



# Addressing Challenges and Promoting Development: Strategies for Health and Wellness Industry in Ethnic Regions

Tsaifa (TF) Yen <sup>a\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Management, Guizhou Qiannan Economic College, Qiannan, Guizhou- 550660, China.

## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

China has entered an aging society. In order to respond to the aging society, government departments have successively introduced various pension policies since 2013 with an attempt to mitigate the impact of the aging society. Under this context, the health and wellness industry came into being. However, the documents of the central department for the health and wellness industry are still lacking, the health care issues in ethnic region have received less attention, and there is no specific legal source for local governments and enterprises to follow. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the development of the health and wellness industry in ethnic region through literature analysis, to study the feasible path of the development of the health and wellness industry in ethnic region, and to provide suggestions. This study finds 40 representative papers on rural revitalization and health and wellness industry in the past three years through literature retrieval. We summarize the questions raised in the papers, analyzes and evaluates them, and finally proposes a conclusion. Findings show that the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region lacks national level policies, and the details of local implementation are relatively weak. Moreover, in terms of the

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: 1722997311@qq.com;

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development path of the health and wellness industry in ethnic region, the integration model of health care, sports, culture and tourism seems to be a feasible direction. In addition, the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region has a positive impact on rural revitalization. In other words, the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region may have a high coupling effect with regional economy. Finally, this study provides some useful suggestions for government departments and subsequent research.

*Keywords: Ethnic region; health and wellness industry; rural revitalization; coupling effect; regional economy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the results of the 7th national population census, China's population has reached 1.4 billion, and the proportion of elderly people over 65 years old has reached 13.5%, and China has entered an aging society [1]. In an aging society, the physical degradation of the elderly not only reduces the labor force, but also easily causes health problems [2]. The lack of family support of the elderly may affect the family relationship, and the elderly living alone are easy to form home care problems [3]. Due to the lack of social security, the elderly may not have enough subsidies to support their old life, which is easy to cause the health problem of the elderly [4]. If the problem of health care is not properly dealt with, it is easy to form social, economic and financial problems of the country, which will have an adverse impact on the development of the country.

In view of this point, the central departments of the State pay special attention to the issue of elderly care. In September 2013, they issued Several Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Elderly Care Service Industry to raise the attention of all social parties to health care and related industries, and effectively promote the reform process of elderly care service industry [5]. In June 2016, the "Guiding Opinions on Promoting and standardizing the Application and Development of Big Data in Health Care" was launched to build the industry chain related to big data in health care and strengthen the information exchange in the health and wellness industry [6]; In October 2016, the Outline of the Healthy China 2030 Plan was issued, which put forward important goals and tasks such as popularizing healthy life, optimizing health services, and developing health and wellness industry [7]. In December 2016, Several Opinions on Comprehensively Opening up the Elderly Care Service Market and Improving the Quality of Elderly Care Services were issued to encourage the entry of

social capital, improve the accessibility of elderly care services, and effectively guarantee the elderly's "old-age support" [8]. In November 2021, the Opinions on Strengthening Aging Work in the New Era were issued to promote the development of the health and wellness industry, accelerate the construction of an age-friendly society, and continuously improve the health level of the elderly [9].

Under the guidance of the central policy, provinces and municipalities have also introduced corresponding aging service policies. For example, Guizhou Province officially implemented the Regulations on Old-age Service in October 2021, proposing specific norms for improving the old-age service system, standardizing old-age service work, and promoting the coordinated development of old-age service and industry in Guizhou Province [10].

However, documents on the health and wellness industry from the central authorities are still lacking, resulting in the lack of top policy guidelines for the health and wellness industry, and the supporting regulations required by local planning and development are relatively limited. This phenomenon is especially obvious in ethnic region. For example, research on ethnic region points out that policy support is relatively limited, the incentive effect is weak [11], the health and wellness industry policy is not targeted, and there is a lack of geriatric specialist and medical services [12]. Specifically, the health and welfare issues in ethnic region have received less attention, and there is no specific legal source for local governments and enterprises to follow. Therefore, exploring the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region not only helps to solve the problem of health care in ethnic region, but also helps to make up the gap in theory.

In addition, ethnic region generally belongs to rural areas, and the economy is relatively underdeveloped. It's needed in the development of health and wellness industry at the same time. It is also important to revitalize the rural economy. Existing studies have pointed out that deepening the combination of medical and nursing care, boosting the rural health and wellness industry, and the mode of medical support and tourism linking is indeed beneficial to rural revitalization [13]. The development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region seems to be conducive to rural revitalization. Another study also shows that developing rural health tourism and guiding practical exploration with scientific planning can also help rural revitalization [14]. Although the economy of ethnic region is not developed, there are many handicraft and cultural resources. If the integration of health and wellness industry and cultural industry can be carried out, it will not only benefit industrial development, but also promote rural revitalization. Research points out that planning experiential healing activities of traditional handicrafts and designing aesthetic education and health care products of traditional handicrafts are conducive to the development of health and wellness industry [15], which are feasible directions for rural revitalization.

In summary, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the literature; To clarify the problems for the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region; finding the possible solutions for the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region, and providing some suggestions. This study finds 40 representative papers on rural revitalization and health and wellness industry in the past three years through literature retrieval. Then we summarize the questions raised in the papers, analyzes and explains them, and finally proposes the conclusions.

## **2. PROBLEMS FACED BY THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS INDUSTRY IN ETHNIC REGION**

Table 1 shows the problems faced by the health and wellness industry in the literature, and also the problems that the health and wellness industry in ethnic region may face. By summarizing these problems, it can be found that the problems faced by the health and wellness industry are mainly planning, implementation and supervision, which can be summarized as policies and regulations, capital, talent, market and operation, respectively as follows.

### **2.1 Planning aspect**

Existing studies have shown that in the context of the great health era, the development of the health and wellness industry takes elderly care, health care and health care as the main body, which is the inevitable demand for the people to enjoy a healthy life [16]. Moreover, the most basic requirement for local development of health and wellness industry is policy support [17]. For example, in the "Action Plan to Support the Development of Health and wellness industry (2019-2021)" issued by the Shanxi Provincial Civil Affairs Department, Jincheng has become a key area for Shanxi to build a brand of "health care Shanxi and summer Care Shanxi" [18].

However, studies on ethnic region show that the national level lacks development planning and standards for the health and wellness industry, as well as supporting policies and financial support in land, taxation, water and electricity, etc., and the health and wellness industry system is not sound [19]. Moreover, if we want to help rural revitalization through the development of health and wellness industry, policy support is relatively limited, especially in the implementation process, the incentive effect is weak [11]. This also appropriately reflects the problem of the last mile to revitalize the rural economy through the development of the health and wellness industry in rural areas, and the problem of policy implementation.

This view has also been echoed by other studies, such as the lack of targeted, detailed and difficult implementation of health care industrial policies [12], the imperfect access mechanism for health and wellness industry [17], and the imperfect policies, laws and regulations [20]. Therefore, ethnic region are mostly rural areas, and policy guidance is a very important planning issue in the planning process of developing health and wellness industries.

### **2.2 Execution Aspect**

In terms of implementation, the problems faced by various regions and health care enterprises and institutions can be roughly summarized as marketing, operations, human resources, finance, research and development innovation and other aspects. In terms of marketing, research points out that the single product structure is a serious obstacle to the development of the health and wellness industry, and many functions such as leisure agriculture, sightseeing experience,

cultural inheritance, and popular science education have not been deeply explored and developed [18].

Similarly, the study also pointed out the fragmentation of product development [21], lack of in-depth product exploration [22], lack of geriatric specialist and medical services [12], low brand awareness [19], and serious project homogeneity [20], high-quality regional health brand has not yet formed [22], insufficient marketing ability [23], etc., are all marketing problems in the development of health and wellness industry. Moreover, in these studies, there is no research and analysis of the pricing mechanism, marketing channels, promotion and other issues of the health and wellness industry, and the marketing problems of the whole health and wellness industry still need to be made up.

Second, on the operational side, there is a relative lack of research. The research points out that the combination of rural tourism and health and wellness industry brings new opportunities for the economic development of Shaanxi Province. However, there is a lack of long-term planning for rural health tourism resources and a weak sense of strategic management [23]. Moreover, the infrastructure conditions of the health and wellness industry are relatively backward, and the pace of equipment investment and construction cannot keep up with the changes in demand [21]. To be specific, the existing studies lack a complete analysis of the basic elements of the operation of the health and wellness industry, such as land, labor, capital and technology, and even less research on the operation of the health and wellness industry in ethnic region. Moreover, the overall health and wellness industry is still in the embryonic stage, and there is a relative lack of research on issues such as operating standards, service processes, service quality, and performance control.

Moreover, in terms of human resources, existing studies have pointed out that there is a shortage of professional talents [12,18,11], lack of industrial talent resources [20], lack of professional ability of practitioners [21], lack of professional compound tourism management talents [23], and urgent need to cultivate multi-level compound talents [24]. These studies have not specifically quantified what kind of talents, what kind of abilities, and what kind of compound talents, which is a great challenge to the human resource type of health and wellness industry and enterprise institutions in ethnic region. For

example, ethnic minority areas are mostly rural areas, which may need more talents for rural tourism and health and wellness industry, including tourism planning who understand health care business, tour guides or tour guides who understand health care consumer groups or consumption habits, activity instructors, fitness instructors, medical personnel, social workers, facility maintenance personnel, etc.

In addition, less research has been done on finance and R&D innovation. Cui et al. (2023) [17] pointed out that although there are supportive policies for the health and wellness industry in Chongqing, the financial support for the health and wellness industry is weak and scattered. Under the circumstance that the investment amount of the health and wellness industry is large, the payback period is long, and the risk is high, the policy support for old-age care institutions and elderly care is less.

In other words, health care enterprises in ethnic region may lack research on financing, investment, working capital management and dividend management, which may limit the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region. Moreover, the research and development and innovation of the health and wellness industry are relatively lacking, and the industrial model is single [18,12], weak innovative development ability [12], and insufficient innovation degree of industry system [21], which may limit the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region.

### 2.3 Regulatory Aspect

Due to the lack of top-level policies, the development of the health and wellness industry has great regulatory problems. The research points out that the connotation and denotation of health and wellness industry are not clear, and the top-level design is lacking; There are still big shortcomings in the supporting industry of health care [17]. Moreover, the correlation of health care related industries is low, and information resources cannot be shared [25]; The value orientation and interest orientation of health care service subjects are inconsistent, which makes it difficult to realize the efficient operation of health care service chain [12]. Overall, the management of health and wellness industry needs to be standardized. In other words, there may also be health and wellness industry supervision problems in ethnic region, restricting the development of health and wellness industry.

**Table 1. Problems faced by health and wellness industry in ethnic region**

<b>Author(s)(year)</b>	<b>Problems</b>
Cui et al. [16]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The connotation and extension of the health and wellness industry are not clear, and the top-level design is lacking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are still major weaknesses in supporting the health and wellness industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Financial support for the health and wellness industry is weak and scattered</li> </ul>
Shi [17]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ideological misunderstanding is the primary factor affecting the development of health and wellness industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The lag of industrial planning is the key link to inhibit the development of health and wellness industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Single product structure is a serious obstacle to the development of health and wellness industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Low brand awareness is the biggest shortcoming limiting the development of health and wellness industry</li> </ul>
Chen and Xu [18]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The degree of resource integration is not high, and the related brand characteristics are not sufficient</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enterprise cognition is not enough, and the supporting functions of industrial services need to be explored</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The integration of human resources is not enough, and multi-level and compound talents need to be cultivated urgently</li> </ul>
Zhang [19]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The research of health and nutrition theory is not mature</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The shortcomings of the development of the health and wellness industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial policies and regulations are lagging behind</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The health and wellness industry system is not sound</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The homogenization of health care projects is serious</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial integration is weak</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are shortcomings in supporting infrastructure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> health and wellness industry is short of human resources</li> </ul>
Li, Wei, and Xu [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The development of healthy tourism products is fragmented</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health tourism resources and population distribution do not match</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high-quality regional health care brand has not yet formed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is a lack of space for personalized health tourism</li> </ul>
Liu [11]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Policy support is relatively limited, and the incentive effect is weak</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The industrial model is single, and the ability to innovate development is weak</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of professional talents and weak soft power</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government has increased support and provided policy support</li> </ul>
Wang [24]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Forest health and wellness industry model is relatively simple, industry system innovation degree is insufficient</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The access mechanism of forest health and wellness industry is not perfect, and the local market environment is complicated</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The supply of forest health professionals is short, and investment by local enterprises is limited</li> </ul>
Chen et al. [12]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The health and wellness industry policy lacks pertinence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of specialized geriatric and medical services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> health care enterprises have not formed large-scale industrial clusters</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is a shortage of professionals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> insufficient supply capacity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are barriers to information exchange in the health and wellness industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The policy lacks refinement and is difficult to be implemented</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The management of the health and wellness industry needs to be standardized</li> </ul>

Author(s)(year)	Problems
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The cognition and participation of elderly people in health care are not high</li> </ul>
Wang [24]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Relevant policies, laws and regulations are not perfect</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure is relatively backward</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The industrial structure is not sound</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The lack of professional competence of the employees</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of sustained funding</li> </ul>
Qi and Wang [25]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> tourism products lack in-depth exploration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> insufficient marketing ability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weak awareness of strategic management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is a shortage of professional and compound tourism management talents</li> </ul>

**Table 2. The integration paths of health and wellness industry development**

Author(s)(year)	Integration paths
He et al. [31]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrich the "culture" product integration system, and systematically build core brands;</li> <li>2. Integration of technology and media to smooth the development of the "cultural cultivation" industry chain platform;</li> <li>3. The consumption of Yi cultural products is healthy, and the application value is increased.</li> </ol>
Liu et al. [29]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen top-level design and improve policy guidance;</li> <li>2. Improve infrastructure and provide material support;</li> <li>3. Explore local characteristics to form unique business cards;</li> <li>4. Increase publicity and establish a good image.</li> </ol>
Ge et al. [30]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community-oriented sports health model led by sports department;</li> <li>2. Sports and health care model dominated by medical departments;</li> <li>3. The sports health model of social cooperation under the leadership of the government;</li> <li>4. Sports rehabilitation center model;</li> <li>5. Health complex model;</li> <li>6. Industry-university-research-medical cooperation model;</li> <li>7. "Sports-health-ecology" model;</li> <li>8. "Sports - health - tourism" model;</li> <li>9. "Sports - health - education" model;</li> <li>10. "Sports - health - rural" model;</li> <li>11. "Sports - health - technology" model.</li> </ol>
He et al. [31]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The integration and coordination of the three industries of the main industry of Chinese medicinal materials;</li> <li>2. Research and development and publicity of the county's affiliated health and wellness industry are promoted simultaneously;</li> <li>3. Deep integration of the main industry of Chinese medicinal materials and the affiliated health and wellness industry.</li> </ol>
Zhang et al. [32]	The integration mode of "TCM - health care - tourism"
Chen et al. [33]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultivate diversified consumption demand of "health - leisure sports";</li> <li>2. Improve the brand publicity and participation intensity of the integrated products of "health care - leisure tourism";</li> <li>3. Expand the overall popularity of Sichuan "health - leisure sports" brand;</li> <li>4. Cultivate "health - leisure sports" professional service market;</li> <li>5. Increase the effective supply of "health - leisure sports" service products;</li> <li>6. Promote the integration of "health care - leisure sports" with the whole industrial chain to effectively connect science and technology elements;</li> <li>7. Expand channels for industrial integration and development.</li> </ol>

### 3. THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS INDUSTRY IN ETHNIC REGION

In the development path of health and wellness industry, it is mainly the combination of health and wellness industry and local characteristic resources, and the integration path is summarized in Table 2. Ethnic region has many cultural characteristics and natural resources, which are suitable for developing health and wellness industry and promoting rural revitalization. For example, Panxi area of Sichuan Province is the largest Yi people's residence in China. The integration of distinctive Yi culture and health and wellness industry is not only conducive to traditional economic development and transformation, but also conducive to rural revitalization [26]. Therefore, the study suggests that the culture-health care integration system [26] and the sports-health care integration model [27, 28] can be adopted to develop the health and wellness industry in ethnic region. [31] and the model of medical-health integration [29,30].

Secondly, most ethnic region belongs to rural areas, with rich rural and natural resources, suitable for the development of rural tourism. In the development of health and wellness industry, we can consider the integration of rural tourism. This kind of multi-dimensional industrial integration, its infrastructure needs are basically the same, and it needs multi-oriented investors, the construction process will be more local employment opportunities and consumption, it may be more conducive to rural revitalization. Existing studies have shown that it is feasible for small counties to take advantage of pharmaceutical origin to promote the integrated development of pharmaceutical - health care - tourism industry. In other words, on the basis of the existing famous TCM production, culture, health care and recuperation bases, the distinctive TCM culture should be explored and sorted out, and incorporated into the supporting projects in and around the bases to develop TCM health tourism [30].

In addition, ethnic region is mountainous, residents have better sports talent, and suitable for the development of sports tourism or leisure sports. This kind of integration of sports and health and wellness industry provides better living and activity environment for health care providers, and also provides more professional

sports instructors. This mode not only meets the needs of the health care providers, but also drives the needs of local health care and sports talents. This integration mode is conducive to achieving the purpose of industrial revitalization and talent revitalization in the rural revitalization. Moreover, in the process of health care - sports and sports, leisure tourism elements can be integrated to achieve the purpose of relaxation of health care. In this way, it forms a health care - sports - tourism industry integration model. Empirical research also confirms that the integration of health care and sports industry in ethnic region has significant advantages and potential for the coupling coordination and development of health and wellness industry and leisure sports industry, and the coupling and coordinated development of the two industries is conducive to promoting the balanced development of regional economy [31].

### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

China has entered an aging society, which has brought adverse effects on the family, society and economy. In response to the aging society, government departments have introduced various pension policies since 2013 in an attempt to mitigate the impact of aging. Health and wellness industry came into being in this context. It is a new industry dealing with national health, medical treatment, rehabilitation and health, the development of health and wellness industry has its necessity. The purpose of this study is to explore the problems and the possible solutions for the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region, and verifying its impact on rural revitalization. Based on the above analysis, the following conclusions are obtained:

- In terms of planning, there is a lack of state-level policies for the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic minority areas, and the details of local implementation are relatively weak; Secondly, local infrastructure needs to be improved, such as road and transportation planning, parking lots, parks, public toilets, etc. In terms of execution, scholars have studied marketing, operation, human resources, finance, R&D and innovation, but the analysis content is not comprehensive enough. Specifically, marketing and operations research is more focused on products, while finance and R&D research are relatively lacking. In terms of supervision, the health and

wellness industry in ethnic region has just entered the established stage, and the regulatory regulations and research are lacking.

- In terms of the possible solutions for the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region, the integration model of health care, sports, culture and tourism seems to be a feasible direction.
- On the whole, the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region has a positive impact on rural revitalization.

Based on the above conclusions, this study makes the following recommendations for government departments:

- The government departments should put forward the overall national health and wellness industry development plan as soon as possible, improve the management laws and regulations, and reasonably guide the ethnic region in resource planning and allocation.
- Government departments at all levels should pool resources, focus on building health and wellness industrial parks in ethnic region, and avoid excessive dispersion of resources.
- After the completion of the key planning, the government departments should strive to improve the external traffic and transportation, and the construction and management of infrastructure in the health and wellness industrial parks in ethnic region.
- The government departments should carry out the construction of health and wellness industry talents in a reasonable and orderly manner, which is more conducive to the sustainable development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region.

Based on the above conclusions, this study makes the following suggestions for subsequent research:

- This study has made use of literature to analyze the possible problems in the development of health and wellness industry in ethnic region. On this basis, the subsequent research can continue to carry out empirical analysis.
- The limitations of existing studies have been specifically pointed out in this study, and future studies can be conducted to analyze the pricing mechanism, marketing

channels, promotion and other aspects of the health and wellness industry in the ethnic region of Korea. Secondly, there is a relative lack of research on finance and R&D, and future studies can try to explore issues in these directions.

- In the development path of health and wellness industry in ethnic region, this study has proposed the model of health and wellness - culture - sports - tourism. Future research will continue to compare these models and explore the contribution of these integration models to rural revitalization.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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