

# Research on the Development Strategy of Panxi Sunshine Health and Wellness Homestays and Hotels Based on Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Preservation

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**Abstract:** This study is the first phase of research results from the student innovation project “Yunqiao Sunshine Health and Wellness Homestay” group at Chengdu Normal University. By analyzing the current state of the Sunshine Health and Wellness Tourism Area economy in the Panxi region of Sichuan, local policies, and the current state of Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels, this paper proposes the possibility of developing Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels through traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) health preservation methods. It also proposes development strategies for such hotels through a market survey SWOT analysis.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese medicine health preservation; Sunshine Health and Wellness Tourism Area; Homestays and hotels; Strategy

**Online publication:** July 10, 2024

## 1. Introduction

Located in the southwestern part of Sichuan, China, the Anning River Basin is known as the Panxi Sunshine Area. Due to its topography, this region forms a unique microclimate with warm weather all year round, dry conditions, and little rainfall, with an annual average temperature above 18°C and over 2,356 hours of sunshine annually. In the past decade, it has become a favored health and wellness destination for elderly people from cities like Chengdu and Mianyang. For many years, Sichuan Province has proposed the industrialization of the Panxi region. In recent years, multiple policies and implementation opinions have been further proposed to promote the development of Sunshine Health and Wellness Tourism and elderly care tourism in this area. In December 2021, major leaders of Sichuan Province, during their investigation into the Panxi region, emphasized leveraging the unique climatic resources of the Anning Valley, formulating a comprehensive high-standard development plan for the Anning Valley, consolidating poverty alleviation achievements, and developing Liangshan Prefecture into a key area for health and wellness and medical care industries. They aimed to build

an international health and wellness tourism destination and expand the health and wellness sector to the entire Chengdu–Chongqing region within a half-hour economic circle. Therefore, exploring a development path that combines traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) health preservation with the construction and development of Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels suitable for the Panxi region and proposing reasonable development strategies has guided and promoted significance for the advancement of this sector.

## 2. Analysis of Panxi Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels

To study Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels, it is first necessary to clarify the positioning of the health and wellness industry. Representative views on the connotation of the “health and wellness industry” include: it is a collective term for the health and elderly care industries and an important part of the modern service industry <sup>[1]</sup>; it is divided into two aspects: “health” and “wellness” <sup>[2]</sup>; it encompasses three dimensions: “health,” “wellness,” and “elderly care” <sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, the health and wellness industry in the Panxi region can be defined as a tourism service industry that relies on the region’s advantageous resources to provide various health, wellness, and elderly care services.

In the past decade, the Panxi region has consistently regarded health and wellness as an important industry for local economic development. By the end of 2023, the Panxi region had already established several mature sunshine health and wellness tourism resorts, such as the Xichang Qionghai Sunshine Health and Wellness Area, Miyi Yuemi Sunshine Health and Wellness Area, and Yanbian Hongge Sunshine Health and Wellness Area. The Panzhihua region has even developed a wellness culture brand targeting young people, middle-aged people, and elderly people <sup>[4]</sup>. According to data released by the Liangshan Prefecture Culture and Tourism Bureau, Liangshan Prefecture received a total of 5.3186 million tourists in 2024, a year-on-year increase of 76.74%. Panzhihua received 2.5398 million tourists, generating tourism revenue of 1.874 billion yuan. This shows that spring sunshine tourism in the Panxi region remains an important travel route within Sichuan. Hotels are crucial supporting facilities in the tourism industry. Based on the characteristics of sunshine tourism in the Panxi region, to better highlight the sunshine tourism brand, hotels and homestays in the Panxi region are classified as sunshine health and wellness hotels, becoming important tourism-supporting facilities in the area. Currently, Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels in the Panxi region can be divided into three types according to their scale:

- (1) Large-scale group Sunshine Health and Wellness hotels: Examples include the Xichang Qionghai Hotel and the Yanbian Hongge Hot Spring Hotel. These hotels typically have local government investment or are operated by corporate groups, combining sunshine health and wellness with hot springs and other forms, with relatively high costs.
- (2) Chain business hotels: In recent years, well-known high-end business chain hotels like All Seasons and Holiday Inn Express have gradually expanded their markets to counties and cities such as Xichang and Panzhihua, targeting the unique sunshine tourism resources of the Panxi region. These hotels feature intelligent and business-oriented services, catering to tourists attracted by sunshine and maintaining a focus on traditional business travelers.
- (3) Small enterprises and individually operated homestays and hotels: These accommodations usually lack brand recognition and substantial corporate investment but offer lower prices and make up the largest proportion of sunshine health and wellness hotels in the Panxi region.

From the perspective of the characteristics of the clientele, the first and second types of hotels primarily cater to short-term stays, with an average guest stay of 1–3 days, while the third type generally hosts guests

for more than seven days. The first type of hotel frequently serves family tourists, the second type targets individual or dual travelers, and the third type primarily accommodates families and elderly tourists, focusing on the “residential tourism for the elderly” model. This model refers to elderly people living outside their administrative region of residence to enjoy a lifestyle that combines tourism, home living, vacation, and elderly care <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **3. Analysis of the current situation of small Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels**

In the Panxi region, small Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels account for the largest proportion of the market. Due to their low prices, they hold a significant market share. After conducting a market survey on this type of hotel in the region, the current characteristics of these hotels are analyzed as follows:

- (1) Large market share, mostly renovated residential houses: For instance, in Xichang around Qionghai Lake, such homestays and hotels are concentrated in areas like Lushan Mountain Gate and Xiaoyucun Village, where resident-built houses are converted into homestays or rented out to individual homestay operators due to the boost from the tourism economy.
- (2) Overall poor environment: Most of these homestays and hotels are converted from residential houses, which are limited by the original building structure and investment constraints. Consequently, the conditions inside the homestays are uneven, with issues such as small room sizes, inadequate ventilation systems, and incomplete fire safety systems.
- (3) Low prices: Influenced by the aforementioned points, the prices of this type of homestay and hotel are relatively low. Depending on the room conditions, the daily rates range from 80 to 200 Chinese yuan, attracting a significant number of elderly “migratory bird” tourists.
- (4) Significant seasonal and timing constraints: The guests of these Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels are mainly elderly and are concentrated in the winter season. From March to October, the vacancy rate is high, and they cannot compete with large chain business hotels.
- (5) Obvious bottleneck phenomenon: In recent years, the “migratory bird phenomenon” of elderly people coming to the Panxi region for winter health and wellness has become very apparent. The supporting medical facilities and technologies for elderly guests are a bottleneck for this type of homestay hotel. Yongmei Liu, chairman of Xichang Qionghai Health and Wellness Home, mentioned in an interview that the biggest difference between health and wellness and elderly care is that health and wellness guests can fully take care of themselves but inevitably have basic health issues. The high cost of hiring medical staff is currently the biggest bottleneck in terms of medical support.

### **4. Advantages of developing TCM-based Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels**

The greatest advantage of developing the health and wellness industry in Panxi lies in its sunny ecology, and its greatest charm is its diverse culture. It is essential to adhere to the integration of cultural tourism, medical care, health and wellness, and other industrial models <sup>[6]</sup>. In recent years, the governments of Liangshan Prefecture and Weizhou have also issued policy documents such as the “Implementation Opinions on Promoting the Inheritance and Innovation Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine” and the “Five-Year Action Plan for ‘Daliangshan’ Advantageous and Characteristic Industries,” proposing to promote the development of the entire TCM industry chain. The combination of health and wellness with medical care is not new in China. Early research has already

seen the emergence of models combining residential health and wellness with medical care <sup>[7]</sup> and “health and medical care” <sup>[8]</sup>. Therefore, the integration of the health and wellness tourism industry with the TCM industry to develop related products and services that meet the health service needs of the people has become a key task of TCM health and wellness tourism <sup>[9]</sup>.

TCM Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels will combine basic medical care with health and wellness to create a brand effect that attracts elderly health and wellness guests. Additionally, TCM health and wellness can drive the local industrial system’s development, promoting the structural transformation of the local TCM industry. As a new type of sunshine homestay hotel, incorporating TCM dietary therapy, TCM fitness, TCM culture, and moxibustion baths into homestay operations will attract not only the elderly but also other groups, achieving comprehensive commercial attraction.

## **5. Development strategies of TCM-based Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels**

The integration of TCM with Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels is supported by local government policies and has a stable flow of “migratory bird” tourists. Based on market surveys and SWOT analysis of small and medium-sized Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels, the following development strategies are proposed to establish TCM-based Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels as industry benchmarks:

- (1) Using TCM as a foundation, targeting “migratory bird” tourists to develop new homestay and hotel services: The main bottleneck for elderly Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels is the lack of basic medical support. Currently, most homestays and hotels with a high concentration of elderly guests cannot provide corresponding medical services. TCM-based Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels will introduce permanent medically qualified personnel to conduct daily blood pressure checks for the elderly, establish personal health records for basic and chronic diseases, and maintain connections with nearby hospitals to ensure reasonable medical care routes during their stay. Daily TCM fitness activities, such as Tai Chi, Wuqinxi, and Baduanjin, will be organized. Acupuncture, moxibustion, and other TCM therapies will be available upon request. During the winter flu season, free TCM anti-flu decoctions and targeted TCM dietary services will be provided to the elderly. Clinical data analysis has shown that TCM dietary therapy can improve the quality of life and nursing satisfaction for respiratory patients to some extent <sup>[10]</sup>. For other age groups, various TCM health and wellness therapies can be combined with popular services. The “Outline of Strategic Planning for the Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine (2016-2030)” emphasizes the leading role of TCM in preventive care, its synergistic role in major disease treatment, and its core role in disease rehabilitation <sup>[11]</sup>. TCM essential oil therapy and aromatherapy, combined with popular spa services, can become unique features of the homestay. For example, TCM aromatherapy involves using traditional Chinese herbs with special aromatic properties to create corresponding formulations, administered through the nose, mouth, or skin to achieve disease prevention, treatment, and health care purposes <sup>[12]</sup>.
- (2) Using TCM as a foundation to develop other homestay and hotel functional modules to ensure off-season revenue: Sunshine Health and Wellness tourism in Panxi has certain time limitations, with the peak season from October to March. To overcome this, related economic modules should be considered. This project will combine the homestay’s catering department with TCM Health and Wellness to create a locally renowned TCM Health and Wellness rainforest restaurant, generating a

social media buzz through its architectural appearance, atmosphere, and food. The main attractions will be TCM medicinal cuisine, TCM congee hotpot, and a popular dining environment, targeting local diners. TCM dietary therapy has always been an important discipline in traditional Chinese medicine, with research indicating that integrating TCM dietary therapy with clinical nutrition can improve patients' nutritional status and enhance immunity <sup>[13]</sup>. Leveraging the herbal planting industry in the Panxi region, developing characteristic medicinal cuisine will not only support the homestay's off-season income but also provide new market opportunities for the industrialization of the local TCM industry.

- (3) Creating new features for TCM Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels by benchmarking against first and second-class hotel guests: In short-term tourism, hot springs are highly attractive to family tourists. To attract these travelers, the homestay can develop TCM hot spring pools as a selling point. TCM hot springs involve adding Chinese herbal medicines to warm water, achieving health benefits through soaking and steaming. Studies have shown that different medicinal hot springs have positive effects on specific diseases. For example, clinical research by Jilin Provincial Hot Spring Hospital from March 2017 to March 2018 demonstrated significant effects of hot spring water combined with TCM steam baths on the rehabilitation of rheumatoid arthritis patients <sup>[14]</sup>. Therefore, developing TCM hot spring pools in hotels can meet the needs of health tourists and attract family tourists seeking hot springs. For business travelers, the design of the homestay's appearance and rooms is crucial. A modern, simple design, a pleasant surrounding environment, convenient dining options, and a comfortable sleeping environment will be key design considerations.
- (4) Establishing a "dedicated and professional" service team to market the TCM Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels as regional iconic hotels: In the internet age, trendy check-in spots have become a popular way of tourism, increasingly favored by young people. Creating a unique identity, immersive atmosphere, and participatory experience projects for TCM Sunshine Health and Wellness homestays and hotels can establish them as popular internet destinations <sup>[15]</sup>. This requires a "dedicated and professional" service team. For example, a fixed TCM professional team can provide health consultations and guidance on medicinal cuisine. The hotel management team can be divided into health and wellness, room service, catering, and activities departments for professional management and project development. A design team can handle trendy architectural and landscape design and post-maintenance, while a marketing team can conduct online and offline marketing. Multi-faceted and multi-angle cooperation will help achieve the hotel's iconic status.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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