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A wellness tour package proposal for Vietnamese customers: Saigon Star Travel company



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Abstract

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The purpose of the thesis is to create a wellness tour package proposal for Vietnamese customers. The research was conducted for the sake of the commissioning party, Saigon Star Travel, a Vietnamese travel agency that wanted to have new ideas for its wellness products.

Different concepts are discussed in the theoretical part, such as wellbeing and wellness, wellness in cultural contexts, wellness tourism, and tourism product. These theories explain the nature, the characteristics of wellness in cultural concepts, wellness tourism, and tourism products, which helps to suggest appropriate tour packages proposal.

The author used qualitative research to solve the research problems. Semi-structure interviews were conducted via email and internet to clarify the issue and have insights of tourism experts and their advice on implementing a wellness tour in Vietnam. The findings show that a Vietnamese wellness tour has different criteria from a foreign wellness tour, such as the activities, the duration of the tour package, and the accommodation.

Applying advice from the tourism experts and the research, the author proposed four ideas, and the commissioning party chose one idea. The scale of the thesis stops at presenting proposal to the commissioning party. The chosen proposal will be tested later by the commissioning party itself.

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1 Introduction

According to the Global Wellness Institute (n.d.), wellness tourism is the intersection of the tourism and wellness industry, the two big industries. Since 2012, the number of countries promoting wellness on their national tourism website has grown by more than 60%, from 13 to 21 countries. Across the Asian region, demand for all types of wellness experiences rises tremendously, from sound therapy to tai chi, meditation to spiritual guidance. Asian-Pacific has grown faster than other regions regarding investments and openings for hotels/resort spas. Furthermore, more and more Asian hotels and resorts advertise their spas and wellness packages to meet the growing demand for wellness retreats and interest in many themes, such as yoga, meditation, detox, and fitness/boot camp. (Global Wellness Tourism , 2018).

Then came unexpectedly the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the tourism industry heavily. Though wellbeing tourism has been negatively influenced during the pandemic, GWI (Global Wellness Institute) predicts wellness tourism will grow 20.9% from 2020 to 2025. GWI notes that domestic and international wellness travelers spend more than average tourists even during the pandemic (Global Wellness Institute, 2021, pp. 10-11, 23).

Tourism has been one of the major sectors in the economy of Vietnam in recent years. However, the pandemic has negatively impacted the world economy and tourism business. Vietnam is also one of the affected countries. In recent days, domestic tourism has been recovering in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2021). At a tourism conference, it was said that in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, more people were paying attention to wellness and healthcare activities as people need to take care of their health (Huong, 2021, as cited in Duong, 2021). In addition, Tourism expert Nguyen Van Luu also mentioned that wellness tourism would grow faster in the coming years. Therefore, Huong stated that wellbeing tourism would vary Vietnamese tourism products for domestic and foreign customers (as cited in Duong, 2021).

However, wellbeing tourism is still new in Vietnam. Though having great potential to develop this kind of tourism, such as favorable climate and various sources of mineral water, wellness tourism is not fully exploited (Dinh, 2021 as cited in Duong,2021). Furthermore, the "wellness" term is new, and the meaning is understood differently in the Vietnamese context. Besides, Vietnamese tourism companies usually divide tour programs based on regions, such as Southern tours, Northern tours, and more, but not the types of tours, namely wellbeing tours, adventure tours, slow tourism.

Nevertheless, Saigon Star Travel company is one of a few Vietnamese tourism companies categorizing tour packages based on their kinds. The company has had three wellness tour packages and wants more wellbeing tours. Therefore, the study on creating a proposal wellness tour package for Vietnamese customers is necessary.

2 Purpose, research problem, research questions, objectives, and commissioning party

In this chapter, the author will present the purpose of the thesis, the research problems, research questions, objectives, and the brief introduction of the commissioning party.

2.1 Purpose

The author chooses this topic because she sees the potential of wellness tourism in Vietnam. However, it is still new in Vietnam. Therefore, as a tourism student studying wellbeing tourism, the author wants to contribute a small part to creating and catching the attention of Vietnamese customers to wellness tourism. For that reason, the author wants to suggest a more relaxing holiday for Vietnamese consumers

2.2 Research problem

A semi-structured interview with Mrs. Thanh Thuy, a team member of Saigon Star Travel, was conducted. According to Thuy (2022), Saigon Star Travel started wellness tourism recently, after the announcement of the conference “Development of wellness tourism in Vietnam” conducted on October 6th, 2021. Therefore, wellness tourism is also still new to them. The company also believed that Vietnam has great potential to develop wellness tourism. Though not many customers have heard of wellness tour packages, Saigon Star Travel believes wellness tours in Vietnam would attract more customers.

After studying and researching, they decided to have their first wellness tour packages by combining the well-known wellness activities, such as yoga, and meditation, with the common Vietnamese wellness activities, such as acupuncture, and spa. So far, the company has had three wellness tour packages. Though Saigon Star Travel wanted new ideas for their wellness products, they had not thought of any ideas. Additionally, they saw the potential of wellness tourism, but the company did not know how to take use of the potential (Thuy, 2022).

2.3 Research questions

For the reasons above, the research is necessary to specify key problems:

The research questions are:

- Why should Saigon Star Travel develop a new wellness tour package in Vietnam?
- What is the potential of a wellness tour package in Vietnam?
- What is a suitable wellness tour for Vietnamese customers?

2.4 Research objectives

In general, the study aims to know how to build a wellness tour package, thereby offering a suitable well-being tour for Saigon Star Travel. To specify, there are three objectives:

- To help Saigon Star Travel have a new product idea.
- To understand the well-being in the Vietnamese context.
- To take use of the potential in Vietnam for wellness tourism.

Saigon Star Travel thrives on the number of innovations as new innovations in services produce high service and value perceptions in customers (L. Hollebeek, E. Jaakola & M. Alexander, 2018). Accordingly, the company targets to promote the image of having wellness tour packages. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to increase the public Vietnamese awareness of travel as a key for improving overall well-being. This research is not only beneficial to Saigon Star Travel but also for those who want to create wellness tour packages in Vietnam in the future.

2.5 Commissioning party

The commissioning party is Saigon Star Travel, a Vietnamese travel agency in Ho Chi Minh City. Since the establishment in 2011, Saigon Star Company has enhanced and developed into one of

the recommended and reliable travel agencies in Ho Chi Minh City trusted by many customers. The company's mission is to give customers new and unique tours that are suitable for every customer, family and every business.

Regarding the tour proposal, the company wants the tourist destinations to be different from its existing wellness product. The tours can have either or not yoga or meditation programs, and they can take place in new destinations, surrounded by the nature and it is not widely known for holiday destinations. The author only needs to inform the tour idea and the rough prices for the commissioning party. Saigon Star Travel does not need the marketing plan for the proposal.

3 Theories and concepts

In this chapter, related theories and concepts such as well-being, understanding of wellbeing, wellbeing and wellness, tourism products, and new tourism product development product process, in Vietnamese culture to name a few, will be presented.

3.1 Wellbeing and the importance of wellbeing

According to Simons and Baldwin (2021), "There is no international consensus definition of 'well-being' " so well-being can be understood in many ways.

To the Cambridge dictionary, well-being is the state of feeling healthy and happy. From these definitions, it can be seen health plays an important role in well-being (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Nef (2012, p. 6) defines wellbeing as "how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole". To Nef, wellbeing is a much broader concept than happiness. It is about how people feel satisfied with their whole life. Still, positive feelings like happiness can lead to overall better well-being.

WHO (World Health Organization) stated: " Wellbeing exists in two dimensions, subjective and objective. It comprises individual's experience of their life as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values" (WHO, 2012). Furthermore, well-being is multidimensional. It contributes to the health and vice versa as it is a determinant of health but also a result of it (WHO, 2012). Therefore, well-being is an important part of health.

To WHO (World health organization), health enables social, economic and personal development to well-being (WHO, 1986). People with higher wellbeing also have a better health (WHO , 2010).

3.2 Wellbeing and wellness

Most people use the words "wellness" and "wellbeing" interchangeably. However, these two words are somehow different from each other (Global Wellness Institute, 2016). Purcell (2018) states his opinion that wellness in "workplace wellness" usually refers to programs addressing physical ailments or conditions (such as high blood pressure, diabetes, ...). Well-being, on the

other hand, is more than physical health, and it considers the entire person, both body and soul. To Badylzhanov (2017), well-being consists of two main components: our life satisfaction and our comfort in the present situation. A healthy environment and relationships with others affect an individual's well-being. Meanwhile, wellness is more about an individual journey to happiness (National Wellness Institute, 2020). Myers et al (2000) defines wellness as a lifestyle towards optimal health and individual's wellbeing to live more fully with the people around them. Well-being can be understood as environmental factors impacting our health and wellness, while wellness is a mental and emotional journey (Badylzhanov, 2017). To Pendell (2021), wellness describes a healthy lifestyle beyond acute illness. It refers to a state of physical health in which people have the ability and energy to do what they want to do in life, without chronic suffering.

In conclusion, well-being is how a person feel satisfied with life and comforted in life. Wellness, on the other hand, is a lifestyle towards being healthy. Therefore, the writer will use the term "wellness" in this work when mentioning the treatments and the tour package since the tour includes the activities that help people get towards optimal health and wellbeing.

3.3 Wellness tourism and its benefit

Voigt et al. (2011, p.17) define wellness tourism as a sum of all relationships from a journey by people whose motive is to maintain their well-being and health, and they stay at least a night at places designed to enhance physical, mental, and/or social well-being. The Global Spa Summit (2011) shares the same thought that wellness tourism involves travelers looking for authentic or local experiences and activities to improve their health and well-being.

According to Global Wellness Institute, wellness tourism is travel associated with the purpose of maintaining or enhancing/improving one's wellbeing (physical, mental, social). Well-being travelers are usually motivated by the desire for healthy living, disease prevention, stress reduction and/ or authentic experience. The activities are proactive, voluntary and non-medical in nature. Wellbeing tourism is not medical tourism. Medical travel is travel to receive treatment for a diagnosed disease, or condition, or to seek enhancement. Travellers are motivated by the low cost of care and/or care are not available at home. Activities are often foreseen by doctors, and or reactive to illnesses (Wellness Tourism , n.d.).

Wellness tourism has a positive impact on human health. In a study, participants felt positive changes in their health and wellbeing after being in a 5-day Panchakarma-based Ayurvedic intervention which included herbs, a vegetarian diet, meditation, yoga, and massage (Peterson, et al., 2016). A study in Australia showed that after participating in a week residential retreat, improvements were lasting in six weeks in multiple dimensions of health and wellbeing of the participants. In the study, significant improvements in mood and self-efficacy of the participants sustained for six weeks. Sleep quality, stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms also showed good signs though they did not maintain for six weeks. (Cohen, Elliott, Oates, Schembri & Mantri, 2017). Another Austrian study demonstrated that sleep quality improved among participants during a 3-week resort stay. Their positive mood also increased during their stay at the resort. Regarding the adaptation when coming home, positive mood decreased significantly in the first week. Though the quality of sleep decreased, it went down gradually. (Blasche, Muhry, Lehofer, Moser & Marktl, 2004, pp. 293-309). In addition, a study showed the connection between the consumer experience, satisfaction of leisure and non-leisure, and quality of life in wellbeing tourism. The results show that consumer experience affects leisure satisfaction, which gives a rise to non-leisure satisfaction. Further, non-leisure and leisure satisfaction benefit the quality of life of customers. (Luo, Lanlung, Kim, Tang & Song, 2017, pp. 410-424).

As can be seen, the more time people engage in wellbeing lifestyle, the longer the improvements in the result maintain. Therefore, it would be great when the Vietnamese know the benefits of wellness tourism and start to have a healthier lifestyle after being in a wellness tour.

3.4 Wellness in cultural context

In the following, the thesis will be about how cultural backgrounds affect the understanding of the term "wellness" in other regions and Vietnam.

3.4.1 Cultural differences in understandings of wellness

To Smith and Puczko (2014, pp. 6-7), the term "wellness" is commonly used and wellness is different among cultures. In Central, Eastern Europe, and the Baltic States, it is about physical and medical therapeutic healing. Treatments are related to mud, and medical water, and tend to be

curative for specific physical conditions. In Western Europe, wellness treatments focus on pampering, relaxation, or stress management. In Asian countries, the concept of energy flow, balance creation (e.g., Reiki, Feng Shui) are applied in healing forms. Water also plays an important role of Asian wellness treatments (e.g., Japanese Onsen, South Korean jimjibang culture).

Similarly, Hunt (2020) mentions the cultural concept of wellbeing in European countries. In Italy, fangothrapy (mud treatments and wraps) is widely known. In Finland, contrast therapy, which is being in the sauna then immersing oneself in cold water and repeat the steps, is a traditional experience. In The Netherlands, people usually have uitwaaien which refers to spending the time in wild or going for a walk or a bike ride.

Likewise, the Global Wellness Summit (2020, p. 16) expresses that the traditions, lifestyle of a region define approaches and its natural resources shape the meaning of wellness. For example, in Africa, the natural environment and traditional spirituality received high importance as assets for tourism. Therefore, hotels and resort spas are popular in Africa.

3.4.2 Vietnamese understanding of health and wellness

Long ago, Vietnamese people believed that health was the balance and harmony of two basic opposing forces, yin (cold, dark, female) and yang (hot, bright, male). An excess of either force may lead to discomfort or illness, and life was short when the balance was not proper (Purnell, 2014, p. 425). Similarly, Spector (2013, p. 358) states that health in the Vietnamese context a long time ago is about the balance of a person, within one's being – physical, mental, and spiritual, and in the outside world, natural, communal, and metaphysical. Illness is the state of imbalance among the body, mind, and spirit (Spector, 2013, p. 359).

Due to concepts of balance, Vietnamese traditional wellness treatments were about maintaining the balance of yin and yang. Following are some treatments that are believed to balance the yin and yang within a body when a person is sick or feels unwell.

Coin rubbing (cao gio) is a method of using hot oil balm to produce purple marks (ecchymosis) on the back (Yeatman & Dang, 1980). However, it can be used to abuse children and even lead to suicide (Davis, 2005). With cupping, practitioners use heated glasses similar to small bowls and place them on the treatment spot, forming a suction effect that leaves red marks (Manz, 2020, pp. 3-4). Both cupping and coin rubbing are believed to draw out the bad forces or pollutants and

correct the imbalances within the body that are causing illness or discomfort (Huang,2004; Vitale & Prashad, 2017).

Acupuncture and acupressure are about the concepts of channels (meridians) in which the Qi (energy or life force) flowed in the body (Stuart, 2021). Acupuncture is done with hair-thin needles, inserted to a point that produces a sensation of pressure or ache. (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2022). Acupressure is a type of acupuncture. In acupressure, muscular tension is released by applying pressure with a hand at specific acupoints or pressure of the thumbs on specific points, or the application of pressure to acupoints is used to balance the flow of the physiological energy. (Tournaire & Theau-Yonneau, 2007).

Herbal steaming is also a traditional Vietnamese wellness treatment. Herbs are boiled in a large pot for 15-20 minutes. Then people will undress and sit on a stool, covering up with a blanket beside the pot for 10 to 20 minutes, depends on their health condition (Bentley, 2022)

As time goes by, there are new wellness treatments in Vietnam, which are hot springs, mud baths and massages. In 1928, a French doctor named Sallet discovered the hot mineral spring in his survey of southern Vietnam. In 1988, Binh Chau Province wanted to develop the place into a tourist attraction and the effort was made in 2003. Since then, Binh Chau is famous for the hot spring in Vietnam (VNS, 2011). In 1995, the muddy dunes started to appear in the small local town of Ninh Hoa. In 1998, Mr. Ho Tan had an idea of combining both mineral mud and mineral water in one place and made a relaxing attraction for both locals and visitors of Nha Trang (Tam Bun Thap Ba, 2018).

About Vietnam massages, Garfinkel (2017) mentions that he could not find a solely Vietnamese massage method. A massager named Bac Ha explained that the Vietnamese spa concept was a combination of Chinese and French styles; therefore, there was no one-hundred-percent Vietnamese style (as cited in Garfinkel, 2017).

Except coin rubbing and cupping, wellness spas, resorts and hotels still offer other wellness treatments, though services of herbal steaming are not as many as other treatments. Besides, some wellness resorts offer therapies from foreign countries, yoga and mediations for the wellness programs (Bui, 2022).

3.5 Tourism product

According to Medlik and Middleton (1973, p.138), tourism product is a bundle of activities, services and benefits that constitute the tourism experience. Consequently, the tourist product can be equally a total travel experience.

Likewise, Koutoulas (2004, p. 2), tourism products can be understood on two levels:

- The tourist product is a combination of all the elements, which a tourist consumes during the trip. The tourist product can be seen as a total travel experience.
- The product consists of services such as accommodation, transport, attractions, and other facilities.

In the following the tourism product will be analyzed from two perspectives.

3.5.1 Tourist product as an experience

Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) define the tourist experience as an interaction between tourists and destinations. Clawson & Knetsch (1966, as cited in Cutler & Carmichael, 2010) see that the planning and preparation phases, as well as post-traveling phase, are also parts of the tourist experience. To Quan & Wang (2004, p. 298), there are two approaches to tourist experiences: the social science approach and the marketing/management approach. Regarding the social science approach, tourist experience is the opposite of daily experience, as tourists choose a way to experience what is different from their daily activities, and daily lives. With the marketing approach, the experience is seen as a commercial exchange relationship between the tourists and the suppliers or service providers.

Pile & Gilmore (1999) define experience as an event that involves the person at an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level. The event has dimensions that show how much customers participate and how deeply they get involved with the event. The degree of participation goes from totally passive to active engagement. The range of how deep the involvement is from simple absorption to total immersion.

Schmitt (2000) writes experience is a process of how customers think, act, feel, sense, and relate to a product. Similarly, Tarssanen and Kylänen (2007) describe an experience in stages, from motivational, physical, and intellectual levels to emotional, and mental levels. The motivational level usually is about positive emotions with the products and the yearning for belonging and owning. The physical level shows how multisensory supports the connection to the product. Then the next level is the intellectual level which indicates the applying knowledge and forming ideas. The following stage is the emotional level involves a meaningful experience with the product from the customer. The final stage of the experience pyramid is the mental level, which may lead to a personal transformation, either the state of mind or lifestyle (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2007). There are elements of the consumer experience: including individuality, authenticity, story, multisensory perception, contrast, and interaction. First, individuality is uniqueness, something new, not ubiquitous. The second element is authenticity that indicates the credibility decided by the customer to the product. Next, contrary refers to non-daily activities, experiences, which emphasizes the difference. The following element is the multisensory perception that highlights the chosen theme from carefully designed sensory perceptions. Finally, interaction indicates successful communication between the products and the customers. (Tarssanen and Kylänen , 2007).

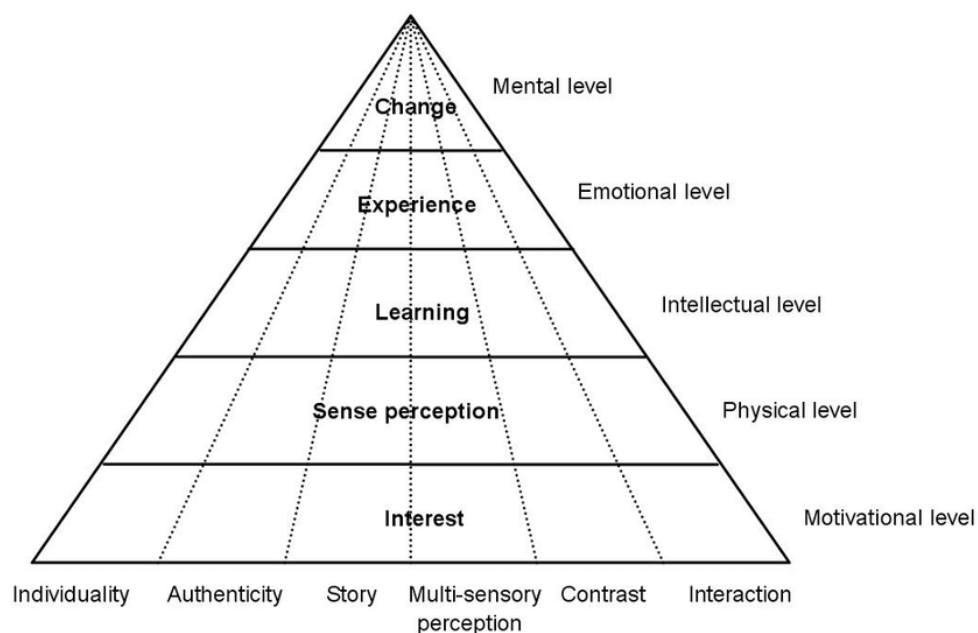


Figure 1. Experience pyramid (Tarssanen and Kylänen , 2007)

3.5.2 Tourism product with components

Tourism product can be analyzed from the product levels. According to Kotler (2017, pp 255-261), a product always has the core, facilitating, supporting, and augmented product. The core product is the most basic level that answers why customers choose that product. The facilitating product is the services that have to be presented for the consumer to use the core product. The supporting product is the extra products offered to add more value to the core product. Then the augmented product is the additional consumer services built around the actual product. The augmented product includes accessibility, atmosphere, customer interaction with the service organization, customer participation, and customer interaction with each other. The augmented product is an important concept because hospitality and travel services require customer coproduction of the service.

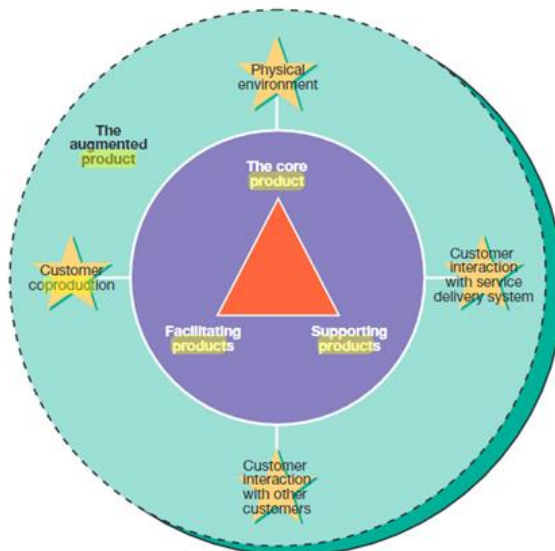


Figure 2. Product levels (Kotler, 2017, p. 254)

A tourist product can be seen as a tour package. The customer perceives the tour package as an experience that is available at a price (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan & Ranchhod, 2009, p. 120). There are five main components:

- Destination attractions and environment: including natural attractions, built attractions, cultural attractions, social attractions
- Destination facilities and services: accommodation units, restaurants, transportation at the destination, sports/interest/adventure/activity, and other services.

- Accessibility of the destination: transport aspects of the products which affect the cost and convenience of the destination
- Images of the destination: how customers think of the destination and their attitudes towards products strongly influence their buying decisions.
- Price to the consumer: the sum of the costs of travel, lodging, and participation in selected facilities and services.

With this understanding, it is easy to not to forget the services needed in the tour package.

3.6 New tourism product development

According to Kotler (2017, pp. 269-276), new tourism product development process consists of these steps:

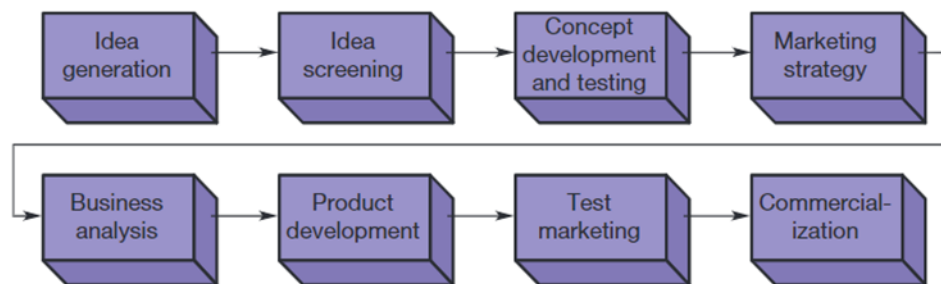


Figure 3. New product development process (Kotler, 2017, p.268)

The process begins with idea generation that aims to generate for future analysis and determine the objectives of the new product. Next, idea screening is to choose good ideas, eliminate poor ones, and review the product by answering some questions:

- Does it fulfill our mission?
- Does it meet corporate objectives and property objectives?
- Does it protect and promote our business?
- Does it please our key customers?
- Better use existing resources?
- Support and enhance existing product lines?

Then, in the concept development and testing stage, the enterprise will present the product idea, product concept, and product image. The next step is the marketing strategy to introduce the product to the market. Marketing strategy consists of three parts. The first part is about the description of the target market, market share, profit goals, and planned product planning for the first few years. The second part is the outline of the product's planned price, distribution, and marketing budget. The last part is about describing profit goals, planned long-run sales, and marketing mix. Then business analysis step, there will be a review of sales, costs, and profit projections to decide if the product is satisfied. Once the product satisfies the company's goals/objectives, the product can move to the product development phase. In the product development stage, the company will develop one or more physical versions of the product concept to see if it meets the required criteria.

The following stage is test marketing that marketers can gain experience in marketing the product, find the problem, and learn needed information. The product and the entire marketing program, such as its positioning strategy, advertising, distribution, and more will be evaluated in this step. The final step in the new product development is commercialization. In this stage, the company should consider these things this step: where to launch the product, how to present it, to whom the company introduces the product, and when the right time to launch the new product.

Similarly, in the book "Product development", Chunawalla (2008, p. 99) mentions eight stages in the new product development, including generation of new product ideas, screening and evaluation of ideas, concept development and testing, marketing strategy, business analysis, product development, and test marketing.

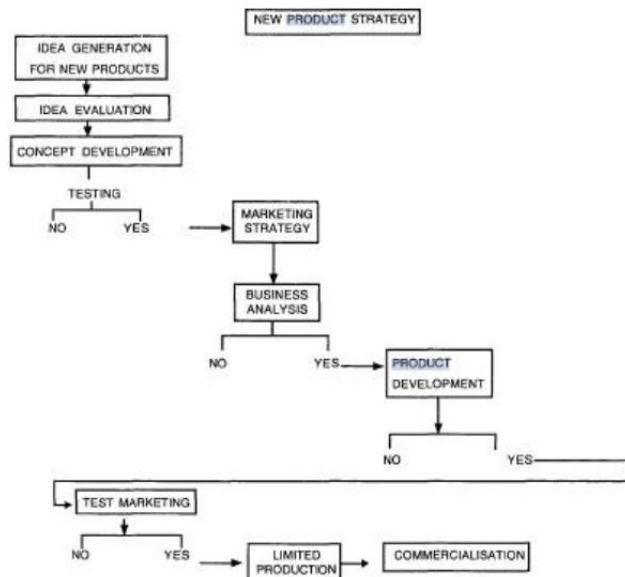


Fig. 6.3 New Product Development Process

Figure 4. New Product development process (Chunawalla, 2008, p. 100)

However, Santos, Ferreira, Costa & C. Santos (2020) have a different new tourism product development process. The development of new tourism products is based on three fundamental components: destinations' core resources, transformative experiences, and the establishment the design of product development processes.

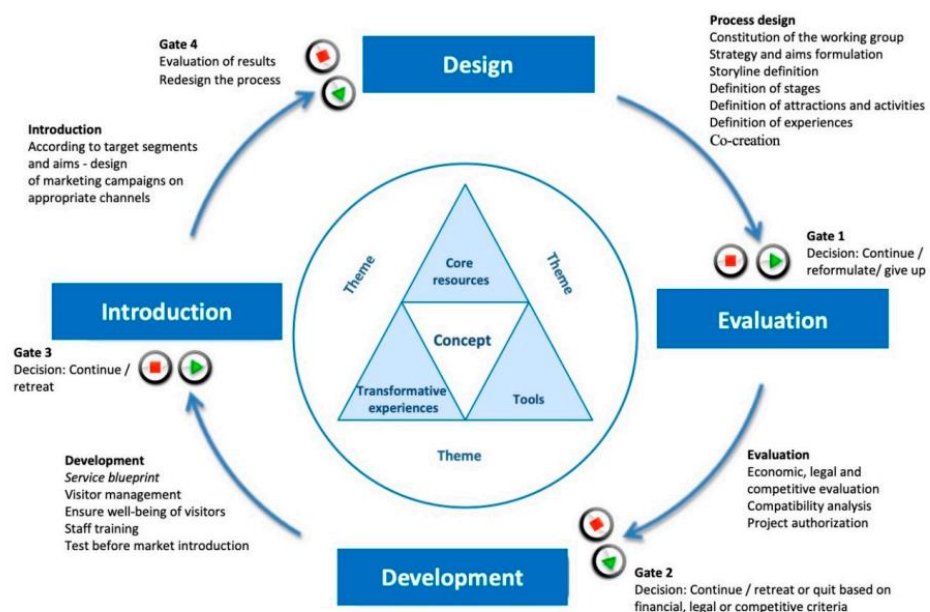


Figure 4. Model of new tourism product development (Santos, Ferreira, Costa & C. Santos, 2020, p. 12)

There are four steps including design, evaluation, development and introduction phases. In essence, the steps in the aforementioned and this model involves the idea generation, evaluation, testing and developing, marketing, though the names, number of steps, and the components in these phases vary. For example, in the design phase, a working group, which is a team can coordinate the entire development process (Müller and Scheurer, 2007, as cited in Santos, Ferreira, Costa & Santos, 2020) along with the objectives, the storyline, scenarios, attractions, and activities should be achieved. The difference of this model is that it is a circular model. Sometimes the tourism providers need to return to the previous step to conduct reformulations. In addition, this new tourism product development process is based on the core resources of the destination. The core can be physical plant, which is a site, natural resource, or facility (Smith, 1994, p. 588) , or the service concept which is customer value and need (Haahti & Komppula, 2006, pp. 101-110), or the attractions (Swarbrooke & Page, 2001). Furthermore, the process also includes transformative experience, as tourist destinations can benefit from the positive behavior transformative experiences bring to the customers (Chen, Cheng & Kim, 2020, p. 16).

In conclusion, the new tourism product development processes mainly consist of idea-generating, idea evaluation, concept testing and development, business analysis, marketing, and launching. However, the model of 2020 is not linear, and the tour operators must decide on the core resources, the transformative experience, and the tools before moving to the idea generation. Hence, the author will adapt her own model based on these models, and the model will be presented in more details in chapter 6.

4 Market analysis of wellness tourism in Vietnam

Eastin and Arbogast (2011, p.2) write "demand, in economics, is the willingness and ability of consumers to purchase a given amount of a good or service at a given price" and supply as "the willingness of sellers to offer a given quantity of a good or service". Therefore, this chapter presents the wellness tourism market in Vietnam from the supply and demand side.

4.1 Vietnam as a potential wellness destination

Vietnam has advantages in geographic features. The land is mainly lowland, with hills with, densely forested mountains. Tropical forests cover about 42% of the area and 40 % of the land are hills (Vietnamese Embassy in Australia, n.d.). In addition, Vietnam has favorable weather as the country has both a tropical climate zone and a temperate climate zone. The northern regions experience average temperatures ranging from 22 to 27.5 °C in the summer, while the average temperatures are from 28-29 °C in summer in the southern area (Climate Change Knowledge Portal For Development Practitioners and Policy Makers, 2021).

According to Wanye and Russell (2020, p.36), ten of the world's top wellness tourism destination markets are in Asia and the Pacific, and Vietnam is on the list. Regarding the attractions, Da Nang, Nha Trang, and Phu Quoc, which are among the most popular tourist destinations with the long coastline, culinary diversity, favorable weather, and many recreational facilities, are appropriate to exploit well-being tourism in Vietnam (Vietnam National Administration Of Tourism, 2020). In 2019, Hoi An has placed in the top 15 of the world's best cities related to wellness services (Terzian, 2019). Besides, Hanoi and Phu Quoc are in the top 17 of Asia's best places to visit by CNN. Visitors can enjoy hopping, diving, snorkeling, and sandy shores at Phu Quoc island or ultra-remote Hon Xuong. (Springer, 2019)

Furthermore, to the Vice Chairwoman of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, Ms. Huong (2021, as cited in Koumelis, 2021), Vietnam has a lot of potential to develop wellness tourism. There is a diverse variety of natural mineral water resources for health care, in which 287 hot mineral water resources among 400 sources have been investigated and analyzed. Those 287

hot mineral springs are also categorized into 11 types, relating to the effects the hot springs bring, such as therapeutic and medicinal effects, to name a few. Additionally, the coastline of 3260 km with sandy beaches, and 2773 large and small islands are suitable for developing wellness tourism. Furthermore, many pagodas, temples, and monasteries can be exploited to develop wellness tourism combined with activities like yoga, and meditation (Huong, 2021, as cited in Koumelis, 2021). Not only with beautiful beaches, but Vietnam is also impressive with vast paddy fields, glamorous waterfalls, and mountainous areas (Vietnam National Administrative Of Tourism , 2021)

4.2 Vietnamese wellness supply in Vietnam

According to Ha (2021), some provinces have exploited their advantages to develop wellbeing tourism. For example, the hot mineral springs in Kim Boi (Hoa Binh), Thanh Thuy in Phu Tho, Quang Hanh in Quang Ninh, My Lam in Tuyen Quang, and My An in Thua Thien-Hue attract a high number of domestic travelers every year. In Lao Cai, the service of having a bath with medicinal herbs from the Red Dao ethnic minority was favored by many tourists as it was good for pain relief, blood pressure, and skincare. Furthermore, Quang Nam authorities were making investments in hot mineral water mines, two of which were operating (Ha, 2021). Besides, beach resorts and luxurious hotels in big cities such as Hanoi, Saigon, Hue, Nha Trang have offered spa and wellness services with health care course, exercise (Duong, 2021).

However, wellness tourism is new in Vietnam; therefore, it is not fully developed (Dinh, 2021, as cited in Duong, 2021). The Director of the Thua Thien Hue provincial Tourism Department, Tran Huy Thuy Giang (as cited in Nhan Dan Press, 2021), states that the lack of proper promotion programs for wellness tourism made it difficult to reach wider domestic and foreign tourists. The Deputy head of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong (2021, as cited in Duong, 2021), also mentioned that there were limited studies, research on the potential of wellness tourism, specific orientations, and policies to develop wellbeing tourism. Furthermore, limited human resources and infrastructure led to medical (wellness) tourism service establishments were still opening on a small scale, added Dr. Truong Sy Vinh, the Deputy Director of the Institute for Tourism Development Research (2021, as cited in Duong, 2021).

The tourism linkage related to wellness tourism is still not strong and tight. Promotions and advertisements on websites are still limited. Vietnamese tourism experts also express that many

wellness tourism services are only about spas and mineral springs. Besides, many businesses have not focused on exploiting specific products, and most of them are just attached to the resort journey, eco-tourism (Pháp Luật Việt Nam, 2021).

The writer conducted a small research and following is the table of wellness packages in Vietnam are solely about spas and mineral springs. Though different places are chosen in the North (Phong Nha, Kim Boi, Yen Tu) and South regions (Nam Cat Tien, Binh Chau), Vietnamese wellness tours are solely about spas or eco-tourism.

Travel Agencies	Price	Destinations	Days	Theme
Phong Nha Explorer (Phong Nha Explorer, n.d.)	4 200 000 VND (169.66 euros)	Dong Hoi – Phong Nha	3 days 2 nights	Sightseeing- hot spring
Vietsoul (Vietsoul, n.d.)	999 000 VND (40.35 euros)	Mai Chau – Kim Boi	2 days 1 night	Sightseeing – min- eral spring
Viet travel (Viettravel, 2021)	8 490 000 VND (342.95 euros)	Ha Long – Yen Tu	3 days 2 nights	Sightseeing – hot spring at Yoko On- sen
Du lich Viet (Dulich Viet, n.d.)	2 650 000 VND (107.05 euros)	Binh Chau	3 days 2 nights	Sightseeing – spa, massage, and hot spring

Vietnam Booking (Vietnam Booking, n.d.)	2 488 000 VND Original price: 3 588 000 VND (144.94 euros)	Nam Cat Tien national park	2 days 1 night	Eco tourism
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Table 1. Existing Vietnamese “wellness” tourism products (own elaboration)

4.3 Customer’s demand

Due to the lack of information on Vietnamese consumer behavior, the author cannot specify specifically their demand for wellness tourism. Instead, the writer has found the shift in Vietnamese tourist behavior post-covid 19 pandemic and criteria relating to wellness tourism.

In 2021 Tourism Advisory Broad (TAB) collaborated with VnExpress news to survey tourist behavior after the second wave of Covid-19 in Vietnam. The results showed an increase in demand for mountain-related tourism (37% compared to 31% in the previous study). There was a significant rise in nature discovery tourism (48% compared to 25% in the previous survey). Furthermore, the respondents expressed to travel in small groups, not more than 10 people like before the pandemic (Mai, 2020).

In March 2021, Digital travel agency Booking.com conducted an online survey for World day (20-22/4). There were more than 29 000 respondents from 30 countries, and Vietnamese participants were 1005 among them. The result was almost 100% of Vietnamese customers wish to visit, and relax at sustainable travel destinations at least once (Trang Linh , 2021).

Recently, Booking.com has conducted a quantitative survey about sustainable travel that collects answers from more than 30 000 travelers from 32 countries and territories including 1000 travelers coming from Vietnam. Most answers show that travelers want to avoid crowded destinations due to disease concerns and the shift in post-COVID sentiment. Furthermore, about 77% of Vietnamese travelers want to have local and cultural experiences. (Booking.com, 2022; Mai, 2022).

To sum up, Vietnamese travelers tend to avoid overcrowding and choose alternative or less popular tourist destinations. They prefer being in a small group when going vacations. Besides, mountain-related and nature discovery tourism now hold appeal to Vietnamese travelers. Therefore, Vietnamese travelers may have interest in wellness tourism since some of the criteria are in wellness tourism.

5 Research methodology

Following the Vietnamese wellness market analysis in chapter 4, this chapter presents the research method, and the ethical considerations, followed by the results of the interviews.

5.1 Qualitative research

The research method is qualitative research. Qualitative research allows researchers to examine participants' experiences in detail by using in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, observation, and so forth. This research method helps to understand and explain the reasons behind the behavior of candidates towards events and objects (Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey, 2020).

The author chooses qualitative research since it focuses on an interpretation that can lead to an evaluation of an organizational process. In addition, it concentrates on data that cannot be analyzed and expressed numerically. (Hancock, Ockleford & Windrige, 2009, p. 6). Regarding this study case, documents or reports related to Vietnamese wellness tourism, criteria for services, activities, and destinations are limited. Hence, the author decides to interview tourism experts to have their insights and valuable advice. In other words, the author uses people's accounts as data, which qualitative research studies (Hancock, Ockleford & Windrige, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, the appropriate method is qualitative research.

Interviews in the qualitative research method can be one of these types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Jamshed, 2014; Stuckey, 2013). Structured interviews are fully controlled by the interviewer and the subjects are expected to have short and straightforward answers. Based on the principles, it is evident that the interview environment is tense, which also gives less room for interviewees to be flexible and casual (Stuckey, 2013). On the other hand, in the unstructured interviews, none of the questions are planned beforehand. Whereas semi-structured interview is a mixture of structured and unstructured interviews (George, 2022). Some of the questions are planned while others are not planned in advance. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are mostly used and can be used for either a group or an individual. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are often open-ended, which enables interviewees to be flexible (George, 2022).

Since wellness tourism is very new in Vietnam, the interviewer decided to interview people working in tourism or related to tourism, without considering if they knew much about wellness tourism or not. Therefore, the interviewer only made a pre-set of questions and would discuss and improvise some questions during the interview. For these reasons, semi-structured qualitative interview was a suitable research method for this thesis.

5.2 Ethical view

Patton (2002) states that reliability and validity are factors which researchers should consider while judging the quality of their qualitative studies. To the University of Miami (2020), reliability is the "stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets". In addition, Creswell (2007, pp 206-207) sees validity in qualitative research as the accuracy of the results. Meanwhile, Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp 290-301) use "trustworthiness" to refer the validity and reliability. Trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Dependability is the consistency of the data, and confirmability indicates the neutrality of the results. Credibility means confidence in the "truth" of the findings. Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings on other occasions.

In this case, the trustworthiness is evidenced through the interview questions. To ensure trustworthiness, the questions are only about wellness tourism and relating subjects such as wellness retreats in Vietnam, understanding of wellness, tourism services, and operation. Furthermore, the questions must not be biased and lead the interviewees' answers to the author's wishes and interests. The author also gains consent from the interviewees, and the participation is voluntary. There will be an explanation of the research aim and purpose for the interviewees.

On top of that, confidentiality is guaranteed in this research paper. In particular, the research results provided by the commissioner and participants' information must not be public or used for other purposes. After the analysis, the author will delete the answers of the respondents.

5.3 Findings

All the interviewees are people who have been working in tourism industry for a long time. Mr Duy Pham is a tourism lecturer of tourism, major in tour guide, at a Vietnamese university. Ms.

Dan Bui is a travel agency manager. Mr. Manh Truong is a corporate travel consultant. And Mrs. Thuy is also a travel agency manager, and a member of Saigon Star Travel, the commissioning party.

Regarding the wellness concept, Thuy and Truong have just known the term recently while Pham and Bui have heard this term before. Pham and Bui share the same opinion that well-being is still a new concept for Vietnamese people nowadays. Though long ago, the Vietnamese physician Hai Thuong Lan Ong and Vietnamese revolutionary man, Uncle Ho shared a definition of the well-being concept that is similar to WHO's well-being definition, the understanding was not widely passed down to people. Only people who work in cultural and Vietnamese historical fields or related fields can have heard of this concept (Pham, 2022). Therefore, wellness treatments that highlight Vietnamese traditional health and well-being concepts are not widely seen in the tourism field since the understanding of well-being usually shapes wellness treatments. In addition, with globalization, yoga and meditation are getting more known in Vietnam, making traditional wellness treatments less known than the new ones (Pham, 2022).

Since wellness tourism is still new, travel agencies in Vietnam face some difficulties (Truong, 2022; Thuy, 2022). Due to the lack of experts, tourism companies have to buy, and sometimes rent wellness experts for wellness holiday packages (Thuy, 2022). Truong (2022) expresses buying or renting wellness experts is also a difficult work, which is challenging for Vietnamese tour operators. Bui (2022) shares a similar opinion and states that outsourcing services will add more price to the tours. However, the average income of the majority of Vietnamese people is not high; therefore, Vietnamese people prefer affordable prices (Bui, 2022). Second, Vietnamese customers like sightseeing and visiting many destinations, and they usually spend 2-3 days on their holidays. Nevertheless, the ideal length to have a wellness tour is 5-6 days. Third, Vietnamese customers like sightseeing and visiting many destinations in a day, which is opposite to the nature of a wellness tour, slow, unpacked, and relaxing schedule (Bui, 2022). Moreover, wellness resorts offering yoga, meditation, and other wellness programs are usually far from the tourist center, which is inconvenient for accessibility (Truong, 2022).

For these reasons, the criteria for wellness tours in Vietnam for Vietnamese customers would be different from wellness tours for foreign customers (Bui, 2022; Pham, 2022).

With different guests and the duration of the tours, the approaches to wellness tours would be different. Long-length tours will be ideal for guests who have time and want to spend more

money. The activities can be up to 3-to 4 within a day, and they can be light activities and authentic experiences, such as taichi, and qigong. Meanwhile, short-length tours will be a better choice for guests who do not have much time. The tour operators can choose wellness resorts or hotels that are near the tourist attractions for a short-length tour (Pham, 2022). Likewise, Bui (2022) also states that choosing wellness hotels near many tourist attractions can meet the criteria of visiting many tourist destinations and having enough wellness treatments, which helps tour operators focus more on wellness activities. However, there should be a balance between wellness activities and sightseeing.

Regarding the wellness services, due to the limitations, as long as the hotels and accommodations have spas or wellness treatment services, the tours can be seen as wellness tours (Pham, 2022). Similarly, Bui (2022) and Truong (2022) suggest choosing wellness hotels and including spa treatment in the schedule to acquire the wellness characteristic.

Besides, travel agencies should choose restaurants that offers local food or regional specialties. If those restaurants are near the hotels or tourism areas, they are better options for the travel agencies (Pham, 2022).

6 Wellness tour package proposals

For developing the proposal for a wellness tour package, the author will apply and adapt the new tourism product development of Kotler (2017, p. 268), the model of Santos, Ferreira, Costa & C. Santos (2020, p.12), and the tourism experience pyramid (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2007). Changes are likely to appear when adopting the theory in the case of Saigon Star Travel. The author will decide on the core resources of the destination, and the goal of transformative experience (Santos, Ferreira, Costa & C. Santos, 2020), followed by the designing phase with steps in the model of Kotler (2017, p. 268), specifically are idea generation and screening steps. When creating the activities for the tour proposal, the author will apply the model of tourism experience pyramid (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2007). Saigon Star Travel will proceed the following steps itself, including concept testing, marketing strategy, business analysis, product development, test marketing, and commercialization.

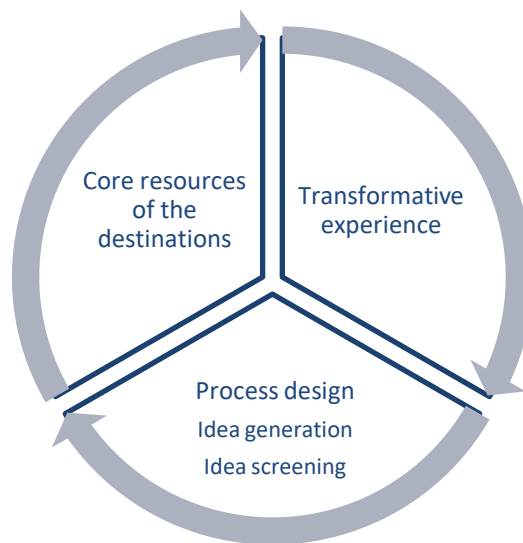


Figure 5. New tourism product development process (adapted by the author)

6.1 Core resources of the destination

In this wellness tour proposal, the destinations should be known for natural or cultural destinations having wellness related-events or superstructures (e.g., community health event, beauty spa resorts/ hotels), human resources, community wellness-related lifestyle, and crossover of wellness with other activities. Specifically, wellness hotels near the tourism area will be ideal for

Vietnamese wellness tour. Besides, the destination must have a clean and sanitary infrastructure for locals and visitors and have sustainability policies and practices. The travel destinations can also be alternative or less popular destinations that meet the above criteria.

6.2 Transformative experience

Transformative experience is an important experience that alters something important to a person (Taylor, 2014). The important things here can be individual's values, beliefs, and assumptions. In this case, the creator hopes to create an experience that somehow leads to a positive personal transformation, such as changes in mindset and behavior. Furthermore, the tourists can learn about the wellness activities and apply them after the wellness holidays.

About the experience, the creator tries to assess and consider the activities that involve at least two stages of connecting with the product in the experience pyramid. Because it is believed that the involvement of these levels can create unforgettable memories with the product. Furthermore, there should be least two to three elements at the bottom of the experience pyramid included in the experience.

6.3 Idea generation

At the commissioning party's request, the tour is for those tourists who are interested in improving their health while having a vacation. It could be people who have experienced wellness tours before as well as who are new to wellness tourism.

There are two approaches to idea generation based on the commissioning party's requirements: alternative or less popular destinations and destinations are known for cultural history or traditional wellness treatments. From searching, Mang Den and Tan Lap meet the criteria of the first approach, and for the second approach, Sapa and Hoi An meet the requirements. Following is the explanation of why choosing these destinations.

6.3.1 Less popular destinations

Mang Den

Mang Den and Tan Lap are less-known tourist attractions in Vietnam. Mang Den is a central highland town located in Kon Tum province. The area is known for mountains, lakes, pine forests, and cool weather. There are ethnic minority villages where customers can learn about their local food and culture. At Mang Den people can enjoy cloud hunting, which is to see the sea of white clouds floating like cotton on the middle of the mountain, in the early morning (Thanh, 2021). And in recent years, Kon Plong province has applied sustainable policies, investments for the tourism development in Mang Den, such as preserving the cultures of host communities and the investment of eco-friendly, high technologies (Vietnam National Administration Of Tourism, 2020; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2022).

The activities in the tour are visiting farms and local ethnic villages, yoga, meditation, and trekking in pine forest, trying local food. The estimated duration of the tour is 3 days and 2 nights, and the estimated price that included all margins profit is 3 593 000 VND.

Tan Lap

Tan Lap is a floating village located in Long An province. Surrounded by melaleuca forest, visitors can enjoy the nature by sitting on a motorboat that weaves through a small canal to the forest. Additionally, customers can enjoy fishing, sightseeing, and experience folk games, such as seesaws, crossing monkey bridge (Vietnam National Administration Of Tourism, 2021). Though being a lesser-known destination, Tan Lap floating village is developing to be a sustainable tourism destination (Du, 2022).

The activities are experiencing Vietnamese folk games, visiting melaleuca forest, experiencing motorboat, yoga, and meditation. The estimated duration of the tour is 2 days 1 night, and the estimated price is 1 400 000 VND.

6.3.2 Cultural destinations

Hoi An

Hoi An, an ancient trading port, is on the central coast of Vietnam. There are many things to do in Hoi An, such as getting lost in Hoi An ancient town, cycling in the countryside, taking a cooking class, boarding a river boat. Hoi An is also known for culinary affected by Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese culture. Many merchant houses and templates have fusion style from China, Europe, and Japan. (Boulter, 2017).

Hoi An is one of the Vietnamese cities preserving sustainable tourism development and to be the first Vietnamese eco-town with the assistance of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) (Vietnam National Administration Of Tourism, 2018; United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2022).

There is no airport in Hoi An, therefore; the customers can travel from Da Nang or Hue to Hoi An. In this tour, the customers will visit Hue then Hoi An. The activities in the tour proposal are visiting ancient palaces, craft villages, the Imperial Citadel, wellness program at the hotel, release flower garlands and color lanterns on the river. The approximated our duration is 4 days 3 nights, and the estimated price that includes the margin profit is 5 675 000 VND.

Sapa

Sapa, a hill station with mixed tribal influences and scenic surroundings, is in the northwest of Vietnam. At Sapa, travelers can go on trekking between rice paddy fields, visit local ethnic Hmong and Dao markets and villages, and enjoy the beauty here. There are hotels in town and a few more lodges outside (Experience Travel Group, n.d.; Vietnam Travel, 2016).

Though the growth rate of sustainable tourism in Sapa is slow and tourism becomes unsustainable faster, the authorities and tourism industry of Sapa are continuing their efforts to improve and strengthen the management of sustainability in Sapa (A.H. Tran & H.X. Ngo, 2021, p. 7163).

Since there is no international airport in Sapa, the customers have to fly to Hanoi first if they are living outside Hanoi and travel by car or by train to Sapa. The activities are Red Dao's herbal bath treatment, cloud hunting, visiting the rice paddy fields, local ethnic villages. The predicted time length of the tour is 5 days for nights. The estimated price included all margins profit is 6 500 000 VND.

These ideas will be evaluated in the idea screening.

6.4 Idea screening

According to Saigon Star Travel company, all these tour proposals meet the company's mission, which is to create a holiday that requires the criteria of Vietnamese wellness tour package. The tour proposals also support and enhance the existing wellness products of the company. The costs of the tour proposals are sensible to the budget of the commissioning party. After discussion and evaluation, Saigon Star Travel decided to choose Hue-Hoi An tour for some reasons.

Though the price of the Hoi An-Hue tour is higher than the Mang Den tour and Tan Lap tour, the tour covers the activities and services that Saigon Star wants, such as the wellness program at the hotel in Hue, the flower-garlands releasing festival. The traveling time between destinations is not long, which is good for the tour operators and the customers.

Even though the Tan Lap tour is short, and the location is convenient for customers living in Saigon, there are no wellness hotels and Saigon Star Travel has to rent the yoga or meditation expert and program for the tour packages. The same reason goes for the Mang Den tour though there are activities those customers can learn about the local lives and the nature is beautiful.

The company also does not choose the Hanoi-Sapa tour since the time traveling from Hanoi to Sapa is long, even though there is traditional wellness treatment in the activities. Furthermore, though the authorities in Sapa are improving the sustainability in tourism, Saigon Star Travel prefers the destinations with stronger sustainability, such as Hue and Hoi An.

7 Commissioning party's chosen wellness proposal (Hue-Hoi An tour)

The program of Hue-Hoi An tour was planned by the author and was chosen among four ideas by the commissioning party. In the following, the author describes the proposal of the tour package day by day. In the program, the author has tried to insert all activities in a way that shows the best sides of the destinations and hopes the visitors to experience as much as possible. For transportation, the tour guide of Saigon Star Travel and the customers will have a flight to Hue and a flight back to Saigon at the end of the tour. The company has its own bus to travel in Hue and Hoi An, as well as when traveling from Hue to Hoi An.

7.1 Explanation of the choices

When researching, the creator found that Hue and Hoi An are known for cultural destination having wellness infrastructures, like wellness hotels. These places also apply some sustainable policies and practices in tourism, which match the requirements of core resources in the adapted model of new tourism development process. Hence, the creator chose Hue and Hoi An.

In Hoi An and Hue, there are many activities that can create a meaningful experience for the customers applying the experience pyramid model. When visiting cultural destinations in Hue and Hoi An, the tourists not only have chances to admire the beauty of tombs and palaces, but they also can learn about the history and culture of those dynasties. This experience involves the stage of intellectual level in the experience pyramid. In this tour, tourists can have a wellness time by choosing one of four wellness activities will be mentioned later. The guests will use their five senses as much as possible, which involves the stage of physical level in the experience pyramid. And these experiences also include the elements of the experience pyramid, such as the contrast and individuality.

Furthermore, the creator also took the advice from the tourism experts to choose the destinations, the restaurants, the hotels, and the activities. The tourist attractions, hotels and restaurants in Hue and Hoi An are in close proximity, which is convenient to travel. The chosen hotels have spas, swimming pool, and other wellness facilities, and Alba Hotel even offer wellness programs like yoga and meditation. Ngoc Anh and San Ho Hoi An restaurants serve local food of the regions,

and they are near either the tourism center or the hotels, which match the criteria mentioned in chapter 5. Following is the schedule of Hue-Hoi An tour.

7.2 Hue-Hoi An tour schedule

Day 1

The first day of the tour is in Hue. Tour guide of Saigon Star Travel will meet the customers at Tan Son Nhat airport, then fly to Hue for an hour twenty-five minutes. When coming to Hue, guests will have lunch then go to the hotel to check in their rooms and have some free time before the sightseeing in the afternoon.

The sightseeing trip will be an experience historical culture of Hue. Tourist will enjoy the stunning view of the Imperial Citadel, Perfume River near Thien Mu Pagoda, and Phu Cam traditional craft village making Vietnamese conical hat (Vietnam Travel, 2016; Thua Thien Hue Government, n.d.). During the trip tourists will hear the story of the history of these places and can buy some souvenirs, conical hats as presents for families and friends. Hue Imperial Citadel city tour has a fee of 200000 VND at multiple locations within the Imperial Citadel (Hue discovery general information page , 2020) .

After the sightseeing trip, tourists will enjoy Hue food, such as Hue mussel rice at Khong Gian Xua Hue restaurant. Then customers go back to the hotel, enjoy their free time with included wellness services, such as 30 minutes of foot massage and warm compress for a good night sleep.

Day 2

Day 2 of the tour starts with the wellness program at the hotel. The customers can choose one among four activities in the program, including Water Meditation, Alba Sounng Therapy Meditation, Truly Breathing Time, Morning biking tour and enjoy the scenery by the Perfume River. Before the wellness activity, customers can enjoy a healthy breakfast included in the hotel's wellness package. After the wellness activities, customers can have their free time, have lunch then check out the rooms before going to Hoi An.

When coming to Hoi An, tourists will visit Hoi An Central Market and Hoi An ancient town. In Hoi An Central Market, customers can try Hoi An local food such as Cao Lau, and Quang noodles and

buy souvenirs for their loved ones (Guest, n.d.). Hoi An ancient town is a destination with assembly halls, ancient houses, and sacred temples with extraordinary architecture influenced by the Japanese and Chinese styles. (Vinpearl, n.d.)

After the visit, customers will have their rooms checked in at the hotel, have dinner, and a head-shoulder-neck therapy.

Day 3

The third day of the tour will be recreational and relaxing. Customers will have their free time in the morning. Then they will have lunch at Faifo restaurant and visit Tra Que vegetable village and Kim Bong Carpentry village. In Tra Que village, customers can watch interesting farm tasks such as watering, vegetable picking, and raking. Furthermore, tourists can try these tasks if they want to understand how hard-working the local people are (Vietnam Online Travel Guide, 2022). Kim Bong Carpentry village is famous for many wooden artworks around the country. Tourists can hear stories from experts in making gongs and adjusting the sound of these Southeast Asian instruments. The guests can also enjoy the fresh and peaceful atmosphere of the countryside (Tran, 2019) .

In the evening, tourists have an opportunity to try the flower-garlands releasing festival on Hoai River to pray for their good luck and happiness. After that, they can have their free time and relax at the hotel (Pham, 2022; Hoi An World Heritage Organization, 2011).

Day 4

The customers will have their rooms checked out and have lunch at San Ho Hoi An restaurant. After that, they will go back to Hue and have a flight back to Saigon, ending their trip.

7.3 Estimated price of the tour

Following is the table of prices of the services in the tour. Furthermore, since the target groups are couples and individuals who are from 30 years old to over 60 years old, the author does not need to include the prices of services for kids (Thuy, 2022). The estimated price has included 10% margin added for Saigon Star Travel.

Activities	Price per person
A return ticket from Saigon to Hue (Vietjet Air)	1 280 000 VND (51,71 euros)
Ngoc Anh restaurant (lunch day 1)	150 000 VND (6.06 euros)
Hue Imperial Citadel	200 000 VND (8.08 euros)
Thien Mu Pagoda Perfume River	No entrance fee
Phu Cam traditional craft village (conical hat)	No entrance fee
Khong gian xua restaurant (dinner day 1)	100 000 VND (4.04 euros)
Alba Boutique Hotel (accommodation day 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 minutes of foot massage • Warm compress for good night sleep • Healthy breakfast and juice • Wellness activity (1 among Water Meditation, Alba Soung Therapy Meditation, Truly Breathing Time, Morning biking tour 	1 100 000 VND (44.43 euros)

and enjoy the scenery by the Perfume River)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy lunch 	
Hoi An Central Market	No entrance fee
Hoi An ancient town	80 000 VND (3.23 euros)
Dinner day 1 at the hotel	150 000 VND (6.06 euros)
Tra Que vegetable village	10 000 VND (0.40 euros)
Kim Bong carpentry village	No entrance fee
Hoi An Lantern Festival – boat excursion	25 000 VND (1.01 euros) (two people for each boat)
Faifo restaurant (dinner day 2)	100 000 VND (4.04 euros)
San Ho Hoi An restaurant (lunch day 3)	100 000 VND (4.04 euros)
Golden Holiday Hoi An hotel	
2 nights and breakfast	1 180 000 VND (47.67 euros)
Head-shoulder-neck therapy	300 000 VND (12.12 euros)
Saigon Star Travel bus	900 000 VND (36.36 euros)
Tour guide	1 000 000 VND (40.39 euros)
	5 675 000 VND (229.24 euros)
	6 242 500 VND (252.16 euros)

	(10% margins included)
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Table 1. Prices of services in the Hue-Hoi An tour

8 Limitations

Email interview is an option to reach the interviewee when the researchers and participants are in different time zone (Opdenakker, 2006, pp. 9-10). Therefore, the author selected this method since the commissioner is not in Finland. At the same time, the interviewee was in a busy situation, so the possibility of having an online face-to-face interview is low. In addition, due to the geographical obstacles, the author had online interviews with the tourism experts. Though it is convenient for both parties, the internet connection was not in good condition, which made the interviews a little challenging.

Another drawback of this thesis is the limitation of research and studies of wellness tourism in Vietnam. Since wellness tourism is new in Vietnam, there have been difficulties in finding the authorized published data, guidelines, and statistics from the information channels of Vietnam's tourism organizations.

9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research results had some success as expected. The study succeeded in answering the research questions and solving research problems and questions at the beginning of the thesis. The author collected the cultural understanding of wellness in Vietnam, Vietnamese wellness supply in tourism, Vietnamese demand for wellness tourism, and the potential for the development. Furthermore, she took the advice from tourism experts to create appropriate ideas for wellness tour packages. Understanding the customer needs, cultural concepts, and difficulties in conducting wellness tours in Vietnam supports the author in creating a wellness tour package that solved the obstacles Saigon Star Travel had met previously.

Furthermore, there were interviews with tourism experts to gain insights on wellness tours in Vietnam and receive advice on creating a suitable wellness tour program for Vietnamese customers. Consequently, the tourism experts expressed that the tour duration should be no more than 5 to 6 days, and there should be a balance between wellness activities and sightseeing trips, as Vietnamese people like sightseeing. Via the author's research and interviews' results, the chosen proposal wellness tour package is in Hue and Hoi An with sightseeing trips, wellness activities, and a relaxing experience in the cultural and historical destinations of Hue and Hoi An. However, due to the time constraints, and the scale of the topic, the tour proposal was not tested. Therefore, the writer hopes to have authors interested in this topic and continue the topic by testing the feasibility of the proposal and having revisions after the test.

In general, the topic was successful because it correctly fulfilled the original purpose. Thanks to the research, the author had a chance to find out the limited aspects of the project that need to be improved next time. The interview results are valuable because they helped the author to build a suitable wellness tour schedule for Vietnamese customers based on Vietnamese criteria. At the end of the study, the author gained more knowledge about understanding of wellness in Vietnam and in other countries. Moreover, through the study, the author gained experience in interviewing the commissioner and tourism experts and developing an appropriate proposal for a wellness holiday. The author believed that developing wellness tourism would bring new value to Saigon Star Travel as well as new experiences for Vietnamese customers.

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11 Appendices

Transcription of interviews.

All the appendices are translated into English, since English is none of the participants native language. Some grammatical mistake might occur during the translation.

Appendix 1: online email interview with the commissioning party

Saigon Star Travel Company (04.2022)

Interviewer: Tho Ngo

Interviewee 1: Mrs. Thuy (Saigon Star Travel – travel agency manager)

(...)

Interviewer: Okay I think we can start with the first question. The first question is, when was the first time your company heard of wellness tourism? Was it after the tourism conference held on October 6th, 2021, when the tourism board mentioned wellness tourism? Or even before that? Or on other occasions?

Interviewee 1: Hmm. Well, I would say I have heard of it before the conference. But yeah. The official time I heard from the company was a few days after that conference. My boss told me that, at the conference, the tourism ministry had mentioned it. They said that in this time we could start to create and develop wellness tourism.

Interviewer: Great. So, what was your first impression and view of it? Did you find it amazing to know about this type of tour?

Interviewee 1: Yes, I would say. To be honest, I was a little confused at first since it is similar to one of a kind of tour Vietnamese usually have. The kind of trip that customers be in hotels for days and just have massages, spas, or do whatever they want. Yet later I and even the company realized that a wellness tour is something totally different. Like the wellness treatments are not an add-on, they are actually in the schedule of the tour. And customers can even do yoga or

meditation while being on tour. Not as a separate class like we usually know, but they are included in the tour. I would say that it is actually more active than Vietnamese common types of tours.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you very much. I too was interested when I first heard of the wellness tour. The more I learn about it in Finland, the more I realize it is different from the resort tour we Vietnamese have. Okay from what I see wellness tourism is new in Vietnam, very sacred to be honest. However, your company is one of the travel agencies that have wellness products. Even with 3 products. I am surprised since it is very new and because of that, not many customers are buying them, right?

Interviewee 1: Right.

Interviewer: Then so why? Why does your company decide to have these wellness products? Because of what is mentioned in that tourism conference? More people care for their health and wellness, so it is the right time to develop wellness tourism?

Interviewee 1: Yes, that would be one point. Furthermore, our company always looks for innovation and improvement. As we see, the trends are changing. Moreover, as it is mentioned in that conference that wellness tourism had been known for a long time in other countries. Then why do we just hear of it, not even mention its development? And as someone who is working in the tourism industry, I think the changes are always needed. We cannot keep one thing time by time. And we see the potential in developing wellness tourism in Vietnam. Though currently, not many customers are buying them, our company believes more customers will be aware and try wellness tour products in the future.

Interviewer: Yes, that's right. Okay so moving to the next question. What are Saigon Star Travel's criteria for a wellness tour package?

Interviewee 1: Oh yes, since it is the type of tour package in Vietnam, our company believes that we should just take some crucial criteria from the common criteria mentioned in that October 6th conference. As long as the activities within the tour and the experience support to improve spirit and mind when customers participate in the tour, then Saigon Star Travel sees it as a wellness tour.

Interviewer: As you mentioned, wellness tourism has the potential in Vietnam to develop, though it is new. So, what are the favorable and unfavorable factors the company faced when planning and implementing the tour?

Interviewee 1: Ok about favorable factors, I would say the destinations, the tourist attraction. As you know, our country has the beach, nature, the trees. The sun shines brightly, the wind. And lately, there are more places for the tourists to come and visit. Therefore, the destinations are not a problem. There were no problems with the food either. There are a lot of restaurants in the region having local food for visitors, so it was pretty easy. However, if you look closely at the accommodation in those regions, then it is a different thing. The standard of hotels in Vietnam has raised recently, as you may know, there are more four, five stars hotels with spas, swimming pools, and gym facilities but just it. There are no wellness programs like yoga or meditation in these hotels. The ones in the city center. Our company wonder if there are hotels in the city center that usually provide wellness programs? (pause). Anyway, after that, our team researched and of course, found some wellness resorts. Yet, the room rates are high if you think about it. Of course, the high price is reasonable due to the wellness programs, the facilities, ... But since we just launched these kinds of products, they should not be too expensive, right?

Interviewer: Yes, that's right.

Interviewee 1: But if we choose the hotels with just spas, we think it is not a wellness product. So (sigh), the company decided to rent wellness experts and implemented our own wellness program to make it out. Though the process to find wellness experts and thinking of the wellness program is not easy either. But at least, our company believes that way will work better.

Interviewer: So, it is better if I can find a wellness hotel in the city center with a yoga or mediation program included right?

Interviewee 1: Yes. But if you cannot find ones like that, then it is fine. Hotels with spas can be options and we will find the wellness experts to go along with us on the tour again (laugh).

Interviewer: Yes, thank you for your consideration. I will try my best to find hotels in the center with wellness programs (laugh). Ok, then what are your requirements for the proposal for the wellness tour?

Interviewee 1: Well, you can decide it on your own, the destination, the accommodation, the food, the duration, etc, and we will evaluate and discuss it later together. The target group of the tour are customers who are from 35 years old to more than 60 years old. (Hmm) I think that is all for the requirement. You do not need to give the marketing plan, though. (Hmm) what else do I miss... Yes, please also write the explanation why you choose them, the destination, the accommodation, ...

Interviewer: Yes, of course.

(...)

Appendix 2: online face-to-face interview (05.2022)

Interviewer: Tho Ngo

Interviewee 2: Manh Truong (corporate travel consultant)

(...)

Interviewer: OK so when was the first time you heard of “wellness” and wellness tourism? What was your impression and view of it?

Interviewee 2: Actually, the term “wellness” is pretty vague for me now. As I only know it is about being happy and healthy, right?

Interviewer: Yes, kind of. The understanding is a bit vague since it is multidimensional. But yes, happiness and being healthy are included when it comes to wellness.

Interviewee 2: Ok. Where was I? Yes. So that is how I understand “wellness”. About wellness tourism, to be honest, I just heard of it after the tourism conference, the one which was held on October 6th, 2021. I guess you know about it, right?

Interviewer: Yes, I do, after the research of course.

Interviewee 2: Yes. So, after that, I was curious about this wellness tour. Like, I mean it seems familiar, but it seems new too. Familiar here is the way people have spas, massages, or other wellness treatments while being on tour. The new thing here is that it is just not only a tour spending all day in a hotel or resort to have these treatments, but the tourists also go out sight-seeing, to visit other places. So yeah. That was how I felt about wellness tourism. It seems an interesting kind of tour to me. However, our company does not classify tours into types. So that was all from I searched by myself.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you very much. Then, though your company does not have wellness tour packages, what kind of obstacles do you think a travel agency will have when implementing wellness holidays, from the point of view of someone who is working in the tourism field, in a travel agency?

Interviewee 2: Ok, in my opinion, the travel will face more difficulties than the favorable factors. The type is new, so there is a shortage of experts and well-trained employees in wellness services. Yet, the scale of wellness services is still small. And I also think that travel agencies may have a hard time buying or renting wellness experts to go along with them on tours. Maybe the accommodation, too. Wellness resorts that have yoga, meditation program, or even other wellness programs, and treatments are usually far from the tourism center. If the tourism company chooses

these resorts for customers to stay overnight, it would be inconvenient for the company and the customers, I believe so.

Interviewer: Yes, since the moving time will be longer, which will affect the schedule of the tour.

Interviewee 2: Yes

Interviewer: Then are there any other difficulties you can think of?

Interviewee 2: (Hmm) (pause) No, I think that is all for the difficulties.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you very much. Then do you have any solutions to the problem above, like the accommodation?

Interviewee 2: (Hmm) Let me see. Well, I don't know if this is ok, but I think hotels that have spas and offer wellness treatments and therapies are still ok.

Interviewer: Yes

(...)

Appendix 3: Interview 3: online face-to-face interview (05.2022)

Interviewer: Tho Ngo

Interviewee 3: Duy Pham (A university lecturer of tourism – major tour guide)

(...)

Interviewer: Ok then here is the first question. When was the first time you heard of the term “wellness” and wellness tourism? What was your impression and view of it?

Interviewee 3: It was a long time ago, I think. Yes, that's right. The first time I heard of it was in 2015 when I was talking to my friends. At that time, they mentioned that they just have tried a new type of tourism, which was still new in the world at that time. As someone who is working in the tourism industry, I was curious about wellness tourism, and my friend told me about it. Later, I found it was interesting, so I decided to study wellness tourism by myself. I even tried to go on a wellness tour, and I really loved it. After that, I always go on a wellness tour at least twice a year. Of course, I could not keep that regular basis when Covid-19 happened. But yeah, everything is getting better, I think (laugh), so I hope I can go on wellness tours again. Oh yes, my first impression of it (pause). I think I liked it from the moment I knew what wellness tourism is (laugh). Since I love the idea that tourists can improve their health while being on tour, like actively doing activities to improve health, not just only spas and massages. So, yeah (laugh).

Interviewer: Wow, great to hear. Then I guess you have known many things related to wellness tourism based on your experience as a tourism lecturer, a tour guide, and a tourist. It has been a long time since the first time you heard of wellness and wellness tourism. Then has your view on wellness and wellness tourism changed?

Interviewee 3: When I first knew about it, I thought it was about having wellness treatment. As long as soft outdoor activities and wellness treatments are included in the schedule, it is a wellness tour package. And the wellness tour is about being in nature or being at somewhere peaceful with no noise. However, after 3 years, I realized that wellness also connects to cultural context, which shows clearly in wellness treatments. The beliefs, the values, and even the geographic features also affect how a wellness tour can be. In general, it is always complicated when it comes to tourism.

Interviewer: Yes, it is true. Thank you for your answer. Ok, then the next question, though wellness tourism is commonly known in the world, it is still new in Vietnam. Even the term "wellness" is new to Vietnamese people. What do you think of this difference?

Interviewee 3: Ok, where to start. Right, about "wellness", it actually appeared a long time ago. Fortunately, I have chances to read academic sources to have insights so that I can tell stories to the customers. One time, when I was reading about Uncle Ho, I happened to see that he mentioned the term wellness before. And his saying was somehow the same as the definition of well-being by WHO. So I was wow, interesting. That document also mentioned that Hai Thuong Lan Ong, one of our ancient physicians, wrote about wellness in his book too. Of course, I also found the primary source that Hai Thuong Lan Ong wrote about wellness. I was happy to know that "wellness" was mentioned long ago not just recently. Still, it is only written in academic books or history books that are not commonly used or read by people. So that is why unfortunately.

Interviewer: Yes, it is. But now more Vietnamese people are getting to know about wellness tourism. And they will get to know the term wellness.

Interviewee 3: Yes. It is a good sign.

Interviewer: Yes, it is. Ok, the next question then. I can tell that you have experience with wellness tour packages. Then what do you think of the criteria for wellness tourism in Vietnam? Are there differences in the common criteria, such as the duration of the tour, the accommodation, and the activities?

Interviewee 3: In my opinion, yes. As I have been on many wellness tours, I realize that since the workforce, facilities, and infrastructure related to wellness tourism are still on the basic levels. So, the criteria for a Vietnamese wellness tour are different. For example, the duration of the tours. Travel agencies can operate wellness tours like they are in foreign countries. Long duration, a few activities a day, being in nature, staying in wellness resorts and trying tai chi, qigong, something like that. This type of tour is suitable for tourists having a lot of time. With long-length tour, travel agencies can even have time to introduce customers our traditional wellness treatment, such as herbal bath in Sapa, since it takes a long way to travel there. On the other hand, there are guests who do not have much time for holidays. So, a short-length tour is a better option for them. Even though the short-length tour doesn't seem to fit in the requirements of a wellness tour, like spending time to relax, to improve the body and mind, it may work with Vietnamese people, due to the lifestyle, the values, beliefs, preconceptions. In this case, accommodation should be near the tourist attractions since wellness resorts are usually far away. About the food,

I think we do not worry about it, since in each region, there is at least a place offering local food of that region. Just find those places for the customers to enjoy local food. If the restaurants are near the hotels or the tourist destinations, that would be even better.

Interviewer: Yes

(...)

Appendix 4: online face-to-face interview (05.2022)

Interviewer: Tho Ngo

Interviewee: Dan Bui (A travel agency manager)

(...)

Interviewer: Ok here is my first question. When was the first time you heard of the term “wellness” and wellness tourism? What was your impression and view of it?

Interviewee 4: When I came to Finland to study, like how you know about wellness tourism (laugh). I found it was very interesting, to be honest. So my first view of it is about having wellness treatments, for example, sauna in Finnish case, Nordic walking, yoga, and meditation.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you for your answer. It has been a long time since the first time you heard of wellness and wellness tourism. Then has your view on wellness and wellness tourism changed?

Interviewee 4: Not really, I think. When it comes to wellness and wellness tourism, I still think about the tour package that tourists can improve their physical, mental, and social health with wellness treatments and activities while having their vacations. (Hmm) what has changed (pause)? Oh yes. Before, I thought that wellness activities must be done outside, like in the forest or in nature. But now I know that as long as the place is quiet enough, the wellness activities can be done inside.

Interviewer: Yes, it is true. Thank you for your answer. Ok, then the next question, though wellness tourism is commonly known in the world, it is still new in Vietnam. Even the term “wellness” is new to Vietnamese people. What do you think of this difference?

Interviewee 4: In my opinion, since wellness tourism is new, so many Vietnamese people have never heard of the term "wellness" either. It is simply like that.

Interviewer: Yes. Ok. Here is the next question. What kind of obstacles do you think a travel agency will have when implementing wellness holidays?

Interviewee 4: I think a Vietnamese travel agency will face some obstacles. First of all, the shortage of experts in wellness services, such as nutritionists and more. Therefore, it is hard to find those wellness experts. Consequently, the price for wellness experts will be high when it is included in the tour. Second, due to the rarity of wellness products, the tour package is higher than other Vietnamese common tours, which is the second unfavorable factor. Unfortunately,

the average income of the majority of Vietnamese people is not high, which varies from 7 and 8 million to 10 million VND. So they want to buy affordable tours. And not many hotels in the city center offer wellness programs. Either the travel agencies have to buy or rent yoga teachers to go along on tours, or the tourism company can actually find hotels having wellness programs at a really high price and accept lost profit in the beginning phase of selling those wellness products.

Interviewer: Yes, it is. It seems troublesome. So, do you have any solutions to these problems?

Interviewee 4: (Hmm) I can only think that as long as it is a wellness hotel, like a hotel with spas, a swimming pool, and other wellness facilities like a gym, it can be seen as wellness accommodation. If we just apply all the common criteria of a wellness tour to the Vietnamese case, like the programs of yoga, meditation, tai chi, and qigong, then I think it is impossible to have wellness tours in Vietnam. So, the criteria for a wellness tour in Vietnam should be different.

Interviewer: Wow. Thank you for your answers. Actually, I am about to ask you if the criteria for wellness tours in Vietnam are different than those of common tours, such as the activities, the destinations, and the duration. But you answer it halfway (laugh).

Interviewee 4: Oh really? (laugh).

Interviewer: It is ok. (laugh). So, I will change my question then (laugh). Then what about having 3-4 activities a day, and the starting time is not early in the morning. For example, 10 a.m. in the morning? Is that possible with a Vietnamese wellness tour?

Interviewee 4: (Hmm) it will be challenging, I would admit. Vietnamese people like sightseeing, so they want to visit many places as many as possible, which is somehow different from the nature of wellness tourism. So, if there are only 3-4 activities a day and half of them are wellness activities, then it will not hold any appeal to Vietnamese customers. Therefore, there should be a balance between wellness activities and sightseeing in order to require the characteristic of a wellness tour. Consequently, choosing hotels in the city can help with the balance of wellness activities and sightseeing. And it is also better for the time convenience.

Interviewer: I see

(...)