



# Research on the Development of TCM Tourism in Western Anhui Region from the Perspective of Industrial Integration

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**Abstract:** The western Anhui region has prominent advantages in traditional Chinese medicine tourism resources, with favorable policy advantages, TCM resource advantages and tourism resource advantages. This research is based on the dual national strategic background of “Healthy China” and “Rural Revitalization”. It conforms to the trend of cultural tourism consumption upgrading and industrial integration, which focuses on the development of TCM tourism in the region from the perspective of industrial integration. This paper employs literature review, field research, case analysis, and SWOT analysis to synthesize relevant academic research over the past five years. It systematically examines the current development status, resource endowment, challenges, and optimization pathways for TCM tourism in the region. The conclusion indicates that to realize the region’s significant potential in this sector, deeper industrial integration is demanded, along with coordinated enhancements to the product system, brand building, infrastructure, and services. This paper aims to enrich the application of industrial integration theory in regional TCM tourism, providing a theoretical reference for similar areas. Furthermore, it seeks to provide a pathway for the region to facilitate economic transformation, inherit TCM culture, consolidate poverty alleviation achievements, and realize rural revitalization.

**Keywords:** Industrial Integration, TCM Tourism, Western Anhui Region, Development Strategy, Rural Revitalization

## I. Introduction

### 1.1 TCM

Traditional Chinese medicine is a medical system rooted in traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, such as Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, as well as theories of Zang-Fu organs and meridians. It is centered on holism and syndrome differentiation/determination of treatment, utilizing multiple approaches including herbal medicine, acupuncture, therapeutic massage, and dietary therapy to prevent and treat diseases, and to maintain health.

### 1.2 Background and Context

Under the background of the “Healthy China” and “Rural Revitalization” strategies, industrial integration has become a key path to promote development. In 2025, Anhui Province has invested 10 million yuan to deepen the research and development of cultural tourism consumption and health care industries, highlighting the trend of dual drive by policy and market.

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This paper aims to enrich the application of industrial integration theory in regional TCM tourism, provide theoretical basis for the development of similar regions, and offer practical paths for local economic transformation, cultural inheritance and rural revitalization.

### 1.4 Literature Review

#### 1.4.1 Domestic Research Status

Globally, the health tourism and medical tourism industry continues to develop, covering various forms such as hot springs, saunas, beauty care and massage therapy. Developed countries such as the United States and Japan, relying on their leading medical technologies, have taken the lead in developing high-end medical tourism. Countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and India have formed competitive medical tourism product systems at a relatively low cost.

Relevant research abroad mainly focuses on three aspects. In terms of tourism resource development, Phongchai Jittamai et al. analyzed Thailand’s health tourism resources and proposed strategic planning and resource allocation strategies<sup>[1]</sup>. Favargiotti Sara et al. explored the health tourism advantages of inland water resources and thermal landscapes in Italy<sup>[2]</sup>. In terms of tourists’ consumption demands, David N. Nguyen et al. conducted the first research on the public’s views on health countermeasures for hot spring tourism<sup>[3]</sup>. Baydeniz Erdem et al. analyzed the factors influencing the behavioral intentions of medical tourism in Turkey through tourist experience<sup>[4]</sup>. In terms of improving medical tourism services, Askari Ali et al. pointed out challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, inadequate policy implementation and low service efficiency from the perspective of managers<sup>[5]</sup>.

#### 1.4.2 Foreign Research Status

The concept of TCM tourism was first proposed in 2000. Its main definitions can be divided into two categories. First, from the perspective of resource integration, as emphasized by Wu Haibo et al., it is a new type of business form that deeply integrates the characteristic resources of TCM with eco-tourism resources<sup>[6]</sup>. Second, it starts



from the tourists' experience. For instance, Li Kunpeng et al. believe that its essence is a comprehensive health experience that integrates TCM knowledge with tourism services<sup>[7]</sup>.

Model research mainly focuses on expanding its perspectives, developing its products, and expanding into overseas markets. In terms of perspective, it covers dimensions such as all-round tourism and policy networks. For instance, Zong Anpeng et al. analyzed the predicament and development path of China's TCM health tourism industry from the perspective of all-round tourism<sup>[8]</sup>. In terms of products, Yang Rongbin et al. have established a product system that encompasses categories such as sightseeing, vacation, and specialized health preservation<sup>[9]</sup>. Overseas, scholars constantly propose innovative strategies to promote the international dissemination of TCM culture.

There are many regional case studies on TCM tourism. For instance, Wang Yanan et al. analyzed the current industrial situation in Bama, Guangxi using the SWOT analysis method and proposed corresponding development strategies<sup>[10]</sup>.

Research Review: Firstly, there is no unified definition of the concept of TCM tourism. Secondly, research on development models mostly focuses on macro theories and mature regions, while paying insufficient attention to underdeveloped areas such as western Anhui. Finally, there are relatively few research achievements on the development of TCM tourism from the perspective of industrial integration. This paper systematically analyzes the case of western Anhui from the perspective of industrial integration, with the aim of providing references for similar regions.

### 1.5 Research Ideas and Methods

This research is carried out along the train of thought of "raising questions, analyzing problems and solving problems". First, raise questions and focus on exploring the fundamental driving forces behind the integrated development of industries. Secondly, analyze the problem and systematically dissect the resource endowment and current development status of western Anhui. Finally, to address the issue, efforts should be made to propose specific paths and development strategies for industrial integration. In terms of methods, a comprehensive approach is adopted, including literature review, field investigation methods such as questionnaires and interviews, case analysis, and SWOT analysis, to ensure the systematic and empirical basis of the research.

### 1.6 Research Content and Framework

This paper mainly studies the development of TCM tourism in the western Anhui region from the perspective of industrial integration. After formally introducing the research through the introduction, the resource endowment of western Anhui is analyzed. Then, from the perspective of industrial integration, the current development status, problems, models, paths and countermeasures of TCM tourism in western Anhui are specifically pointed out. Finally, a summary and outlook are made.

## II. Analysis of TCM and Tourism Resource in West Anhui

### 2.1 Overview of West Anhui

Located in western Anhui Province, West Anhui covers the entire city of Lu'an and parts of Anqing City, stretching along the northern foothills of the Dabie Mountains and covering approximately 18,000 square kilometers. Lu'an City has a registered population of about 5.8 million and a resident population of around 4.5 million. The region is rich in tourism resources, with 16,950 registered tourism resource points in Lu'an alone, among which high-quality resources significantly contribute to local tourism development. In 2023, Lu'an received 57.1 million tourist visits, generating tourism revenue of 40.2 billion yuan, representing year-on-year increases of 25.49% and 11.05%, respectively. In 2024, tourist visits rose to 65 million, with revenue reaching 47.125 billion yuan, reflecting growth rates of 22.87% and 26.68%. In the first half of 2025, the region welcomed 39.85 million tourists, achieving tourism revenue of 29.8 billion yuan, up by 16.28% and 31.8% year-on-year, demonstrating sustained high-quality development in the cultural and tourism industry.

### 2.2 Analysis of TCM Resource Endowment

The Dabie Mountains in West Anhui are a key hub of medicinal herb resources in Anhui Province. The province has identified 3,578 varieties of medicinal herbs, with a cultivation area of 2.134 million mu and an output of 718,000 tons in 2019. Authentic medicinal materials from West Anhui are renowned for their quality. For instance, *Dendrobium huoshanense* has been included in the 2020 edition of the Chinese Pharmacopoeia, while *lingzhi* and *tianma* are listed as both medicinal and edible resources. By 2020, the province had established "Top Ten Anhui Medicinals" demonstration bases covering a total area of 127,452.2 mu, with an additional 41,053 mu newly added. Six authentic medicinal varieties from West Anhui—*Dendrobium huoshanense*, *lingzhi*, *fuling*, *duanxueliu*, *huangjing*, and *tianma*—have been selected as "Top Ten Anhui Medicinals," supported by four industrial demonstration bases and 16 development entities<sup>[11]</sup>. The distribution of these genuine medicinal materials exhibits distinct regional clustering. Specifically, *Dendrobium huoshanense* is primarily found in mountainous areas at 300 – 800 meters above sea level in Huoshan County. *Poria cocos* from Yuexi is concentrated in the high-altitude regions of Yuexi County. *Clinopodium polycephalum* is distributed throughout the Dabie Mountains. In 2020, 15 "Top Ten Anhui Medicinals" industrial demonstration bases were recognized, covering 11 varieties, including *xuanmugua*, *xuanzhou taizishen*, *huangjing*, *gongju*, *ningqianhu*, *gegen*, *jiangbaishao*, *fuling*, *Dendrobium huoshanense*, *lingzhi*, and *tianma*. Among these, *huangjing* has four bases, *gegen* has two, and the remaining varieties each have one. These bases are distributed across multiple counties and cities, including Xuancheng, Huangshan, Bozhou, Yuexi, Huoshan, and Jinzhai. Leveraging its medicinal resources and traditional cultivation advantages, West Anhui has successfully established several demonstration bases, forming significant industrial clusters for characteristic varieties such as *Dendrobium huoshanense*, *fuling*, and *tianma*. Relying on the unique natural conditions of the Dabie Mountains, these bases not only promote standardized and large-scale cultivation of medicinal herbs but also inject sustained momentum into local industrial integration and rural revitalization. The region

boasts profound traditional Chinese medicine cultural heritage, often referred to as the “Western Herbal Medicine Repository,” with historical connections to figures like Hua Tuo and Li Shizhen. The TCM service system is well-developed. By 2023, all counties in Lu’an had public TCM hospitals, with 148 registered TCM clinics. Lu’an Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine is a national top-tier hospital with 1,500 beds and hosts high-level talents, including nationally renowned TCM experts.

### 2.3 Analysis of Tourism Resource Endowment

#### 2.3.1 Natural Landscapes

West Anhui is abundant in natural landscapes, with the Dabie Mountains traversing the region. Tiantangzhai, a national 5A-level scenic area, received 54,800 tourist visits during the 2020 Qingming holiday, ranking first in Lu’an. The area’s forest coverage rate reaches 96.5%, making it an ideal destination for forest therapy and hiking. Water landscapes are centered around Wanfo Lake, the Pi River, and the Shi River. Wanfo Lake, a national water conservancy scenic area, covers a water surface of 50 square kilometers and includes over 60 islands. Hot spring resources in Huoshan, Jinzhai, and other areas feature water temperatures ranging from 45°C to 65°C year-round, rich in trace elements beneficial for wellness tourism. Often located in picturesque valleys, these hot springs have become key attractions.

#### 2.3.2 Cultural Landscapes

West Anhui features diverse cultural resources, integrating red culture, historical heritage, and tea culture into its tourism system. Red culture is particularly prominent: Jinzhai County, known as the “Number One Red Army County and Second General County in China,” is hailed as the “Cradle of the Red Army and Hometown of Generals.” The county preserves 215 revolutionary heritage sites with 259 specific points, including three national-level and ten provincial-level protected units <sup>[12]</sup>, forming a complete revolutionary heritage system. The region also has profound historical significance. Shou County, a national historical and cultural city, preserves sites such as the Song Dynasty ancient city wall, offering potential for developing historical-cultural experience zones and study tours. Qing Dynasty structures like Zizhu Temple, combined with red heritage sites, provide a foundation for “red + ancient” themed tourism. In terms of tea culture, Lu’an Guapian, one of China’s top ten teas, has its production techniques listed as national intangible cultural heritage. Spring tea-picking and processing experiences serve as important components of tea tourism integration, enriching ecotourism offerings.

Tab.1-1 Tea culture resources classification of Lu’an city

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	The Lu’an example	location
natural resources	geographical landscape	geological resources	Qishan Mountain, Tiantangzhai, Baimajian Peak	Jinzhai County, Jinzhai County, Huoshan County
		Landform Tourism Resources	Huoshan Grand Canyon, Yanzhihe Grand Canyon, West Anhui Grand Canyon	Huoshan County, Jinzhai County, Jin’an District
	aquatic landscape	river system	Meishan Reservoir, Xianghongdian Reservoir, Foziling Reservoir	Huoshan County, Jinzhai County, Huoshan County
		Lakes	Wanfu Lake	Shucheng County
		waterfall	Longjing Gorge, Tiantangzhai Waterfall Group, Emmenopterys henryi Waterfall	Huoshan County, Huoshan County, Shucheng County
		embankment	water gate pond	Huoxiu County
biological landscape	ancient trees	Bat Cave ancient Camellia sinensis tree, Twelve Sandalwood Ancient Tree Cluster	Jinzhai County	

### 2.4 Value and Advantages of Industrial Integration

The integration of traditional Chinese medicine and tourism in Western Anhui offers multiple benefits. Economically, it fosters new formats such as health tourism and wellness vacations, driving regional economic growth. Culturally, it promotes the preservation of Western Anhui’s heritage, traditional Chinese medicine schools, and intangible cultural heritage skills. Socially, it raises awareness of ecological and environmental protection. Policy-wise, it receives support and guarantees from both national and provincial levels. In terms of market, sustained demand and post-pandemic health tourism consumption create broad prospects. In summary, the integrated development of traditional Chinese medicine in Western Anhui benefits from complementary resources, favorable policies, and a vast market. Through scientific planning and innovative development, it holds the potential to become a nationally renowned health tourism destination, injecting new momentum into regional growth.

Tab. 1-1 Tea culture resources classification of Lu'an city

human resources	Ancient cultural relic	Old tea plantations	Qishan Bat Cave White Morus alba Garden	Camellia sinensis Garden, Xiaotian	Jinzhai County, Shucheng County
		Ancient Tea Route	Daoshichong Village Tea Horse Road	Camellia sinensis Ancient	Huoshan County
		Red heritage sites	Dabie Mountain Revolutionary Tangjia Hui Red Tourism Town	Memorial Hall,	Jin'an District Jinzhai County
	cultural remains	Cultural Heritage of Tea	Lu'an Guapian, Shucheng Camellia sinensis, Lu'an Xiangpian	Xiaolanhua, Huangda	
		Tea books, poetry, and paintings	Poetry on Camellia sinensis, Paintings of Camellia sinensis	Couplets on Camellia sinensis	
		tea ticket	camellia sinensis citation, camellia sinensis label number		
		Tea Dance	Picking camellia sinensis mountain songs and operas		
		Tea Language	Tea Proverb		
		Tea Ceremony	Respectfully offer the three rites of Camellia sinensis, the three rites of Camellia sinensis		
		Modern Camellia sinensis architectural affairs	The Legend of Tea	Golden Rooster Mountain God Camellia sinensis, the origin of stir-fried Guapian tea	
		Camellia sinensis tourism base	Lu'an Camellia sinensis Garden	Valley, 916 Camellia	Jinzhai County, Shucheng County
		Tea Museum	Lu'an Guapian Camellia Sinensis Cultural Exhibition Hall	Museum, Lu'an Guapian Camellia Sinensis	Jinzhai County, Yu'an District
		Camellia sinensis Travel Camping Base	See the landscape Camellia sinensis camping base	travel	Jinzhai County

### III. Analysis of TCM Tourism from the Perspective of Industrial Integration

#### 3.1 Development History and Main Modes

TCM tourism in western Anhui has evolved from initial exploration to diversified integration starting with visits to herb markets and planting bases and now featuring three mature models.

The tourism experience model encompasses visits to TCM cultural parks museums and cultivation bases. For instance, Jinzhai County hosts 663 TCM operators and 226 processing enterprises which has driven expansion in both the cultivation area and output of medicinal herbs.

The health and wellness model offers services such as medicinal diets hot spring baths massage and acupuncture. For instance, the Doushahe Hot Spring Town in Huoshan County is characterized by its TCM hot spring pools integrating Huoshan Dendrobium and poria cocos and other medicinal materials. It also built the Xishan Medicine Expo Garden and the National Medicine Hall and invited famous TCM practitioners to provide outpatient services.

The cultural and popular science model disseminates knowledge of TCM through study tours and cultural festivals. For instance, the Jiuxianzun Huoshan Dendrobium Cultural Museum in Jin'an District organizes educational visits for teenagers to observe the dendrobium production line. This approach deepens tourists' understanding by integrating resources such as museums and cultivation bases with methods like immersive experiences.

#### 3.2 Analysis of Existing Product System

TCM tourism in western Anhui leverages the rich medicinal resources and ecological advantages of the Dabie Mountain Area to establish a wellness tourism model. This model integrates cultivation and sightseeing, exhibitions, medicinal cuisine, hot spring therapy acupuncture and massage. From an industrial integration perspective, its product system is characterized by the coexistence of both shallow and deep integration.

##### Shallow Fusion Products:

The first type is the shallow resource sightseeing product. Such as TCM planting base sightseeing and museum visit. It is based on watching and listening with low participation. Tourists sightsee along the trail during the magnolia viewing in Wangchun Valley in Jinzhai County. Lu'an Youran Lanxi Baicao Garden focuses on Chinese herbal medicine. They are still at the core of cognitive tourism.

The second type is the shallow service experience product. Such as basic Chinese herbal hot springs. It is not integrated with the governance concept of dialectics. Huoshan Jinwanxi Hot Spring only adds medicinal materials without professional guidance. The TCM hot spring and massage services at the Xugu Hot Spring in the Dabie Mountains are still relatively basic.

##### Deeply Integrated Products:

The first product is a deep cultural experience type product. They achieve synergy effects through cross-border integration. For instance, the Doushahe Hot Spring Town has built an experience chain from "recognizing a hundred herbs" to

“making sachets”. Furthermore, it incorporates the concept of “medicinal cuisine” to deepen visitors’ cultural understanding.

The second product is a deep health and wellness product. They integrate health management into the entire tourism process and offer systematic solutions. The Huoshan Dabie Mountain Medicine Depot Base offers integrated services such as constitution identification and health care and convalescence. It has established a complete health and wellness system.

The third product is a deep-industry extension type product. These products expand the industry through the integration of diverse elements. For instance, Jiuxianzun Company develops health products and cultural creative goods derived from dendrobium combining practical value with cultural significance.

### 3.3 Main Existing Problems and Constraints

The level of integration is shallow and the products are highly homogeneous. The products are mainly for sightseeing and visiting. Western Anhui Province is home to 1866 kinds of wild medicinal plants and 35 kinds of rare medicinal materials. However, products from various regions lack in-depth experience content and differentiated advantages. For the entire province the main industries are the cultivation and primary processing of medicinal materials. The investment in product research and development is relatively small and the added value and technological content are low. The form is still dominated by traditional medical services lacking innovative mechanisms [13].

The short industrial chain leads to insufficient value exploration. For instance, Jin’an District has developed eight types of mugwort products. However, the overall value of the industrial chain has not been fully tapped. Insufficient development of health products that meet modern needs. The differentiation is not obvious and the market competitiveness is weak.

The brand has weak influence and lacks unified planning. Although western Anhui has signature products such as “Huoshan Dendrobium”. However, it failed to effectively integrate to form a brand synergy. Brand building is scattered across different regions. Most destinations do not clearly define the attributes of their product audiences and lack targeted marketing.

The lack of professional talents limits the service capacity. The western Anhui region urgently needs compound talents who are proficient in both TCM and tourism management. At present, practitioners generally lack cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills. The cross-disciplinary talent training mechanism is not sound.

Lack of industrial resource sharing mechanism. There are obvious barriers between industries and the degree of resource integration is not high. For instance, the development of Chinese herbal medicine in Jinzhai still remains at the primary industry model. Its herbal resources are solely for sale and are rarely used for deep processing. There is almost no integration with other industries, and the utilization of the Internet is also nearly zero [14].

The infrastructure and service support are incomplete. Many projects are located in remote areas and the quality of services varies greatly. In particular professional explanations and experience guidance are insufficient. It also affects tourists’ understanding of cultural connotations.

### 3.4 Questionnaire Survey

In order to provide more effective development suggestions, a questionnaire survey was conducted in this study. The main content of the survey focused on the views of international tourists regarding health tourism based on TCM. The sampling method for the questionnaire is random sampling. A total of 128 foreigners were interviewed in the questionnaire survey. According to Table 2, the questionnaire survey shows that international tourists’ perception of TCM tourism exhibits the characteristics of “high interest but low understanding”. 89.4% of the respondents show curiosity and interest in Eastern culture, but 57.5% were merely at the initial stage of “having heard about it but not understanding it”. This indicates that TCM has significant appeal, but its theoretical connotations and regional characteristics have not yet been widely understood. In terms of the content of the experience, projects that are highly perceptible and interactive are the most popular, such as traditional therapies like acupuncture and massage and traditional Chinese health-preserving food and medicine. The popularity rates of the two are 77.9% and 69.9% respectively. This indicates that the western part of Anhui Province can leverage the medicinal resources of the Dabie Mountains and the intangible cultural heritage skills to create a distinctive TCM tourism experience product that reflects the characteristics of the western Anhui region. Moreover, 55.8% of the tourists have experienced confusion due to cultural differences. This indicates that language services and the internationalized interpretation system have become the main bottleneck restricting the depth of the experience. In conclusion, the development of TCM tourism in western Anhui can focus on breaking through the bottlenecks of cross-cultural communication and international service, and deeply integrate local tourism and cultural resources, thereby transforming the cultural appeal and tourism ecological resources into sustainable industrial value.

Table 2 Analysis of Questionnaire on Health Tourism Perception, Experience, and Consumption Intention in Traditional Chinese Medicine

Specific Indicators	Classification	Number/% (top 2 items)
Level of Understanding of Traditional Chinese Medicine	I heard about it, but I don't know	65(57.5%)
	Have some understanding	32(28.3%)
Most Attractive Items (multiple choice)	Experience traditional therapies such as acupuncture and massage	88(77.9%)
	Tasting Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Food	79(69.9%)
Experience Motivation (multiple choice)	Curiosity and interest in Oriental culture	101(89.4%)
	Seek unique and novel travel experiences	95(84.1%)

Specific Indicators	Classification	Number/% (top 2 items)
Service Evaluation (satisfaction)	Experience the comfort and cleanliness of the environment	61 (71%)
Confusion and Barriers Caused by Cultural Differences Methods for Understanding Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture (multiple choice)	Professionalism and Safety of Services	53 (68%)
	Occasionally, but not significantly	63(55.8%)
Premium Experience Payment (half a day)	Provide easy-to-understand multilingual narration or an app	98(86.7%)
	Use modern scientific principles or visualization tools	85(75.2%)
Premium Experience Payment (half a day)	50~100\$	49(43.4%)
	101~200\$	38(33.6%)

#### IV. Model Construction and Path Selection of TCM Tourism

##### 4.1 Goals and Principles of Integrated Development

Industrial integration is an important driving force for promoting industrial upgrading and regional economic development. Based on the unique resource endowment, industrial foundation and development opportunities of the western Anhui region, the overarching goal of the development of TCM tourism in the region is established. Rooted in the abundant natural ecological resources and profound TCM cultural heritage of the Dabie Mountain Revolutionary Old Base Area, the goal seeks to integrate the TCM industry with tourism. This integration will be driven by institutional innovation, product innovation, and technology enablement to achieve development across a broader scope, at deeper levels, and to higher standards. The overarching goal is to establish Western Anhui as a distinctive, service-excellent, highly effective, and nationally renowned “Chinese Dabie Mountain TCM Health and Tourism Destination”.

To ensure the realization of the above-mentioned overall goals, the integrated development of TCM and tourism in western Anhui must adhere to the following basic principles. The principle of specialization emphasizes that characteristics are the vitality of industrial integration. The development of western Anhui must not simply imitate other regions. It is necessary to deeply explore its unique characteristics. The principle of branding is that on the basis of specialization, implementing a branding strategy is the key to enhancing regional competitiveness and achieving sustainable development. The principle of sustainability means that the development of TCM tourism must be based on the long term and adhere to the organic unity of economic benefits, social benefits and ecological benefits.

##### 4.2 Construction of Multi-level Integration Model

Industrial chain extension and integration model aims to vertically integrate the TCM industry with the tourism industry from upstream to downstream, forming a complete industrial chain covering “planting, processing, experience and consumption”. As Tao Hongjiao pointed out, Zhangshu, known as the “Medicine Capital of China”, has set up a scenic area for “exploring the source of medicine” and a museum for “visiting the history of medicine”. Furthermore, the city has developed a cultural tourism street for “tasting medicinal cuisine”, and a Chinese medicinal materials market for “purchasing medicinal materials”, initiatives that have received a positive public response<sup>[15]</sup>. The upstream extension of Western Anhui can transform the TCM planting bases into tourist attractions. After building the “Dabie Mountain Medicine Garden” and the “Wild-like Cultivation Garden”, it is not limited to visits but can develop the “I Am a Medicine Farmer” experience project. The downstream extension is achieved by setting up venues to showcase and teach intangible cultural heritage techniques, establishing transparent workshops and experience areas, as well as developing new dendrobium products and health tea beverages to extend the industrial chain.

Functional complementary integration model emphasizes the horizontal integration of the core functions of TCM and the diverse functions of tourism. In the western Anhui region, integrating TCM health preservation with tourism and vacation, TCM elements can be deeply integrated into hot spring resorts and high-end homestays, launching distinctive services such as “Medicinal Bath in Hot springs” and “TCM sachets for Sleep”. By integrating TCM health preservation with tourism and mountain climbing, the western Anhui region can design theme products such as “Mountain climbing and hiking + Chinese medicine Identification” and “Forest Tai Chi + Breathing Guidance”. By integrating TCM health preservation with tourism study Tours, the western Anhui region can offer the “TCM Around Us” study tour courses, which include learning acupoint massage, making TCM sachets, etc.

Technology penetration and integration model employs modern technology to enhance the quality of experience and service efficiency, achieving intelligent integration. Song Meng pointed out that digital technology has restructured the boundaries of tourism enterprises and significantly enhanced the intelligent infrastructure and public service levels of cultural and tourism<sup>[16]</sup>. The western part of Anhui Province can build a digital TCM museum. Through AR scanning, the 3D models of medicinal materials, their properties, flavors, meridians and related legends can be presented, and VR can be used to simulate the process of famous doctors diagnosing or picking medicinal materials. Personalized health management plans can also be generated for tourists through physical constitution identification questionnaires and smart wearable devices, covering medicinal diet recipes, health-preserving exercises and physical therapy project recommendations.

##### 4.3 Selection of Differentiated Development Paths

To avoid homogenized competition, various regions in western Anhui should implement differentiated development based on their resource endowments.

The core leading path is suggested to take “Dabie Mountains” as the core, build “China Dabie Mountains TCM Health Tourism Destination” to high standards, and create a regional leading project and image window.

To break through barriers between different types, the regional linkage pathway requires proactive engagement with tourist source markets such as Hefei, Anqing, and Xinyang in Henan Province. Collaborative planning should be undertaken to develop a golden route for Dabie Mountain TCM health tourism, advancing mutual tourist referrals, resource sharing, and joint brand building. This approach aims to enhance the overall competitiveness of the region.

The “TCM +” multi-path approach focuses on promoting the in-depth integration of TCM with the existing tourism formats in western Anhui. Develop “Red Culture + TCM Health Preservation” courses in red sacred places such as Jinzhai, and provide health care services in combination with historical narratives. Strengthen the theme of “forest health and wellness” in national forest parks such as Tiantangzhai and Wanfo Mountain, and develop characteristic products. Design research and study products for the student group and build a popular science education base for TCM. At the same time, rural inns and homestays are encouraged to offer experiences such as medicinal cuisine, herb picking and drying, to contribute to rural revitalization.

#### 4.4 Suggestions for Spatial Layout Optimization

The western Anhui region can build a networked spatial development pattern featuring “one core leading, two belts driving and multiple points supporting”. First of all, the “One Core” refers to the Dabie Mountain TCM Health Tourism Destination in China, which showcases the highest level of TCM tourism in western Anhui. Secondly, the two belts refer to: (1) The mountain and water health experience belt follows the Dabie Mountain tourist route, connecting natural scenic spots such as Tiantangzhai, Yanzihe Grand Canyon and Gongzhai. This zone focuses on developing industries such as sightseeing and vacation, mountain sports, and forest health preservation. (2) The cultural health and leisure belt is part of the water conservancy project along Pishi Xing, relying on water resources such as Wanfo Lake and Foziling Reservoir. This zone focuses on developing peaceful and health-preserving products such as hot spring therapy, Zen meditation and health preservation, and lakeside homestays. Finally, “Multiple Points” refers to the characteristic nodes in other counties and districts of Lu’an City. Yu’an District should focus on the revolutionary site cluster of Dushan, develop “red + health preservation”. Shucheng County should take the Tangchi Hot Spring of Wanfo Mountain as the core and develop “mountain and water hot spring + health care”. Yeji District and Huoqiu County should take advantage of the characteristics of the plain areas to develop large-scale cultivation and tourism of traditional Chinese medicinal materials, etc. Each point develops in a complementary way, forming an organic whole with the “one core and two belts” that is functionally complementary and features a smooth flow of tourists.

### V. Suggestions of TCM Tourism in Western Anhui

#### 5.1 The Government Level of the Policy System and Optimize the Development Environment

##### 5.1.1 Strengthen Top-level Design and Planning

The government should formulate regional development plans to clearly define industrial positioning and phased goals, which can prevent resource waste and project homogenization. Top-level design can provide a unified direction for local governments and enterprises, enabling TCM tourism to complement each other in spatial layout and functional division of labor, and promoting cross-regional linkage.

##### 5.1.2 Establish a Special Support Fund

The government should establish a special fund for traditional TCM tourism and guide social capital into fields such as health care, cultural tourism and health management through fiscal subsidies, interest-subsidized loans and risk compensation<sup>[17]</sup>. The establishment of the fund can not only relieve the investment pressure on enterprises, but also encourage more innovative projects to be implemented.

##### 5.1.3 Simplify the Approval Process

The government can shorten the processing cycle through a “one-stop” approval platform and information technology means. After simplifying the process, enterprises can advance project application and implementation more quickly, which will enhance the participation of social capital and boost the vitality of the TCM tourism industry in western Anhui.

##### 5.1.4 Formulate Industry Standards

The government can establish unified norms around convalescence procedures, health care services, medicinal diet and tourism reception, etc., to ensure the health and safety of tourists. Standardization construction can reduce service differences and enhance the brand influence of western Anhui in the field of TCM tourism.

#### 5.2 Enterprise Level of Innovate Product Formats and Build Core Brands

##### 5.2.1 Develop In-depth Experience Products

Enterprises can launch health and wellness packages that combine acupuncture and physiotherapy, massage and health care, and medicinal diet health preservation, providing tourists with immersive experiences<sup>[18]</sup>. Through customized treatment courses, the health preservation functions are integrated with leisure and vacation to meet the health needs of different groups.

##### 5.2.2 Build the Public Brand of “Health Preservation in Western Anhui”

Enterprises can integrate regional resources, unify their image and shape the brand of “Health Preservation in Western Anhui”, which can enhance tourists’ trust. The establishment of a public brand not only facilitates overall promotion but also reduces disorderly competition, making the regional image more distinct.

##### 5.2.3 Promote the Construction of Smart Tourism

By applying big data platforms and artificial intelligence technologies, enterprises can achieve analysis of tourists’ demands and personalized recommendations. Build a smart tour guide system and an online reservation platform to provide tourists with a convenient experience, while enhancing the service efficiency and management level of enterprises.

#### 5.3 Talent Level of Cultivate Professional Teams and Enhance Service Quality

##### 5.3.1 Cooperate with Universities and Vocational Schools for Targeted Training

The government should collaborate with universities and vocational colleges to offer relevant professional courses such as TCM health care and tourism management, forming a stable talent supply channel to provide long-term support for the development of the industry.

#### 5.3.2 Introduce High-end Talents

The government has attracted the participation of TCM experts, tourism brand planners and health and wellness project operators by introducing preferential policies, thereby promoting the growth of local teams. Housing subsidies, scientific research support and the construction of entrepreneurial platforms are effective ways to enhance attractiveness.

#### 5.3.3 Systematically Train Existing Employees

Enterprises should carry out systematic training for existing tourism service personnel, enabling tour guides, waiters and managers to master basic knowledge of TCM and reception skills, thereby enhancing tourists' satisfaction and improving the overall reputation.

### 5.4 Market Level of Strengthen Integrated Marketing and Expand the Customer Source Market

#### 5.4.1 Combine Online and Offline Channels to Disseminate Health Preservation Stories

The government and enterprises showcase the unique value of TCM culture and natural environment in western Anhui through documentaries, short videos and cultural festival activities.

Online platforms expand the scope of dissemination, while offline experience activities enhance the sense of immersion.

The combination of the two can form a complete communication closed loop.

#### 5.4.2 Precise Marketing Targeting Key Customer Groups

For different customer groups, enterprises should implement differentiated promotion strategies: The elderly prefer leisure and health care, and can recommend quiet rest bases and slow-paced treatment courses. People in a sub-healthy state should pay attention to conditioning and stress relief. Massage therapy and medicinal diet conditioning can be promoted. The study tour group emphasizes knowledge and interactivity, and can design study tour routes such as medicinal herb cultivation and medicinal diet cooking.

#### 5.4.3 Cooperate with Travel Agencies and Platforms

The government and enterprises should cooperate with large travel agencies and OTA platforms, leveraging their mature marketing and sales systems to rapidly expand the scale of customer sources. By launching joint routes, the brand influence of TCM tourism in western Anhui will be effectively disseminated on a larger scale.

## VI. Conclusion and Outlook

This study, based on the perspective of industrial integration, systematically explores the current development status, resource endowment and optimization path of traditional Chinese medicine tourism in the western Anhui region. Research shows that industrial integration is the core driving force for promoting the high-quality development of traditional Chinese medicine tourism in western Anhui. The western Anhui region should build a deep integration model of "traditional Chinese medicine culture + tourism experience + health care services" in a trinity. This integration model creates distinctive tourism products by vertically extending the industrial chain, horizontally integrating traditional Chinese medicine and tourism, and permeating digital technology. Under the guidance of policies, the drive of the market, the empowerment of technology and diversified marketing, a spatial development pattern of "one core leading, two belts driving and multiple points supporting" is achieved. The innovation of this research lies in focusing on the western Anhui region and systematically sorting out its resources and integration potential. It also applied the theory of industrial integration to construct a multi-dimensional analysis framework, filling the gap in regional research. Due to the limitations of the research cycle, empirical data show deficiencies in both breadth and depth. Moreover, no quantitative analysis work on aspects such as tourist satisfaction was carried out during the research process. In addition, the evaluation index system for industrial integration degree has not yet been established, which has an impact on the accuracy of the research conclusion. In the future, the traditional Chinese medicine tourism in western Anhui should establish an evaluation system for the degree of industrial integration and strengthen the micro-empirical research on specific projects. By exploring the empowerment paths of digital technologies such as VR/AR, a sustainable development mechanism can be established. Achieve the coordinated development of economic, social and ecological benefits, and help the region become an important health and wellness tourism destination in the Yangtze River Delta.

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