3132), Tertiary Industry(0.2639)	Highway Passenger Transport(0.0601), Travel Agency(0.1243)
Potential of Tourism-Related Medical Resources	2.3455	2	Specialized Hospital(0.4117), Registered Nurse (RN)(0.2516)	Hospital Beds per 1,000 Population(0.2356), Licensed Physician(0.2503)
Potential of Medical Tourism Resources	2.2277	3	Five-Star Hotel(0.2460), 4A-rated Scenic Area(0.2358)	Highway Passenger Transport(0.0601), Travel Agency(0.1243)

### 3.3 Potential Value Calculation and Weight Analysis

**Potential Value Calculation:** We add up the results of each secondary indicator multiplied by its weight to get the tourism potential value. This way takes all related factors into account

**Weight Analysis:** Higher weights mean greater importance. Specialized hospitals, doctors density and passenger volume matter more. Travel agency numbers have lower influence but cannot be ignored.

## 4. Conclusion and Discussion

### 4.1 Conclusion

This study uses the DPGT framework including resources, ecology and socio-economy to build an evaluation system for wellness tourism potential in Bozhou. Data from 2014 to 2023 are processed by the coefficient of variation method and the weighted sum method.

Results show that the total potential value reaches 7.6067, at an upper-middle level, but development is seriously unbalanced. The socio-economic part contributes the most at 39.9%, mainly from tertiary industry added value (0.2639) and public transport resources (0.3132). But road passenger traffic (0.0601) and travel agency count (0.1243) hold back service efficiency. The tourism medical resource potential is 2.3455. Specialized hospitals (0.4117) form a clear advantage, while licensed physicians (0.2503) and beds per thousand people (0.2356) perform poorly, showing structural imbalance in medical resource allocation.

Bozhou owns the brand of "Huatuo in the North" and a national Chinese herbal medicine market, yet the integration of TCM culture and medical tourism remains weak. Local advantages have not been converted into competitive strength, which restricts the release of development potential.

### 4.2 Recommendations

Based on the hierarchical potential analysis, differentiated development strategies are proposed: analyze the areas of potential strength, medium potential, and weak potential individually, and provide constructive suggestions. For areas of potential strength, we should further strengthen economic and transportation infrastructure advantages and promote efficient resource integration. For areas of medium potential, We need to balance the development of specialized medical resources and basic medical supply to strengthen core competitiveness. For areas of weak potential, we should urgently address service shortcomings and strengthen policy guidance to unlock resource synergies.

#### 4.2.1 Areas of Potential Strength (Socio-economic Development)

We should leverage regional economic and transportation advantages to concentrate health resource

allocation. To build a "medical-transportation" cooperative service network, we can launch direct shuttles from high-speed rail stations and airports to major medical institutions for a seamless health tourism experience, use intelligent scheduling platforms to adjust bus routes and frequencies in real time, and set up special funds to encourage SMEs in tourism to design thematic routes. Through targeted professional training, local service quality can be effectively improved, thus lifting the overall competitiveness of health tourism.

#### **4.2.2 Areas of Medium Potential (Tourism Medical Resources)**

We should mix specialized resources with basic medical services to build our own strengths. To fix weak points in tourism medical support, we can team up with local schools and hospitals to train more doctors and nurses. We can also set up more community clinics based on people flow to use resources better. We can use good points in areas with medium potential. We should focus on big hospitals, add local TCM practices such as acupuncture and massage, and develop special international services under the Bozhou TCM brand.

#### **4.2.3 Areas of Weak Potential (Health Tourism Resources)**

For regions with relatively low development potential, we can first increase investment. While upgrading 4A and 5A scenic spots, we will improve barrier-free facilities and multilingual guidance systems at the same time. In addition, we plan to build TCM culture-themed hotels and launch eco-tourism routes such as "Hometown of Hua Tuo - Exploration of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Capital", making the integration of medical and tourism services more appealing to tourists. With the support of relevant policies, we will provide value-added tax reductions for travel agencies, set up a special fund for innovative medical tourism products, and encourage customized services integrating diagnosis and treatment, medicinal diets and wellness programs. This will help the industrial chain move towards higher value-added sectors. By strengthening our strengths, addressing shortcomings and enhancing policy support, Bozhou will gradually achieve coordinated and sustainable development of its regional medical tourism resources.

### **4.3 Research Limitations and Outlook**

This research has a few obvious limitations. First, data acquisition was restricted by existing statistical norms, and estimated data was added to supplement indicators like travel agency revenue share, which may affect result accuracy. Second, the model ignored dynamic external factors such as pandemic impacts and policy changes, so long-term trend forecasts require further verification.

Future research can be expanded in these ways: introduce Random Forest and other machine learning algorithms to optimize weight distribution, making the model adapt to dynamic scenarios; integrate tourist satisfaction surveys and willingness-to-pay analyses to improve the potential evaluation system from the demand side for more scientific decision-making; explore cross-regional cooperation like building a TCM tourism alliance between Bozhou and Huangshan, to boost the integrated development of medical care, wellness, culture and ecology and form regional coordinated development.

In short, to fully unlock Bozhou's wellness tourism potential, the city must follow three core principles: highlight unique features, remedy shortcomings, and promote regional coordinated development. With proper policy guidance and continuous market innovation, Bozhou can achieve sustainable development in this field, and offer a replicable example for other Chinese cities integrating TCM and tourism.

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