TRADITIONAL MEDICINES-BASED HEALTH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BAHIR DAR CITY

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Abstract

Traditional medicine can serve as a valuable and distinctive asset in promoting health tourism centered on indigenous healing practices. This study aimed to examine the potential of traditional medicine, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with developing traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar city, Amhara, Ethiopia. A descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach was employed. Out of 75 distributed questionnaires, 73 valid responses were analyzed, and 18 key informants were selected through purposive sampling for interviews, while respondents were included using a census method. Data were gathered from both primary sources—such as interviews, questionnaires, and observations—and secondary sources, including books, journal articles, reports, and other relevant documents. The findings indicate that traditional medicine possesses strong potential for health tourism due to its authenticity, healing effectiveness, natural origins, and diversity. The study also identified favorable conditions supporting development, such as a suitable environment and location, supportive institutions, and the presence of tourist attractions and related services. However, significant challenges were identified, including inadequate infrastructure, weak collaboration among stakeholders, limited product development, insufficient marketing and promotion, underdeveloped human resources, and a negative public image. Based on these findings, the study recommends that stakeholders should capitalize on the strong potential and available opportunities while addressing the existing challenges to successfully develop traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar city.

Keywords: Potentials, health tourism, traditional medicines, traditional medicine practitioner, traditional medicines-based health tourism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The demand for health tourism is steadily increasing and has become a worldwide trend, with many individuals traveling across borders to seek various medical and wellness treatments (Tosun et al., 2020). Globally, the expansion of health tourism has involved significant utilization of traditional medicines, enabling people to benefit from indigenous healthcare systems through tourism development (Khayamali & Khayamali, 2021; Farsani et al., 2018). Traditional medicines, in particular, can serve as valuable and distinctive products in promoting traditional medicine–based health tourism (Kumar et al., 2019). For example, countries like China and India have generated substantial revenue by positioning traditional medicine–based health tourism as a specialized niche market, capitalizing on their indigenous medical systems that have gained international recognition (Odmell et al., 2018).

In Africa, traditional medicine—including indigenous healthcare practices and locally produced remedies—is widely practiced. A large proportion of the population depends on these systems for both preventive and curative healthcare services (WHO, 2014; James et al., 2018). Recently, the growing popularity and increased use of traditional medicine across the continent have drawn the attention of policymakers, researchers, and healthcare professionals (Kasilo et al., 2019). However, at the regional level, Africa has struggled to fully utilize this growing interest as a niche health tourism market, which remains a missed opportunity for the continent (Odmell et al., 2019).

Ethiopia possesses abundant natural resources and diverse ethnic communities, many of which maintain unique healthcare traditions. Traditional medicine in the country is derived from plants, animals, and minerals, supported by rich indigenous knowledge and practices (Motbaynor et al., 2020; Assen et al., 2021). These traditional remedies are commonly used to treat a wide range of illnesses, including cancer, hypertension, diabetes, bacterial and parasitic infections, hepatitis, rabies, and other diseases (Getachew et al., 2022). Despite regulatory efforts under the national medicine proclamation to oversee traditional products, practices, and practitioners, significant challenges remain. These include limited budget allocation, inadequate infrastructure, and shortages of skilled human resources, highlighting the need for stronger collaboration among stakeholders to advance traditional medicine to a higher level (Usure et al., 2024).

Bahir Dar and its surrounding areas are rich in medicinal plants and possess valuable traditional medical knowledge and healing skills that have been practiced for generations (Mazengia et al., 2019). The city is also a major tourist destination in Ethiopia, attracting international visitors (ANRSCTB, 2017). Most tourists, however, primarily visit attractions such as Lake Tana monasteries, the Blue Nile Falls, and events like the Tana High-Level Forum (Biwota et al., 2021). Despite the city's wealth of traditional medical resources and favorable conditions, there has been little effort to evaluate and promote these practices as health tourism products to attract health-seeking visitors and diversify tourist flows. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on Bahir Dar city to assess the potential of traditional medicine, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with developing traditional medicine–based health tourism in the area. The main objectives of the study are:

- To assess the potentials of traditional medicine for health tourism development in Bahir Dar city.

- To examine the opportunities that supports the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar city.
- To identify the challenges that hinders the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar city.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Traditional Medicines-Based Health Tourism Development

Traditional medicine has its own unique appeal in the health tourism industry (Widarini, Wijaya, & I N, 2022) because it integrates health benefits with local cultural values. According to Smith and Puczko (2015), health tourism can be developed by utilizing the resources and assets already present at a destination. These resources may include natural healing elements, indigenous medical traditions, professional medical services, and spiritual practices. Porwal et al. (2018) similarly note that destinations can become health tourism hubs due to their long-standing healing traditions, alternative treatment methods, indigenous healthcare systems, and medicinal practices. Gurung and Goswami (2020) further emphasize that destinations with extensive traditional medical knowledge can attract visitors seeking herbal, natural, and traditional remedies. Likewise, Agrawal and Vishwavidyalaya (2023) argue that ancient healing systems, alternative therapies, and indigenous medicinal practices can be strategically developed and marketed as health tourism products. Overall, these perspectives indicate that traditional medicine and related practices possess strong potential to be promoted and developed as viable health tourism products.

2.2. Studies on Potentials, Opportunities and Challenges of Traditional medicines-based Health Tourism Development

Research has increasingly examined the potentials, opportunities, and challenges associated with developing traditional medicine-based health tourism worldwide. Islam (2014) explored the healing properties and nature-based origins of traditional medicines, while noting challenges such as inadequate product development and weak marketing efforts. Jiang and Zhang (2018) investigated strategic aspects of traditional medicine health tourism and identified obstacles including insufficient infrastructure, limited marketing, poorly trained human resources, and lack of collaboration.

Meera and Vinodan (2018) assessed tourists' attitudes toward traditional medicinal practices in the wellness tourism sector and found that tourists generally view these medicines positively due to their perceived healing effects. Bangun and Nurbani (2019) highlighted opportunities such as the presence of supportive institutions but also identified weak institutional linkages as a hindrance. Darmayanti et al. (2019) examined the diversity of traditional medicines and the infrastructural challenges limiting the expansion of traditional medicine-based health tourism.

Khanal and Shimizu (2019) studied strategies for promoting traditional medicine-based health tourism, revealing challenges such as insufficient human resources, poor marketing, limited product development, and underdeveloped infrastructure, alongside opportunities like tourist attractions, supportive institutions, and favorable environments. Ying et al. (2020) focused on tourists visiting China for traditional Chinese medicine treatments and identified the location as a key advantage.

Gautam and Bahtta (2020) noted barriers in alternative medical treatments, including weak product development, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of skilled personnel. Gurung and Goswami (2020) highlighted challenges such as poor infrastructure, marketing issues, and negative perceptions affecting rural health tourism based on indigenous knowledge. Wen et al. (2021) studied how the healing potential of traditional Chinese medicine influenced tourist behavior after COVID-19. Hakim et al. (2021) examined the use of traditional plant oils in developing health tourism destinations and concluded that traditional medicines can serve as high-value products. Agarwal and Vishwavidyalaya (2023) highlighted Ayurveda's healing potential for health tourism through secondary data, while Sama and Ruthyanke (2023) emphasized the authenticity potential of traditional medicines.

Previous research has several gaps: most studies used qualitative methods, focused on mature destinations, overlooked the perspectives of traditional medicine practitioners (supply side), or concentrated mainly on tourist demand. Other neglected areas include authenticity, diversity of traditional treatments, negative image challenges, and the strategic significance of destination location. This study addresses these gaps by engaging traditional medicine practitioners and examining all potentials (authenticity, healing ability, nature-based origin, and diversity), opportunities (environment, location, institutions, attractions), and challenges (lack of collaboration, insufficient human resources, poor infrastructure, limited marketing and promotion, inadequate product development, and negative perceptions).

Furthermore, no prior research has explored the potentials, opportunities, and challenges of traditional medicine-based health tourism in Bahir Dar city. Therefore, this study aims to fill methodological, scope, comprehensiveness, empirical, knowledge, and population gaps identified in previous studies.

3. RESEARCH METHDOLOGY

A descriptive research design was employed to examine and portray the existing conditions related to the potential, opportunities, and challenges of developing traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem than either method could provide independently.

The study population comprised legally licensed traditional medicine practitioners operating in Bahir Dar and registered under the ANRS traditional hea443lers' association, along0/;; with experts from the city's culture and tourism office, tour guide association, and health office. Additional participants included academicians from the School of Medicine and the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management at Bahir Dar University, as well as experts from the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (North West region), health bureau, culture and tourism bureau, and biodiversity and environmental conservation offices.

To collect quantitative data, census sampling was applied because the target population was relatively small, allowing the inclusion of all relevant respondents. Purposive sampling was used for qualitative data collection to select individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in the field. Through census sampling, 7 respondents were drawn from the culture and tourism office, 15 from the tour guide association, 17 traditional medicine

practitioners, and 36 from the health office, resulting in a total of 75 quantitative respondents. For qualitative inquiry, 18 key informants participated in interviews, with the final number determined by data saturation.

Primary data were gathered using structured questionnaires, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and observation checklists. Secondary data sources included books, academic articles, reports, journals, official documents, websites, and other public records. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions, organized using five-point Likert scale items. It addressed respondents' background information and issues related to the potential, opportunities, and challenges of traditional medicine–based health tourism development. Observations were conducted using prepared checklists to assess environmental conditions, location advantages, institutional availability, tourism attractions and services, and infrastructural limitations.

Quantitative data were coded, organized, and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistical tools—such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations—were applied, and results were presented in tables. Qualitative data from interviews were examined through thematic analysis, while observational findings were described narratively.

To ensure reliability, a pilot study involving 15% of the total sample was conducted, and internal consistency was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The overall coefficient for the 48 items was 0.82, indicating strong reliability. Instrument validity was strengthened by designing clear and straightforward questions, employing appropriate measurement scales, adapting standardized tools from existing literature, triangulating data collection methods, and obtaining feedback from research advisors and subject experts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Profile of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents include gender, age, educational attainment, and years of work experience. These variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, to provide a clear overview of the sample composition. The table below summarizes the results generated from the frequency analysis.

As indicated in the frequency table, out of the total 73 respondents, 48 (65.8%) were male and 25 (34.2%) were female, demonstrating that males constituted the majority of the study participants.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Profiles	Category	F	%

Gender	Male	48	
	Female	25	65.8
	Total	73	
			34.2
			100.0
Age	Below 25	1	1.4
	26 to 35	10	
	36 to 45	19	13.7
	46 to 60	33	
	Above 61	10	26.0
	Total	73	
			45.2
			13.7
			100.0
Education	Below Diploma	6	8.2
	Diploma	12	
	First Degree	33	16.4
	Master Degree	18	
	PhD	4	45.2
	Total	73	
			24.7
			5.5
			100.0
Work Experience	Below 5	4	5.5
	6 to 15	20	27.4
	16 to 25	36	49.3
	Above 26	13	17.8
	Total	73	100.0

Source: Author's Survey, 2025

Regarding age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents—33 individuals (45.2%)—were between 46 and 60 years old. This was followed by 19 respondents (26.0%) aged 36–45, 10 (13.7%) aged 26–35, and another 10 (13.7%) aged above 61. Only one respondent was under the age of 25. These figures suggest that most participants were in the 46–60 age group.

In terms of educational attainment, 33 respondents (45.2%) held a first degree, making it the most common qualification. Additionally, 18 (24.7%) had a master's degree, 12 (16.4%) held a diploma, 6 (8.2%) had qualifications below diploma level, and 4 (5.5%) were PhD holders. This indicates that the majority of respondents possessed at least an undergraduate-level education.

Concerning work experience, nearly half of the respondents—36 individuals (49.3%)—had 16–25 years of professional experience. Meanwhile, 20 (27.4%) had 6–15 years of experience, 13 (17.8%) had more than 26 years, and only 4 (5.5%) had less than 5 years of experience. These results show that most respondents had substantial professional experience, particularly within the 16–25 year range.

4.2. Potentials of traditional medicines for health tourism development

4.2.1. Authenticity of treatments and skills

Table 2 illustrates the authenticity potential of traditional medicines in the study area. This dimension encompasses the availability of endemic traditional medicine inputs, the presence of genuinely local forms of traditional treatments, and the existence of unique traditional medical knowledge and skills that are specific to the destination. Together, these elements reflect the extent to which traditional medicine in the area is distinctive, locally rooted, and not easily replicated elsewhere, thereby contributing to its potential for health tourism development.

Table 2. Mean Results of Authenticity of Traditional Medicines

Items	N	Mean	**Standard Deviation**
Traditional medicines are made from locally available endemic traditional medicine inputs exist only in the destination	73	4.33	1.02
There are authentic local based forms of traditional treatments which can attract health seeking tourists	73	3.95	1.05
There are authentic traditional medical knowledge and skills exist in the destination	73	4.03	1.09
Group Mean and Std.		4.10	0.66

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, traditional medicines provided by legally licensed practitioners in Bahir Dar demonstrate a strong level of authenticity across multiple dimensions. They are perceived as very highly authentic in terms of being prepared from endemic ingredients (M = 4.33; SD = 1.02), highly authentic regarding locally rooted forms of treatment (M = 3.95; SD = 1.05), and highly authentic in relation to the unique local knowledge and skills available only within the destination (M = 4.03; SD = 1.09). The overall group mean (M = 4.10; SD = 0.66) further indicates that traditional medicines in Bahir Dar possess substantial authenticity and endemic value, suggesting strong potential to attract health tourists.

Supporting this quantitative finding, a well-known traditional medicine practitioner with an academic background in plant science emphasized the city's rich endemic biodiversity and its role in shaping local medical practices. He explained that practitioners in Bahir Dar rely heavily on

endemic plant species to prepare remedies, making these treatments distinctive and unavailable elsewhere. He also highlighted the presence of specialized therapeutic knowledge and skills—such as authentic treatments for rabies and other diseases—that are unique to the area. According to his perspective, this combination of endemic ingredients and exclusive indigenous expertise significantly enhances the city's appeal to international health-seeking tourists (Traditional medicine practitioner, January 2025).

The findings of this study align with previous research. Gerami et al. (2019) emphasized that the development potential of health tourism lies in traditional medicines, including medicinal herbs and indigenous healing practices that are authentic and locally rooted. Similarly, Saman and Rathnayake (2023) highlighted that the authenticity of traditional treatments and the expertise of traditional practitioners are important factors in enhancing health tourists' satisfaction.

4.2.2. Healing ability potential of traditional medicines

Table 3 presents the healing ability potential of traditional medicines. This dimension is assessed based on three key aspects: their capacity to treat diseases that may not respond effectively to modern medical treatments, their broad role in addressing various types of ailments, and their holistic approach to care—focusing on treating the body as a whole rather than merely providing quick or temporary relief. Together, these elements reflect the perceived therapeutic strength and comprehensive nature of traditional medicine in the context of health tourism development.

Table 3. Mean Results of Healing Ability Potential of Traditional Medicines

Items	N	Mean	**Std.**
Traditional medicines can cure diseases not treated by modern medicines	73	3.64	1.13
Traditional medicines play a great role in treating most types of alignments	73	3.64	1.15
Traditional medicines treat the body as a full instead of quick relief	73	3.84	1.13
Group Mean and Std.		3.70	0.61

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, traditional medicines provided by legally licensed practitioners in Bahir Dar demonstrate a strong healing ability across multiple dimensions. They are highly effective in treating diseases not addressed by modern medicine (M = 3.64, SD = 1.13), play a significant role in managing a wide range of ailments (M = 3.64, SD = 1.15), and adopt a holistic approach by treating the body as a whole rather than offering only quick relief (M = 3.84, SD = 1.13). The overall group mean (M = 3.70, SD = 0.61) indicates that traditional medicines in Bahir Dar possess high therapeutic potential, making them appealing to health-seeking tourists.

Qualitative data from interviews further support these findings. Participants reported evidence of traditional medicines successfully treating conditions that are often resistant to modern medical interventions, including cancer, hepatitis, and diabetes. Individuals from diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and geographic locations seek treatment from practitioners in the city, with many testimonials confirming effective recovery from various ailments. This demonstrates the strong potential of Bahir Dar's traditional medicine system to attract international health tourists seeking effective and holistic treatments (Participants, January 2025).

The results of this study are consistent with those of Wen et al. (2022), who noted that traditional medicine provides rejuvenation and relaxation in treating various ailments, including COVID-19, and holds significant potential for promoting holistic health among health-seeking tourists. Likewise, Meera and Vinodan (2018) confirmed that health tourists generally have a positive attitude toward alternative medicinal practices, as these treatments align with their health needs and expectations.

4.2.3. Nature-based origin

Table 4 highlights the nature-based origin potential of traditional medicines. This dimension is evaluated through three key aspects: the use of treatments free from toxic or harmful ingredients, their minimal side effects on the human body, and their preparation from natural components that promote overall holistic well-being. Collectively, these factors underscore the safety, natural composition, and health-enhancing properties of traditional medicines, which contribute to their attractiveness for health-seeking tourists.

Table 4. Mean Results of Nature-based Potential of Traditional Medicines

Items	N	Mean	**Std.**
Traditional treatments are free from toxic ingredients that harm the body of patients	73	3.88	1.13
Traditional medicines have little side effects on human body	73	4.05	0.99
Traditional medicines are made from natural ingredients that improve holistic wellbeing	73	3.88	0.99
Group Mean and Std.		3.93	0.60

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, traditional medicines provided by practitioners in Bahir Dar demonstrate strong nature-based qualities. They are highly free from toxic ingredients that could harm the body (M = 3.88; SD = 1.13), have minimal side effects on patients (M = 4.05; SD = 0.99), and are largely prepared from natural components that promote holistic well-being (M = 3.88; SD = 0.99). The overall grand mean (M = 3.93; SD = 0.60) confirms that traditional medicines in Bahir Dar possess a high potential for nature-based origin.

Qualitative insights from key informant interviews reinforce these findings. Respondents emphasized that the medicines are made from non-toxic, natural ingredients, ensuring minimal adverse effects while supporting patients' overall health. This combination of safety, natural composition, and wellness-enhancing properties makes these treatments particularly attractive to health-seeking tourists who prioritize holistic and non-harmful therapeutic options (Participants, January 2025).

According to Bangun and Nurbani (2019), health management using traditional methods is believed to have fewer adverse side effects compared to modern treatments, as it relies on natural ingredients. Similarly, Singh and Pandey (2019) identified that international tourists often choose traditional treatments due to their natural and holistic approach and the minimal risk of side effects.

4.2.4. Plurality of Treatments and specializations

Table 5 presents the plurality potential of traditional medicines. This dimension is assessed based on three key aspects: the use of diverse ingredients to address various health problems, preparation in multiple forms to treat different types of diseases, and the presence of practitioners with skills across a range of specialized areas. Together, these elements highlight the versatility, adaptability, and comprehensive expertise of traditional medicine in Bahir Dar, which enhances its appeal for health-seeking tourists.

Table 5. Mean Results of Plurality Potential of Traditional Medicines

Items	N	Mean	**Std.**
Traditional medicines are made from different ingredients to solve patients health problems	73	3.63	1.19
Traditional medicines are prepared in different forms to treat different diseases	73	3.81	1.19
Traditional medical practitioners are skilled in different specializations	73	4.23	1.02
Group Mean and Std.		3.89	0.80

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As presented in the table, traditional medicines offered by legally licensed practitioners in Bahir Dar demonstrate a high degree of diversity. They are highly varied in terms of ingredients used (M = 3.63; SD = 1.19), display considerable plurality in the forms of preparation (M = 3.81; SD = 1.19), and show very high diversity in practitioner specializations for addressing different health problems (M = 4.23; SD = 1.02). The overall mean (M = 3.89; SD = 0.80) indicates that traditional medicines in Bahir Dar possess strong plurality potential, making them highly adaptable and attractive for health tourism development.

Supporting this quantitative finding, a well-known traditional medicine practitioner in the city explained that a wide variety of ingredients is used to prepare medicines tailored to individual

patient needs. Treatments are provided in multiple forms, including solid, liquid, and smoke-based preparations. Furthermore, practitioners possess specialized knowledge and expertise across a range of diseases, allowing them to deliver comprehensive care. According to the practitioner, this diversity ensures that health-seeking tourists can access a wide spectrum of treatments at traditional medical centers in Bahir Dar, enhancing the city's appeal as a destination for traditional medicine-based health tourism (Traditional medicine practitioner, January 2025).

Darmayanti et al. (2019) stated that traditional medicine systems encompass multiple types, and this diversity can serve as a key asset in developing traditional medicine as a health tourism attraction.

4.3. Opportunities for traditional medicine- based health tourism development

4.3.1. Existence of Suitable Environment

Table 6 highlights the existence of a suitable environment for health tourism in Bahir Dar. This dimension is assessed through several key factors: favorable weather and climate that support tourists' comfort during their stay, well-preserved biodiversity that provides valuable resources for traditional medicine preparation, scenic and pristine natural environments offering recreational and leisure opportunities, and the presence of beaches where tourism facilities can be developed. Collectively, these environmental attributes underscore the city's potential to support and enhance traditional medicine–based health tourism.

Table 6. Mean Results of Suitable Environment

Items	N	Mean	Std.
There is pleasant weather condition and climate in the city that is favorable for tourists stay	73	3.74	1.06
There is well preserved biodiversity that helps to explore valuable inputs for traditional medicine preparation	73	3.89	1.10
There is beautiful and pristine natural environment in which tourists can go to entertain	73	3.85	1.05
There are beaches in Bahir Dar city in which tourist facilities can built	73	3.67	1.17
Group Mean and Std.		3.78	0.60

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city offers highly favorable environmental conditions that support the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism. Pleasant weather and climate (M = 3.74; SD = 1.06), well-preserved biodiversity (M = 3.89; SD = 1.10), beautiful and pristine natural surroundings (M = 3.85; SD = 1.05), and beaches suitable for tourism infrastructure

(M = 3.67; SD = 1.17) all represent significant opportunities. The overall mean (M = 3.78; SD = 0.60) indicates that the city possesses a highly suitable environment for promoting health tourism based on traditional medicines.

Qualitative data from interviews further highlighted these opportunities. Participants noted the city's naturally favorable climate, scenic landscapes with palm trees, and the shores of nearby Lake Tana and the Blue Nile River, which are ideal for building resorts and recreational facilities. Additionally, well-preserved biodiversity in the islands and the Lake Tana biosphere reserve provides valuable resources for traditional medicine. Observational data confirmed these findings, showing the presence of an ideal climate, pristine natural environments, suitable beaches and shores for spa and resort development, as well as well-protected monastic forests and biosphere reserves in and around the city (Observation, January 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. Kiss (2015) highlighted that key opportunities for developing health tourism include a favorable climate, pristine natural surroundings, superior environmental quality compared to other locations, and distinctive scenic landscapes. Similarly, Henama (2014) emphasized that health tourism products can be enhanced by a destination's scenic beauty, pleasant climate, presence of wildlife, and game parks, which can also influence holiday patterns outside the peak season.

4.3.2. Location of the destination

Table 7 highlights the location potential of Bahir Dar city as a health tourism destination. This dimension is evaluated based on several factors: the city's position along major national tourist routes, its proximity to sources of traditional medicine inputs, and its accessibility to the majority of regions and populations within the country. Collectively, these location attributes emphasize the city's strategic advantage in supporting traditional medicine–based health tourism.

As depicted in the table above, Bahir Dar city is highly suitable in which it lies in the main tourist destination routes, is very highly suitable in which it is near to the source places of traditional medicine ingredients, and is highly accessible for most of the regions and the populations of the country that supports the development of traditional medicines-based health tourism in the city with mean values of (m = 3.82; Std. = 1.12), (m = 4.45; Std. = 0.89), and (m = 3.64; Std. = 1.07), respectively. The overall mean values were (m=3.97, Std. = 0.60) which confirmed that the location of the city is highly suitable as an opportunity to develop health tourism based on traditional medicines.

The data obtained through interviews with participants of the study also revealed that the location of the city can enhance the development of traditional medication-based types of health tourism. The natural location of the city that is near Lake Tana, the river, and the islands helps to find valuable herbs and medicinal plants. On the other hand, Bahir Dar city lies on the way of the northern Ethiopian historic route, which connects main tourist destinations that helps to promote traditional medicines more fully (Participants, January 2025).

Additionally, the results gained from observation also confirmed that Bahir Dar city is located on the way of northern Ethiopian historic rout as well as the city is located near to the source places

of herbs and minerals which used to prepare traditional medicines (Observation data, January 2025).

Table 7. Mean Results of Location of the Destination

Items	N	Mean	Std.
The location of the city lies in the main tourist destination routs of the country	73	3.82	1.12
The geographic location of the city is near to the source places of traditional medicine inputs	73	4.45	0.89
The place is accessible for most of the regions and the populations of the country	73	3.64	1.07
Group Mean and Std.		3.78	0.60

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

The results of this study align with previous research. Chongsitjiphol and Wongmonta (2021) noted that proximity to major national destinations or well-known cities, where tourists can access multiple attractions and activities, is a significant advantage for developing health tourism. Similarly, Ying et al. (2020) highlighted that traditional medicine is a primary motivation for travelers, and geographic proximity to the destination further supports convenient travel.

4.3.3. Availabilities of institutions

Table 8 highlights the availability of institutions in Bahir Dar that support traditional medicine–based health tourism. This dimension is assessed through several key aspects: the presence of universities and colleges that provide training for traditional medicine practitioners, public and private health institutions that offer support and collaboration with practitioners, and governmental and non-governmental organizations that facilitate the operations and development of traditional medicine services. Collectively, these institutional resources reflect the city's capacity to strengthen and sustain traditional medicine–based health tourism.

As indicated in the table, Bahir Dar city demonstrates a high availability of supportive institutions that can facilitate the development of traditional medicine–based tourism. Universities and colleges (M = 3.66; SD = 1.15), public and private health institutions (M = 3.74; SD = 1.06), and governmental and non-governmental organizations (M = 3.73; SD = 1.08) all show strong institutional presence. The overall mean (M = 3.70; SD = 0.67) confirms that these institutions constitute a significant opportunity for advancing traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

The data gained through interviews with participants of the study also revealed that Bahir Dar is the place where one of the oldest universities (Bahir Dar University), health colleges, large public and private hospitals, and numerous governmental (regional and federal) and non-governmental organizations exist, which in turn supports the sector by training the professionals,

researching and investigating, and promoting and running related conferences to develop traditional medicine-based health tourism in Bahir Dar city (Participants, January 2025).

Table 8. Mean Results of Availabilities of Institutions

Items	N	Mean	Std.
There are universities and colleagues which can provide training for traditional medicine practitioners	73	3.66	1.15
There are public and private health institutions which can support traditional medicine practitioners	73	3.74	1.06
There are governmental and non-governmental organizations which can supports traditional medicines operations	73	3.73	1.08
Group Mean and Std.		3.70	0.67

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

Additionally, the researcher observed a high availability of supportive institutions in Bahir Dar city that are directly or indirectly involved in the operation of traditional medicines. These include universities and colleges, public and private health institutions, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, all of which contribute to strengthening and sustaining traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city (Observation, January 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. Khanal and Shimizu (2019) highlighted that the presence of multiple colleges and universities offering medical education and training for traditional practitioners and other health professionals, along with competitive health institutions, serves as a supportive factor for developing health tourism at a destination. Similarly, Kilicarslan (2017) noted that the number of legally accredited hospitals, the qualifications of university physicians, and the availability of adequate public and private hospitals are key factors that support health tourism development.

4.3.4. Availability of Tourist Attractions and offerings

Table 9 highlights the availability of tourist attractions and offerings in Bahir Dar. This dimension is assessed through several key aspects: the presence of numerous tourist sites in the city and its surroundings, social celebrations, ceremonies, and events, locally produced handicrafts, traditional cuisines and drinks, and well-preserved cultural traditions and lifestyles. Together, these factors reflect the city's rich tourism resources, which can complement and enhance the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism.

Table 9. Mean Results of Availability of Tourist Attractions and Offerings

Items	N	Mean	Std.
There are many tourist attraction sites in Bahir Dar city and its surrounding	73	4.22	0.78
There are social celebrations, ceremonies and events in the city	73	3.90	1.16
There are handicrafts, local cuisines and drinks in the city	73	4.05	0.95
There are well preserved traditions and life style in the place	73	4.05	0.92
Group Mean and Std.		4.05	0.56

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city and its surroundings exhibit a very high availability of natural and historical tourist sites (M = 4.22; SD = 0.78), high availability of social celebrations, ceremonies, and events (M = 3.90; SD = 1.16), high availability of handicrafts, local cuisines, and drinks (M = 4.05; SD = 0.95), and high availability of well-preserved traditions and lifestyles (M = 4.05; SD = 0.56). The overall mean (M = 4.05; SD = 0.56) confirms that the city offers abundant tourist attractions and cultural offerings, representing a strong opportunity to develop traditional medicine–based health tourism.

Interview data supported these findings. A culture and tourism bureau expert noted that one of the city's major advantages for this sector is its rich tourism resources. Bahir Dar is a well-known tourist destination in Ethiopia, with nearby attractions such as Tis Abay/Blue Nile Falls and Lake Tana, including ancient monasteries and islands. The city hosts conferences and conventions, such as the Tana High-Level Forum, as well as religious events and festivals like Meskel, traditional music and dances, weddings, and funerals. These attractions and cultural offerings provide opportunities to promote and market traditional medicines as a health tourism product (Culture and tourism expert, January 2025). Attractions, including natural, cultural, and ethnic resources, are integral to health tourism. When combined with wellness tourism, these attractions become a significant factor for tourists in choosing a destination (Chen, 2023).

Observational data further confirmed the high availability of natural and cultural tourist sites, events and festivals, handicrafts, local cuisines and drinks, and well-preserved traditions and lifestyles in Bahir Dar city, reinforcing its potential to support traditional medicine–based health tourism development (Observation, January 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. Gerami et al. (2019) highlighted that key factors supporting the development of traditional medicine-based health tourism include well-known tourist destinations, abundant and diverse historical and natural resources, a variety of ancient, historical, cultural, and religious sites, vibrant rural areas with rich cultural and traditional lifestyles, cultural and social events, the hospitable and friendly nature of

local residents, as well as native handicrafts and a wide range of traditional healthy foods and beverages.

4.4. Challenges for traditional medicines-based health tourism development

4.4.1. Lack of institutional tie-ups

Table 10 highlights the challenge of lack of institutional tie-ups in Bahir Dar. This dimension is assessed through key issues such as poor coordination between relevant bodies, mistrust and inability of traditional medicine practitioners to collaborate effectively, and the inefficiency of public–private partnerships. Collectively, these factors reflect significant institutional barriers that can hinder the development and growth of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Table 10. Mean Results of Lack of Institutional Tie-Ups

Items	N	Mean	**Std.**
Lack of coordination between concerned bodies	73	4.05	1.10
Mistrust and inability to work together among each traditional medicine practitioners	73	4.16	0.88
Inefficiency of public private partnerships	73	3.70	1.18
Group Mean and Std.		3.97	0.62

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city faces a high level of challenges related to institutional tie-ups in traditional medicine–based health tourism. Specifically, poor coordination between concerned bodies (M = 4.05; SD = 1.10), mistrust and inability of traditional medicine practitioners to collaborate effectively (M = 4.16; SD = 0.88), and inefficiency of public–private partnerships (M = 3.70; SD = 1.18) were all identified as significant barriers. The overall mean (M = 3.97; SD = 0.62) confirms that lack of institutional collaboration strongly hinders the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Interview data further elaborated on these challenges. Participants noted that while there have been some attempts at collaboration between the government and traditional healers, these efforts remain insufficient to strengthen the sector. Many traditional healers prefer to operate independently rather than cooperate, and government policies tend to tolerate rather than integrate traditional and modern health systems. This lack of coordination and integration limits the growth and promotion of traditional medicines as a key health tourism resource in Bahir Dar (Participants, January 2025).

The findings of this study align with previous research. Khanal and Shimizu (2019) indicated that limited cooperation and coordination among relevant stakeholders, as well as weak public-private partnerships, are major obstacles to developing traditional medicine-based health tourism. Similarly, Bangun and Nurbani (2020) noted that poor collaboration among organizations

responsible for health tourism, insufficient coordination with traditional healers in the development and preservation of traditional medicines, and mistrust or inability to work together are significant challenges.

4.4.2. Lack of well-developed human resource

Table 11 highlights the challenge of a lack of well-developed human resources in Bahir Dar. This challenge is assessed through several key issues: insufficient specialized human resources in the field of traditional medicines, the absence of formal institutions producing trained traditional medical practitioners, the lack of medical doctors trained in both modern and traditional health systems and a shortage of skilled personnel with adequate language proficiency. Collectively, these gaps indicate that human resource limitations pose a significant obstacle to the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Table 11. Mean Results of Lack of Well-Developed Human Resource

Items	N	Mean	**Std.**
Lack of sufficient specialized human resource in the field of traditional medicines	73	3.85	1.11
Absence of institutional production of traditional medical practitioners	73	3.96	1.03
Lack of medical doctors who train both modern and traditional health systems	73	3.79	0.92
Lack of skilled manpower in terms of language proficiency	73	3.85	1.02
Group Mean and Std.		3.86	0.54

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city faces a high level of challenges related to human resources in traditional medicine–based health tourism. Specifically, there is a significant shortage of specialized human resources in traditional medicine (M = 3.85; SD = 1.11), a high challenge due to the absence of institutional training for traditional medicine practitioners (M = 3.96; SD = 1.03), a lack of medical doctors trained in both modern and traditional health systems (M = 3.79; SD = 0.92), and a shortage of skilled personnel with adequate language proficiency (M = 3.85; SD = 1.02). The overall mean (M = 3.86; SD = 0.54) confirms that these human resource limitations pose a major obstacle to the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Interview data further highlighted these challenges, revealing that the scarcity of skilled practitioners, the absence of institutional programs to train traditional medicine professionals, the lack of doctors knowledgeable in both traditional and modern healthcare, and insufficient language proficiency among staff collectively hinder the growth and promotion of traditional medicine as a key health tourism resource in Bahir Dar (Participants, January 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. Kiss (2015) highlighted that low levels of education, training, and skills, along with the absence of traditional medical practitioners trained in both indigenous and modern (allopathic) treatments, are major challenges. Similarly, Khanal and Shimizu (2019) noted that the lack of specialized and skilled human resources, insufficient professional training for service providers, and a shortage of expert labor are significant obstacles to the development of health tourism.

4.4.3. Poor development of infrastructure

Table 12 highlights the challenges associated with poor infrastructure in Bahir Dar. This dimension is assessed through several key issues: the limited accessibility and capacity of diagnostic centers to serve health tourists, the absence of information technology systems to support traditional medicine operations, the lack of research and investigation centers to strengthen traditional medicine practices, and the nonexistence of herbal processing institutions that facilitate traditional medicine production. Collectively, these factors indicate that inadequate infrastructure poses a significant barrier to the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Table 12. Mean Results of Poor Development of Infrastructure

Items	N	Mean	Std.
Inability and inaccessibility of diagnostic centers to serve health tourists	73	4.15	1.15
Absence of information technology systems to run traditional medicine operations	73	4.32	1.01
Lack of research and investigation centers to strengthen traditional medicine operations	73	4.41	0.96
Absence of herbal processing institutions that support traditional medicine operations	73	4.30	0.98
Group Mean and Std.		4.29	0.57

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city faces very high challenges related to inadequate infrastructure for traditional medicine–based health tourism. Specifically, there is a high challenge due to the inaccessibility and limited capacity of diagnostic centers (M = 4.15; SD = 1.15), and very high challenges from the absence of information technology systems (M = 4.32; SD = 1.01), lack of research and investigation centers (M = 4.41; SD = 0.96), and insufficient herbal processing institutions (M = 4.30; SD = 0.98). The overall group mean (M = 4.29; SD = 0.57) indicates that

infrastructure deficiencies represent a very significant barrier to the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Interview data further emphasized these issues, revealing that although general tourism and hospitality infrastructures such as hotels and food outlets exist, facilities specifically supporting traditional medicine are severely lacking. Participants noted the absence of accredited diagnostic centers and hospitals serving traditional medicine patients, the lack of pharmaceutical and herbal processing centers, and the absence of research and technology-equipped centers to support traditional medicine operations. These gaps directly limit the potential for developing traditional medicines into viable health tourism products in Bahir Dar (Participants, January 2025).

Observation data confirmed these findings, showing insufficient and inaccessible traditional medical centers, lack of research and investigation facilities, and inadequate information technology systems to support traditional medicine operations (Observation, January 2025).

The results of this study are consistent with previous research. Khanal and Shimizu (2019) identified that insufficient infrastructure and the absence of effective information-gathering systems are major challenges to health tourism development. Similarly, Amouzagar et al. (2016) noted that a lack of adequate diagnostic centers, outdated and low-quality facilities, insufficient IT infrastructure, and poorly equipped service centers pose significant obstacles to the growth of health tourism.

4.4.4. Lack of proper marketing and promotion

Table 13 highlights the challenges related to the lack of proper marketing and promotion for traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar. This challenge is reflected in several key issues: the lack of adequate information and evidence about the best traditional medical service providers, the absence of common media platforms to promote traditional medicines, the failure to create integrated tourism packages that combine traditional medicine with other tourism products, and the lack of clear brand differentiation for traditional medicine offerings. Collectively, these factors indicate that insufficient marketing and promotional strategies significantly hinder the development and visibility of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city faces significant challenges in marketing and promoting traditional medicine–based health tourism. Specifically, there is a high lack of adequate information and evidence about the best traditional medical service providers (M = 3.73; SD = 1.10), a high absence of common media platforms to promote traditional medicines (M = 3.86; SD = 1.04), a high lack of integrated tourism packages that merge traditional medicine with other services (M = 3.90; SD = 0.98), and a high deficiency in clear brand differentiation for traditional medicine products (M = 4.14; SD = 0.80). The overall mean (M = 3.90; SD = 0.54) indicates that insufficient marketing and promotion represents a major obstacle to developing traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Table 13. Mean Results of Lack of Proper Marketing and Promotion

Items	N	Mean	**Std.**

Lack of adequate information and evidence about the best traditional medical service providers	73	3.73	1.10
Absence of common media to promote traditional medicines	73	3.86	1.04
Lack of preparing packages by merging traditional medicines with other tourism products	73	3.90	0.98
Lack of clear brand differentiation of traditional medicine products	73	4.14	0.80
Group Mean and Std.		3.90	0.54

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

Interview data from a culture and tourism expert further confirmed these challenges, noting that almost no marketing efforts exist for this sector. Tourists often do not know where qualified traditional physicians are located, and there is no consistent media to introduce and promote these services. Additionally, traditional medicine has not been packaged together with other tourism resources, and individual product branding is weak. Many traditional medical centers are situated in areas with limited public access, creating further confusion for visitors seeking these services (Culture and Tourism Expert, January 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Khanal and Shimizu (2019), who identified challenges such as issues with service provider registration and documentation, as well as weak and insufficient advertising and marketing. Similarly, Islam (2014) emphasized that limited information about the best service locations is a major obstacle to the further development of this sector.

4.4.5. Poor product development

Table 14 highlights the challenges related to poor product development in traditional medicine–based health tourism in Bahir Dar. These challenges include the lack of standardization of traditional medicine products according to international standards, insufficient information about the ingredients used in preparing the medicines, and issues with service quality, including delays in medical procedures and treatments. Collectively, these factors hinder the competitiveness and reliability of traditional medicine offerings, limiting their potential to attract health-seeking tourists.

As shown in the table, Bahir Dar city faces significant challenges in product development for traditional medicine–based health tourism. Specifically, there is a high lack of standardization of products according to international standards (M = 4.14; SD = 0.94), a high lack of information regarding the ingredients used in medicines (M = 3.85; SD = 1.05), and a high deficiency in service quality, including delays in traditional medicine operations (M = 4.00; SD = 1.01). The overall

mean value (M = 3.99; SD = 0.60) indicates that poor product development is a major barrier to developing traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

Table 14. Mean Results of Poor product development

Items	N	Mean	Std.
lack of standardization of products in international standards	73	4.14	0.94
Lack of information about ingredients formed	73	3.85	1.05
Lack of service quality and delaying operations	73	4.00	1.01
Group Mean and Std.		3.99	0.60

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

A Food and Drug Authority expert elaborated on these challenges, stating: "Despite the rich potential of traditional medicines for health tourism development, there are significant problems, including poor standardization of medicine production and inadequate service quality. Some ingredients used in these traditional medicines are not clearly identified, and delays in service delivery remain a major issue in traditional medicine operations" (Food and Drug Expert, January 2025).

The findings of this study are supported by previous research. Gautam and Bhatta (2020) identified challenges in developing traditional medicine-based health tourism, including inadequate composite product development, insufficient standardization of products for the international market, and poor service quality, such as delays in medical procedures. Similarly, Bangun and Nurbani (2020) highlighted issues related to the formulation of traditional medicines and the use of unidentified ingredients as major challenges for health tourism development.

4.4.6. Bad image and ignorance

As presented in Table 15, Bahir Dar city faces a high challenge related to the negative perception and ignorance of traditional medicines. Specifically, traditional medicines are often viewed as backward and diminished by modern education, associated with negative symbols or superstitions, perceived as unhygienic or unqualified, and suffer from a lack of integration with other tourism products (e.g., no packaged offerings). These factors collectively hinder the development of traditional medicine–based health tourism in the city.

As the mean scores in the above table show, there is a high challenge regarding the negative perception of traditional medicines in Bahir Dar city. Specifically, traditional medicines are viewed as backward and diminished by modern education (m = 3.92; Std. = 1.06), overshadowed by symbols of bad spirits (m = 3.99; Std. = 0.89), perceived as illegal business operations (m = 3.79; Std. = 1.08), and considered unhygienic or unqualified (m = 3.67; Std. = 1.05). The overall mean (m = 3.84; Std. = 0.55) indicates that the bad image attached to traditional medicines is a

significant challenge that hinders the development of traditional medicine-based health tourism in the city.

Table 15. Mean Results of Bade Image and ignorance

Items	N	Mean	Std.
Traditional medicines are seen as backward and diminished by modern education	73	3.92	1.06
Traditional medicines are overshadowed by the symbol of bad sprits	73	3.99	0.89
Lack of preparing packages by merging traditional medicines with other tourism products	73	3.79	1.08
Traditional medicines are seen as unhygienic and unqualified	73	3.67	1.05
Group Mean and Std.		3.84	0.55

N- Total number of respondents, Std. - standard deviation. Source: Author's Survey, 2025

Supporting this, one well-known traditional medicine practitioner stated: "One of the bottlenecks that makes it difficult to grow this sector as a tourism asset is the skewed perception by the government and current generation. Traditional medicines and treatments are seen as symbols of backwardness and are considered illegal businesses. They are also associated with bad spirits like digimit and tinkola. This negative image creates barriers to developing the sector into a health tourism asset. In fact, this bad perception is the root of many other challenges. Because of it, nothing has been done to make this resource valuable to the nation. The government and current generation do not accept it as a cultural asset. In my view, this significantly blocks the development of` traditional medicines as health tourism products" (Traditional medicine practitioner, January 2025).

The results of this study align with the findings of Gurung and Goswami (2020), who noted that challenges in developing traditional medicine-based health tourism arise from factors such as the influence of modern education, the perception of traditional treatments as "village remedies" rather than as rich repositories of medical knowledge, and the negative image associated with traditional medicine systems. Similarly, Gayuka et al. (2020) emphasized that stigmatization resulting from poor perceptions and an attitude is a major challenge that needs to be addressed.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that Bahir Dar city holds significant potential for traditional medicine-based health tourism. Traditional medicines practiced and delivered by legally licensed practitioners in the city exhibit strong health tourism potentials, including authenticity, healing ability, nature-based origin, and plurality of treatments. The study revealed that these medicines are highly authentic, capable of treating diseases not addressed by modern medicine, derived from natural ingredients, and diversified in both preparation and practitioner expertise. Despite these strengths, these resources remain underutilized and should be actively promoted to attract health-seeking tourists.

In addition to the intrinsic potential of traditional medicines, the study identified several opportunities that can support the development of health tourism in Bahir Dar city. These include a suitable environment (pleasant climate, pristine natural settings, and biodiversity), strategic location (proximity to medicinal plant sources and key tourist routes), availability of supportive institutions (universities, health facilities, and governmental/non-governmental organizations), and abundant tourist attractions and offerings (natural and cultural sites, festivals, handicrafts, and local cuisines). The results confirm that these opportunities are highly present and can be leveraged to develop traditional medicine-based health tourism.

However, the study also highlighted several challenges that hinder the growth of this sector. Key challenges include lack of institutional coordination, poor infrastructure development, insufficient specialized human resources, weak marketing and promotion, poor product development, and the negative image of traditional medicines. Notably, infrastructure-related challenges are very high, requiring urgent attention, while other challenges—such as institutional tie-ups, human resource capacity, marketing, product standardization, and image perception—are also significant and need targeted strategies to overcome them.

Overall, the study emphasizes that while Bahir Dar city has both the resources and opportunities to become a hub for traditional medicine-based health tourism, addressing the critical challenges is essential to fully realize this potential and promote the city as a health tourism destination.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and identified challenges of this study, the following recommendations can be drawn for key stakeholders to develop traditional medicine-based health tourism in Bahir Dar city.

6.1. Traditional Medicine Practitioners

- **Collaboration:** Work closely with health offices, culture and tourism offices, universities, and tour guide associations to strengthen the sector.
- **Skill Development:** Improve language proficiency and intercultural communication skills to serve international health tourists effectively.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Actively promote and advertise services using both digital platforms and traditional channels.

- **Product Development:** Standardize and upgrade the quality of medicines and services, ensuring safety, efficacy, and compliance with international standards.
- **Openness to Cooperation:** Build trust and work collaboratively with other practitioners, government offices, and stakeholders to maximize sector growth.

6.2. Culture and Tourism Offices

- **Inter-agency Collaboration:** Partner with health offices, traditional medicine practitioners, universities, and tour guide associations to integrate traditional medicine tourism into broader tourism strategies.
- **Promotion and Branding:** Promote traditional medicines-based health tourism through digital marketing, festivals, and events that showcase local treatments.
- **Policy Support:** Collaborate with other government bodies to establish clear branding and recognition for traditional medicines and ensure consistent quality standards.

6.3. Health Offices

- **Infrastructure Development:** Work with higher government authorities to address infrastructure gaps, including diagnostic centers, research facilities, and processing units for traditional medicines.
- **Standardization and Guidelines:** Develop standards for traditional medicines and services to ensure quality, safety, and consistency.
- **Integration of Health Systems:** Facilitate cooperation between modern and traditional medicine systems for comprehensive patient care.
- **Human Resource Development:** Collaborate with universities, colleges, and practitioners to train professionals and build a skilled workforce in traditional medicine.

6.4. Travel and Tour Companies

- **Tourism Packages:** Incorporate traditional medicine tourism into travel itineraries, combining it with cultural, historical, and nature-based tourism experiences.
- **Collaboration:** Coordinate with culture and tourism offices, health offices, and practitioners to ensure seamless and authentic health tourism experiences.

6.5. Academicians

- **Curriculum Development:** Introduce traditional medicine and health tourism-related courses in universities and colleges.
- **Research and Training:** Strengthen research programs on traditional medicine and health tourism development.
- **Human Resource Cultivation:** Support training programs to produce professionals equipped with both technical knowledge and cross-cultural skills.

6.6. Food and Drug Administration Authority

- **Regulation and Oversight:** Enforce strict safety regulations and conduct regular inspections to ensure that traditional medicine production complies with standards.
- **Brand Development:** Collaborate with health offices, practitioners, and other stakeholders to establish recognized and trustworthy brands for traditional medicines.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuously monitor traditional medicine practices and products to maintain high quality and safety standards for health tourists.

By implementing these recommendations, Bahir Dar city can transform its traditional medicine resources into a structured, safe, and attractive health tourism product, addressing current challenges and maximizing existing opportunities for both domestic and international health-seeking tourists.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This research focused solely on the supply-side perspective, examining the potentials, opportunities, and challenges of traditional medicine-based health tourism development in Bahir Dar city. Therefore, future studies should explore the demand-side aspects, including the traditional medicine tourism market and tourist behaviors, to provide deeper insights for academics, industry practitioners, and policymakers in developing this niche market more effectively. Moreover, this study only examined traditional treatments provided by 17 legally licensed traditional medicine practitioners. Subsequent studies should consider including a broader range of traditional treatments and practitioners to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their potential for health tourism development.

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