

A Comprehensive Analysis of Postpartum Care Centers: Industry Trends and Growth Factors

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Abstract

The emergence of postpartum care centers is challenging traditional practices in modern women's postpartum recovery. This industry successfully meets market demands, expanding its reach to numerous Asian countries and even Western countries. Despite global growth, the development of industries varies significantly among countries and regions, with no academic research on the market of the industry. This study sought to investigate the current global status of postpartum care center industry development, discern industry trends, and identify growth factors. This research categorizes the industry market into four developmental states: geographical origin, country with cultural adaptation and strong policy support, country with cultural adaptation but weak policy control, and country with the industry primarily serving Chinese communities due to incomplete cultural adaptation. Additionally, it was found that the major factors contributing to the uneven development of the industry are cultural beliefs, policy support, economic factors, and effective marketing strategies.

Keywords: Global Market, Industry Development, Cultural Beliefs, Policy Support, Economic Factors, Marketing Strategies

Background

The inception of the postpartum care center industry traces back more than 40 years in Taiwan, China (Hung et al., 2010a; LIR, 2018; Zheng, 2021), benefiting and bringing great

convenience to modern families (Chien et al., 2006; Chou et al., 2022; Fatima et al., 2021; Hung et al., 2010b; Lee et al., 2022; Song et al., 2020). This thriving business success matches market needs and subsequently spread to mainland China and the Hong Kong-Macau region, as well as neighboring countries such as South Korea (Han et al., 2020), Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia (Chou et al., 2022). A global presence is evident through the existence of such service centers in Western countries such as America, Canada, and France, as identified through internet searches (iiMedia, 2019, 2021b), which are also basically run by Chinese businesspeople. However, the development speeds of the postpartum care center industry vary significantly between countries and regions for numerous reasons.

Researchers have found that mothers who stay at postpartum care centers experience numerous advantages compared to those receiving home-based postpartum care (Abdullah et al., 2021; Awang et al., 2021; Chien et al., 2006; Han et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020; Hung et al., 2010a; Lee et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2018; Song et al., 2020; Song et al., 2023). However, there is no English-language research specifically addressing the postpartum care center market in individual countries. The available research, if any, is either outdated or less relevant, with a notable absence of documentation on the industry's current development status. This study aimed to investigate the present global development status of the postpartum care center industry, discern industry trends, and identify growth factors. By analysing the current global development status, this study establishes an informational groundwork for future market research in this field.

Understanding the Value of Postpartum Care Centers

The postpartum care center was initially established for the demands of a rapidly changing modern society (Hung et al., 2010a). Due to an increasing trend of young mothers residing in nuclear families instead of extended families, delayed marriage causes childbirth at an advanced maternal age (Holroyd et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2020); coupled with a rising number of female elders having their jobs, there may be a lack of experience or capacity to fulfil traditional postpartum caregiving roles (Holroyd et al., 2004; Hung et al., 2010a). Additionally, as income and education levels increase, an increasing number of women tend independence and self-centring (Holroyd et al., 2004; Peng et al., 2021), causing the prevalence of single mothers to also increase (Hung et al., 2010a; Zhao & Basnyat, 2021). These occurrences have all spurred the growth of the postpartum healthcare industry.

From a medical advice perspective, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) underscored that postpartum care should be tailored to each woman's needs, offering individualized services and support (ACOG, 2018). These services, offered either in postpartum care centers or through home confinement, are tailored to support postpartum women and promote their recovery. Verbiest et al. (2018)Verbiest et al. (2018)Verbiest et al. (2018)Verbiest et al. (2018) identified six key postpartum health topics: 1) sleep and nighttime parenting, 2) infant feeding, 3) weight and body image, 4) contraception and family planning, 5) mood and emotional well-being, and 6) partners and relationships. However, traditional home-based postpartum confinement practices consistently face limitations.

In contrast, medical postpartum care primarily combines traditional postpartum care with Western medical dietary management practices (Choi & Jung, 2017), which postpartum care centers advocate. This care is typically administered by a skilled team, comprising licenced medical professionals (doctors and registered nurses) and proficient technicians (such as postpartum caregivers, chefs, and nutritionists), aiming to provide postpartum

women with more meticulous and scientifically informed support. This level of care is difficult to achieve when opting for postpartum confinement at home.

Recent Studies and Emerging Findings on Postpartum Care Centers

The rise of postpartum care centers extends beyond addressing solely the difficulties encountered by postpartum mothers. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the services offered by these centers provide various benefits to modern families, see Table 1. From a functional perspective, postpartum care centers are equipped with an ample workforce to handle all aspects of care, allowing postpartum mothers to fully relax and enjoy sufficient, undisturbed sleep at night. Their professional guidance and care, including massage, auxiliary medical equipment therapy, and a sterilized indoor living environment, significantly contributed to mothers' better recovery and a sense of being well-cared for. Moreover, the round-the-clock care provided by professional nurses for the baby also reassures postpartum mothers, while avoiding anxiety caused by differences in opinions regarding caregiving approaches from elderly people.

Table 1

Compilation of Studies on Postpartum Care Centers

NO	Author (year)	Title	Findings	Journal
1	Chien et al. (2006)	Adherence to "Doing-the-month" practices is associated with fewer physical and depressive symptoms among postpartum women in Taiwan.	Women whose location for doing-the-month was at a postpartum care center had a lower severity of physical symptoms compared with those who spent this time in their own home , while there were no significant differences between being at one's own home and a relative's or a friend's home.	Research in Nursing & Health, 29(5), 374–383. Doi:10.1002/nur.20154
2	Hung et al. (2010a)	Taiwanese maternal health in the postpartum nursing center.	This study found Tso-Yueh-Tzu as practiced in postpartum nursing centres gave the postpartum women the opportunity to receive tangible support and, therefore, helped decrease postpartum stress and improved their general health . The greatest source of postpartum stress was concern over negative body changes .	Journal of Clinical Nursing, 19(7-8), 1094–1101. Doi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2009.03065.x
3	Hung et al. (2010b)	Maternal satisfaction with postpartum nursing centers.	A high level of social support and low level of postpartum stress significantly predicted their satisfaction with the postpartum nursing centers. The three main reasons women gave for choosing to stay in a postpartum nursing center included desire for high-quality care, reluctance to bother others, and lack of a helper . This implies that a woman's mother or mother-in-law was not available during her postpartum period. The results also showed that most women's key helper during the postpartum period was her husband (45.6%) or the center staff in the postpartum nursing center (21.4%).	Research in Nursing & Health, 33(4), 345-354. Doi:10.1002/nur.20387

4	Shao et al. (2018)	Postpartum weight retention risk factors in a Taiwanese cohort study.	An increasing number of women in Taiwan prefer to practice postpartum confinement in care centers. In this study, we investigated whether the site of the postpartum confinement month influences PPWR. Although our multivariable regression results indicate that staying at a postpartum care center is not significantly associated with PPWR, the ANOVA results suggest that women who stay at such centers have a lower 1-month PPWR than those who stay at home. This is likely due to the centers providing dietitians who manage the diet of their clients, registered nurses who offer instruction in and assistance with breastfeeding, and facilities for physical exercise, all of which may have contributed to the low PPWR observed in this study. However, because of the lack of related research, the association between residence at a postpartum care center and PPWR requires confirmation by additional studies.	Obesity facts, 11(1), 37-45. Doi:org/10.1159/000484934
5	Yusoff et al. (2018)	Postnatal Care Practices among the Malays, Chinese and Indians: A Comparison.	The results obtained showed that there are a variety of treatments and practices during postnatal or confinement period for each of the race. Plus: Nowadays maternal care institutions have been commercialized and extremely well received in the Chinese community.	In SHS Web of Conferences (Vol. 45, p. 05002). EDP Sciences. Doi:10.1051/shsconf/20184505002
6	Tsai & Wang. (2019)	Role changes in primiparous women during 'doing the month' period.	The change from being a childless adult to being a mother experienced by the participants during 'doing the month' period was divided into two themes: 'Motherhood burden' and ' Motherhood adaptation '. In Taiwan, new mothers choose carrying out their "doing the month" at a postpartum nursing centre or at home, based on their needs and preferences.	Midwifery, 74, 6-13. Doi:10.1016/j.midw.2019.03.007
7	Han et al. (2020)	Korean Immigrant Women's Postpartum Experiences in the United States.	In Korea, women often recover from childbirth at a SanhooJoeriwon, a place where the new mother and infant stay for several weeks. Korean postpartum practices also ward off Sanhupung or "postpartum disease" that includes joint problems, chills, and fatigue. Given the prevalence of Sanhupung among Korean women, treatment is covered under Korean National Health Insurance (Son).	MCN: The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing, 45(1), 42-48. Doi:10.1097/nmc.0000000000000585
8	Huang et al. (2020)	Effect of stay in a postpartum care institution on postpartum depression in women.	The women who stayed at postpartum care institutions (n = 130) had a higher education status, higher income, higher percentage of assisted reproductive technology (ART) treatment, higher cesarean section rate, and lower postpartum Edinburgh Perinatal Depression Scale (EPDS) scores (14.6% vs. 27.8%) compared with those who did not stay at postpartum care institutions. Multivariate linear regression analysis indicated that postpartum care institutions was the main factor (r = 1.38, p = 0.014) correlating to postpartum depression in women.	Midwifery, 82, 102600. Doi:10.1016/j.midw.2019.102600

			Providing maternal and infant care in postpartum care institutions allows the mother to rest; and the professional guidance from the medical staff can provide the necessary support and help mothers to learn. Postpartum care institutions can decrease the incidence and severity of postpartum depression.	
9	Song et al. (2020)	Effects of a maternal role adjustment program for first time mothers who use postpartum care centers (Sanhujoriwon) in South Korea: a quasi-experimental study.	The experimental group received the maternal role adjustment program, which included family education and counselling regarding breastfeeding and infant care , and encouraged rooming-in practices during their stay in the Sanhujoriwon. These results indicate that the maternal role adjustment program was effective in improving maternal role confidence and breastfeeding success among first time mothers in the postpartum care center.	BMC pregnancy and childbirth, 20, 1-11. Doi:10.1186/s12884-020-02923-x
10	Abdullah et al. (2021)	Analysis of spatial requirement for postpartum care center to support the needs of women with postpartum depression.	This research found that healing and reducing the impact of negativity among postpartum depression women depends not only on physical spatial development , but the most crucial aspect is the provision of a support system from family members and friends . Nevertheless, the research had outlined spatial requirements for designing a postpartum care center to support the psychological and physical needs of postpartum depression women, especially those in Malaysia . The research would also serve as a platform for an effective architectural solution for reducing the negative impacts of postpartum depression among women.	Journal of architecture, planning & construction management, 11(2).
11	Foong et al. (2021)	Comparing breastfeeding experiences between mothers spending the traditional Chinese confinement period in a postpartum care center and those staying at home: a cohort study.	Breastfeeding rates appeared to be similar at confinement centres and at home during the confinement period, but there were gaps in how confinement centres supported breastfeeding. Targeted training to confinement centre staff to support breastfeeding may result in better outcomes for mothers staying in confinement centres .	International breastfeeding journal, 16(1), 1-9. Doi:10.1186/s13006-020-00353-1
12	Jia & Wu (2021)	Topic modelling and opinion mining of user generated content on the internet using machine learning: An analysis of postpartum care centres in Shanghai.	To reach a compromise between adhering to the traditional culture and embracing the modern lifestyle, more and more Asian moms are heading towards postpartum care centres for postpartum recovery. However, research regarding the quality of care of these postpartum care centres is nearly missing from the literature. Results show that the mothers are generally satisfied with the studied care centres . Meanwhile, the 13 major topics in the customer online reviews were identified, which provide an overview of the interaction between a mother and a care centre. In addition, weight of topic analysis suggests that the studied care centres can further improve in the areas of support team, environment, and facility.	Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems, 41(3), 4661-4668. Doi: 10.3233/JIFS-189726

13	Lin et al. (2021)	Understanding Home in the Chinese Cultural Context: Insights From Postnatal Women's 'Doing the Month'.	Analysis of data from three Yuezi Clubs in Guangzhou reveals that the traditional 'doing the month' exacerbates intergenerational and regional customary conflicts in modern Chinese families. However, the emergence of the Yuezi Club was a timely invention that has averted such conflicts. We find that Yuezi Clubs strengthen nuclear family bonds. This paper extends the role of capital in shaping the Chinese home, including the social construction. Our findings uncover specific cultural practices in Chinese homes and expand Marxist theory in furthering understanding of Chinese homes.	Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie, 112(5), 536-548. Doi:10.1111/te sg.12479
14	Sidek & Adnan (2021)	The necessity of a confinement lady's presence at the early stage of postpartum.	In Malaysia, both the traditional and modern approaches in postpartum are widely practised among the Malaysian mothers. Mothers who undergo postpartum are still in fragile and unhealthy condition in which some cultures believe that early stage postpartum mothers should not be left unaccompanied at home. The needs for this care are translated into the existence of many postpartum care centres or postpartum care centers in Malaysia. Nonetheless, since hiring a postpartum confinement lady incurs extra cost, some mothers opt not to have a confinement lady around. Many opt to have confinement at their family's home, while there are mothers going through the early stages of postpartum alone. Using quantitative analysis, the majority of the respondents agreed that a confinement lady presence is necessary and important during the early stages of postpartum as mothers are susceptible to postpartum depression. This study points to the need to have an affordable and high-quality confinement service since it plays a significant role to support postpartum mothers in Malaysia.	In The 2nd International Professional Doctorate and Postgraduate Symposium Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 25th September 2021 (p. 499).
15	Chou et al. (2022)	User-centered care, engagement, and user's orientation preference in postpartum care of quality: practitioner-postpartum women interdependence mediation analysis.	Postpartum or "zuo yue zi" services are well-received among Chinese communities such as Taiwan, China, Singapore, and Malaysia. The postpartum services provided by the confinement center or one-month home confinement are designed to support the needs of postpartum women and to help in regaining their health. The analysis results showed that postpartum women-centered care had significant and positive effect on quality of care. Meanwhile, the mediating effect of postpartum women engagement and the moderating effect of orientation preference were not significant.	Journal of Integrated Design and Process Science, (Preprint), 1-20. Doi: 10.3233/JID-220005
16	Foong et al. (2022)	Mothers' hygiene experiences in postpartum care centers: A cohort study.	Research found unsatisfactory hygiene practices in confinement centres as reported by mothers who spent their confinement period there. Although they were not able to establish any direct evidence of infection transmission but based on reports	Plos one, 17(5), e0268676.

			given by the mothers in this study, it is likely to be happening.	
17	Ge (2022)	Reclaiming Postpartum Care Practices Among Urban Middle-Class Women in Contemporary China.	With an emerging postpartum care-providing industry, middle-class women are encouraged to purchase such care from a commercial setting . They are empowered to seek autonomy and negotiate the exact terms of the care with other parties involved in their postpartum care. However, the extended family network is still highly relied upon for child rearing and other supports due to financial constraints and insecurities, and thus women's postpartum care still remains as a family issue. I analyse that despite the considerable degree of autonomy this consumption offers to women , how the Confucian model of intergenerational dependence and gendered relations endures , and thus how they still face structural constraints to reclaim their own postpartum care practices.	Cultivate: The Feminist Journal of the Centre for Women's Studies, 4, 80-96.
18	Lee et al. (2022)	Mothers' experiences of childbirth and perspectives on Korean medicine-based postpartum care in Korea: a qualitative study.	According to the cultural characteristics, there is a postpartum care center in Korea . The postpartum care center provides education as to how to care for newborns and breastfeeding, and provides services , such as massages. In total, 81.2% of Korean mothers who gave birth in 2020 received an average of 2 weeks of care at postpartum care centers following childbirth. After this, Korean mothers often received traditional postpartum care at home, and reported that the ideal period of postpartum care was an average of 71 days. According to data from Statistics Korea, over 21 years, postpartum care center users spent an average of 24.31 million won and 815,000 won at home for postpartum care. The cost of postpartum care is not covered by insurance in Korea, so there is a perception that postpartum care should be done well, but the burden is also high. Because of the economic burden, it was not always possible to stay at a postpartum care center or hire a postpartum helper. They also found it difficult to personally pay for herbal medicine, even though they knew it would help their recovery. On the other hand, they also expressed that they had access to good postpartum care due to government support and they were satisfied with the financial aid or services offered by the government .	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(9), 5332. Doi:10.3390/ijerph19095332

The Benefits of Postpartum Care Centers

Research has shown that focusing on women-centered care during the postpartum period has a significantly positive impact on the quality of care (Chou et al., 2022). Postpartum care centers allow mothers to rest, and the guidance of medical professionals offers essential support and education, including newborn care and breastfeeding (Huang et al., 2020; Lee et

al., 2022). Encouraging rooming-in practices and providing family education and counseling on breastfeeding and infant care in these centers have proven effective in boosting maternal confidence and breastfeeding success, especially for first-time mothers (Song et al., 2020; Song et al., 2023). Additionally, postpartum care centers offer mother–infant assessments, lessons, and psychological support to ease women into their roles as mothers (Hung et al., 2010b; Hung et al., 2010a; Song et al., 2020; Tsai & Wang, 2019). Compared to those who stayed at home, women who chose postpartum care centers reported lower physical symptom severity (Chien et al., 2006). They also experience less postpartum weight retention, possibly due to the centers' well-managed meals which are provided as guidance from dietitians, assisted breastfeeding by registered nurses, and physical exercise, which reduce the risk of consuming excessive high-protein or high-calorie diets at home without guidance (Shao et al., 2018). A study in Korea indicated that postpartum practices at Sanhoo-Joeriwon centers not only aid in postpartum recovery but also help prevent "postpartum disease," encompassing joint issues, chills, and fatigue (Han et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research suggests that postpartum care institutions are key factors associated with a lower incidence and severity of postpartum depression in women (Huang et al., 2020). Women who desire the comfort of a contemporary family lifestyle may unwillingly accept traditional support, because this support often involves the intervention of extended family members, which can negatively affect women's privacy and interfere with their lives (Özcan et al., 2017). The analysis of data from three Yuezi Clubs in Guangzhou reveals that these centers have emerged as timely valuable inventions that strengthen nuclear family bonds, mitigating intergenerational and regional conflicts arising from differing opinions on traditional postpartum practices in modern Chinese families (Lin et al., 2021). A proper spatial design for confinement centres can also play a crucial role in addressing the psychological and physical needs of women experiencing postpartum depression (Abdullah et al., 2021).

The findings indicate that mothers generally express satisfaction with postpartum care centers (Jia & Wu, 2021). With the emergence of the postpartum care industry, middle-class women are encouraged to purchase care services from commercial providers, enabling them to autonomously negotiate the terms of their postpartum care (Ge, 2022). A majority of the respondents in Malaysia, according to a quantitative analysis, agreed that the presence of a confinement lady during the early postpartum stages is crucial due to susceptibility to postpartum depression, underscoring the necessity for affordable and high-quality confinement services to support mothers in Malaysia (Sidek & Adnan, 2021). In South Korea, 81.2% of mothers who gave birth in 2020 received approximately 2-3 weeks of care at postpartum centers, however, economic constraints sometimes hinder access, and government support ensures access to quality postpartum care, leaving many people satisfied with the financial assistance or services provided (Lee et al., 2022).

Methods

Almost all research on postpartum care centers revolves around the in-depth exploration of whether such services benefit postpartum mothers and newborns. There are no academic studies or journals in English that examine the market development of this industry. Hence, aside from the limited market data available from Taiwan, Mainland China, and South Korea through their authoritative research institutions and government websites, which are in their local languages, additional information regarding the postpartum care center market in other countries can only be sourced from the official websites and social

media platforms of local postpartum care center brands.

As evident in numerous studies, Chinese individuals, in particular, place a strong emphasis on confinement practices for both physical and emotional recovery (Withers et al., 2018). Beyond South Korea, postpartum care centers are primarily established in countries with significant Chinese populations, such as China (including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), Singapore, and Malaysia (Chou et al., 2022). Therefore, the greater the number of exposed brands in postpartum care centers is, the greater the market popularity of a country in this industry or the greater the number of Chinese immigrants.

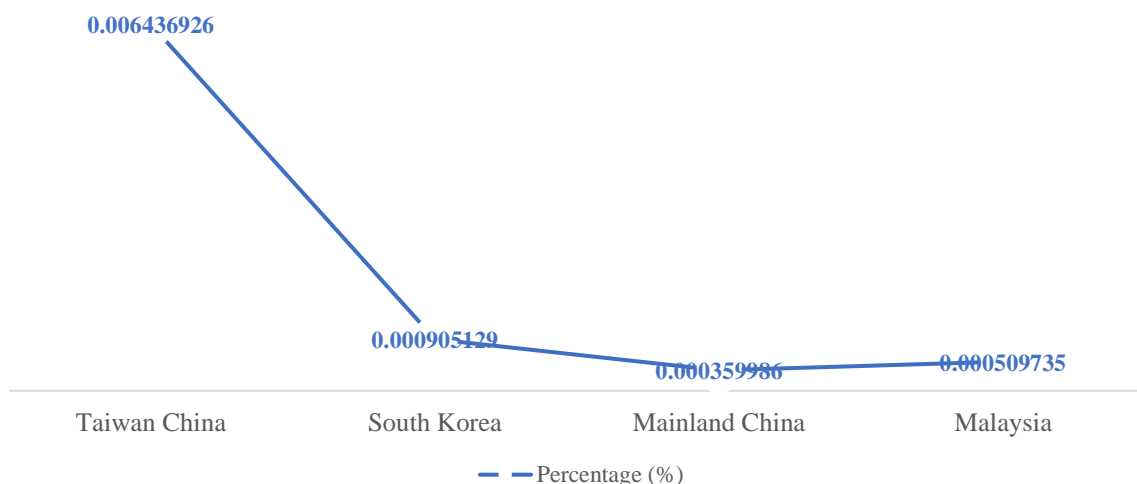
Findings

Leading Regions or Countries Boasting the Most Postpartum Care Centers

After examining the global market, it is evident that the four countries or regions with the highest concentration of postpartum care centers are Taiwan (with independent administration), Mainland China, South Korea, and Malaysia, as shown in Figure 1. The industry data were obtained or purchased from the official statistical websites or industry associations of their respective countries or administrative regions.

	Taiwan China	South Korea	Mainland China	Malaysia
Since	1980s	1996	1999	2012
Number of confinement centres (Source)	1538 (Taiwan Ministry of Health and Welfare. Dec 2022)	469 (South Korea Ministry of Health and Welfare. June 2023)	5133 (China Maternity Center Industry Association. June 2023)	173 (Companies Commission of Malaysia. 2024)
2022 Population	23,893,394	51,815,810	1,425,887,337	33,938,221
Percentage	0.006437%	0.000905%	0.000360%	0.000510%

THE DISTRIBUTION DENSITY OF CONFINEMENT CENTRES IN FOUR AREAS



(Population data from: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries>)

Figure 1 The current operational status of confinement centres in four selected areas

As shown in Figure 1, Taiwan surpasses the other three areas in terms of the proportion of the number of confinement centre operations and population. When comparing South Korea and Mainland China, which started in similar years, South Korea boasts a postpartum care center distribution density 2.5 times greater than that of Mainland China. Malaysia, optimistically, started later, and although the overall number of postpartum care centers lags behind that of mainland China, it is worth considering that these centers in Malaysia are predominantly active in the Chinese community, which constitutes only 22.8% of the country's population; thus, the industry's development prospects appear promising.

The Four Key Developmental Statues

Based on the available data, the postpartum care center industry can be classified into four primary development statuses: 1) Geographical origin, where the postpartum care center industry originates and operates. 2) Country with cultural adaptation and strong policy support, where the postpartum care center industry has adapted to the local culture and received significant policy support. 3) Country with cultural adaptation but weak policy control, the postpartum care center industry has adapted to the local culture, but policy support is limited or inconsistent. 4) Countries with the industry primarily serving Chinese communities due to incomplete cultural adaptation. This classification is visually represented in Figure 2.

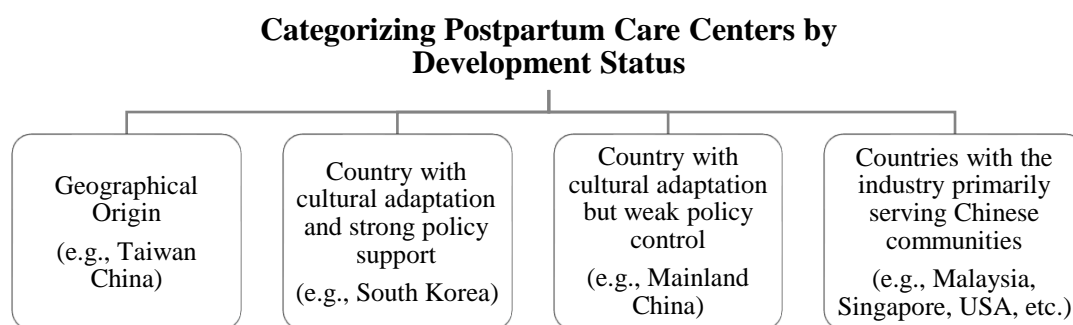


Figure 2 The four primary forms of development statues in the postpartum care center industry

Geographical Origin and Its Impact

The most mature market for postpartum care centers is in Taiwan, China, which is the birthplace of the postpartum care center industry (Li Yali, 2008; Lu Nanzhi, 2010). Since the late 1980s, the embryonic form of the postpartum care center has been operated by the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department in the hospital, but has quickly separated because the limited space and insufficient human resources. Taiwanese people package confinement practices into commodities and develop them into postpartum nursing centers (Hung et al., 2010a), popularly called 'Tso-Yueh-Tzu Centre' (Hung et al., 2010a). To ensure quality of life and services for women's recovery and newborns' healthy growth, postpartum nursing centers in Taiwan are regulated very strictly, either as postpartum care institutions with medical qualifications, or as hospitals directly under the government. There are no confinement nannies or other nonmedical professionals, all employees are registered nurses, and the hardware design, operating mode, and staffing must conform to uniform industry standards (Hung et al., 2010a). Due to the high operating costs, the daily consumption of postpartum care centers at that time was as high as 2 to 3.5 times the average daily income

of ordinary blue-collar workers (Hung et al., 2010b; Hung et al., 2010a). Nonetheless, the number of new mothers opting for these services has continued, to increase from 7.0% in 2001 (Hung, 2001) to 62.46% in 2019 (Taiwan, 2022; Zheng, 2021), and by the end of 2022, the number of postpartum care centers in Taiwan reached 1,538 (Taiwan, 2022), corresponding to a population of 23.893 million (WPR, 2023); additionally, the price is becoming increasingly affordable.

Country with Cultural Adaptation and Strong Policy Support

Apart from China, South Korea is the country with the highest cultural adaptability to the postpartum care industry (Youn et al., 2021). In this country, postpartum care is viewed as “*Sanhujori*”, and postpartum care center is known as “*Sanhujoriwon*” (Choi & Jung, 2017; Han et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020). The first postpartum care center in South Korea was established in 1996 (Choi & Jung, 2017; Han et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020), this center was established more or less later than the Taiwan–China decade. Fortunately, the postpartum care center industry in South Korea has received considerable government intervention and financial support (Han et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Namu, 2023; Youn et al., 2021). These policies support, motivate, and standardize the service process; thus, this industry has gained high public trust, further contributing to its successful growth. In a country with a population of 51,816 million (WPR, 2023), as of June 2023, the number of effectively registered operating CCs had already reached 469 (South Korea, 2023), with strong local characteristics, and the market utilization rate was as high as 81.2% (Lee et al., 2022; Namu, 2023; South Korea, 2022). Specifically, the typical duration of stay at a confinement centre in South Korea is usually only 2-3 weeks (Choi & Jung, 2017; Song et al., 2020; South Korea, 2022), which is nearly half the length of stay compared to other countries. This significantly reduces costs, making postpartum care more affordable for individuals seeking postpartum care.

Country with Cultural Adaptation but Weak Policy Control

Interestingly, in view of mainland China’s market, the establishment of the Beijing Mother Yuezi Centre in 1999 marked the beginning of the postpartum care center market in Mainland China (Li & Zhao, 2020; Zheng, 2021). Since the policies of Taiwan and mainland have not yet been fully unified, even with respect to cultural adaptation, the management policies of the postpartum care center industry in mainland China are poorly controlled (iiMedia, 2021a, 2022; LIR, 2018), and implementation is also a huge challenge due to the enormous population of 1.426 billion people (WPR, 2023). Several professional research institutes, such as iiMedia (2022)iiMedia (2022)iiMedia (2022)iiMedia (2022)iiMedia (2022), divided the development of the confinement centre industry in mainland China into four stages: 1999-2005 was the budding period, 2006-2015 was the active exploration period, 2016-2019 was the rapid development period, and 2020-present was the stable period (Figure 3). During these years, the service model evolved from the initial strict copying to be wildly different from the standards of Taiwan, with many extended new functions. Statistics from the China Maternity Center Industry Association revealed that there were 5133 postpartum care centers operating until August 2023 in mainland China. A survey report from iiMedia Research, a global third-party data mining and analysis institution established in 2007, showed that 93.5% of the respondents believe that “postpartum confinement” is essential, with 65.8% preferring professional maternity centers for postpartum recovery for themselves or their wives (iiMedia, 2022). However, the data also reveal that due to the high consumption standards associated with these centers, the majority of Chinese consumers are concentrated

in top-tier cities, comprising 71.1% of respondents from first-tier cities, new first-tier cities, and second-tier cities. According to a report by Zheng (2021)Zheng (2021)Zheng (2021)Zheng (2021)Zheng (2021), the penetration rate in mainland China is only 7%-8% in first-tier cities, 4%-5% in new first-tier cities, and 2% in others. Despite the survey showing that consumers are highly satisfied with Mainland China's confinement centres (Jia & Wu, 2021), the corresponding percentage is as high as 85.9% (iiMedia, 2022). This difference still lags falling behind the utilization rate (81.2%) in South Korea, whose market started in similar years with effective policies.



(Adapted from iiMedia Research, 2022)

Figure 3 The four stages of confinement centre industry development in Mainland China

Countries with The Industry Primarily Serving Chinese Communities

Drawing from the service usage experiences shared by consumers—primarily Chinese immigrants—from various countries through the Internet, it becomes apparent that in certain cultures that are not fully adapted to the industry, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, postpartum care centers mainly offer services tailored to Chinese mothers, which may be less accepted by local residents and individuals of other ethnicities. Additionally, in some European and American cities (e.g., the United States, Canada, France), postpartum care centers are established or operated by Chinese individuals. These centers primarily cater to Chinese women but occasionally attract some Western mothers who wish to try their services.

Among such countries, a typical example is Malaysia, which is a multi-ethnic society with three major ethnicities (Malay, Chinese, and Indian). The postpartum care center industry in Malaysia has only a decade of history, but the density of industry coverage is greater than that in other countries in this category. Scholars have reported that most postpartum care centers in Malaysia primarily serve ethnic Chinese mothers (Foong et al., 2021; Yusoff et al., 2018), only a small number of them serve other minorities. However, it could be seen by searching social media (e.g., Facebook) and the website rankings of the Top postpartum care centers in Malaysia that even though the usage intention among local Malay and Indian families is not significant, the market influence on them still increases at a slow

speed, and different ethnicities exemplify private-run postpartum care centers due to their different cultural characteristics. Scholars have reported that Malaysian mothers appreciate these centers as part of their postpartum recovery, through the services provided by the centers, they can receive support from specialized staff (e.g., confinement ladies, chefs, and nutritionists) to ease their stress workload. However, the lack of registration and supervision policies has resulted in the development status of the postpartum care center industry in Malaysia closely resembling the early developmental stages observed in the Mainland Chinese market.

Conclusion

The growth of an emerging industry is often shaped by various factors. This study underscores the manifold benefits that postpartum care centers offer to mothers, infants, and families. Nevertheless, the industry's development status, popularity, operational challenges, policy regulations, and levels of support vary across countries and regions. Existing data highlight that the growth of postpartum care centers is shaped primarily by a blend of cultural, policy, and economic factors.

Cultural Acceptance and Trends

The postpartum care center industry has emerged in response to Chinese culture and has gained widespread acceptance by Chinese communities. Taiwan, where these centers originated, sets a benchmark for cultural values, industry structure, and regulations, contributing to its positive development. Even in mainland China, where regulations are less stringent, modern women appreciate postpartum care centers. In South Korea, these centers are regarded as indigenous cultural products, as evidenced by an 81.2% market utilization rate, highlighting their cultural significance. In Malaysia, the industry is primarily active within the Chinese community, with minimal impact on ethnic Malays and Indians. Limited engagement from these populations reflects a lack of cultural acceptance and consumer mistrust in the market.

Regulatory System and Policy Support

Taiwan benefits from a robust and mature industry regulatory system, fostering the growth of its respective industry. Mainland China faces challenges regulating the industry due to its large population and information disparities between urban and rural areas. South Korea's achievements are closely tied to substantial government support through policies and consumption subsidies, coupled with a smaller population facilitating broad knowledge dissemination. This underscores the crucial role of policy promotion and financial backing in propelling industry growth. In contrast, Malaysia started its postpartum care center industry development later, lacking a fully developed regulatory framework and supportive laws, hindering its progress.

Economic Factors and Marketing Strategies

In Taiwan, China, the postpartum care center industry originated in response to market demand and is highly valued by postpartum mothers. Mothers willingly invest in high-cost confinement, with support from husbands and in-laws. In mainland China, the industry lacks economic subsidies, relying on consumers' economic progress for development. Meanwhile, in South Korea, government consumption subsidies and unified marketing strategies, focusing on a 2-3 week stay, make the industry widely affordable, significantly boosting its development. In Malaysia, similar to mainland China, the higher cost of trial-and-error hampers consumer experimentation with unfamiliar confinement methods.

In summary, the widespread acceptance of new technologies or products by culture plays a crucial role in influencing the success of emerging industries. Cultural trends and attitudes significantly impact consumer adoption. Nevertheless, in situations of low cultural acceptance, government support and promotion become imperative. Government regulations and policies can either facilitate or hinder the growth of emerging industries. Encouraging investment and development requires supportive policies, incentives, and a transparent regulatory framework. The recognition and approval of postpartum care centers by relevant government authorities directly promote the health and well-being of mothers, infants, and families, as well as contribute to the potential development of the national economy. Government initiatives are instrumental in establishing trust among consumers from diverse cultures toward the industry. Economic factors directly influence consumer behavior and purchasing power, guiding marketers to tailor their strategies accordingly. However, postpartum care centers, with the core philosophy of providing high-quality services, inevitably incur high operating costs, leading to high prices. In South Korea, the government addresses consumer economic challenges to promote maternal and infant well-being, contributing significantly to the successful development of this industry.

Thus, the growth of the postpartum care center industry is closely shaped by a delicate balance of cultural beliefs, policy support, economic factors, and effective marketing strategies. Understanding and addressing these factors in each region are paramount for the sustained development and success of the industry.

Contribution

The research on the emergence and evolution of postpartum care centers significantly advances the current understanding of the industry and fills a gap in academic literature. Prior to this study, there was a lack of research examining the market of postpartum care center industry. This study addresses this gap by identified and categorized the industry's market development status, trends, and growth influencing factors, thus provides a framework for understanding the global landscape of this industry. Furthermore, identified cultural beliefs, policy support, economic factors, and marketing strategies as key influences on industry development enriches existing theoretical perspectives on market dynamics and cross-cultural healthcare practices, contributes significantly to theoretical contributions.

In practical contexts, this study uncovers significant disparities in the development of the postpartum care center industry across countries and regions, and offers valuable insights to policymakers, healthcare professionals, and industry stakeholders. Moreover, categorized specific segments based on geographic origin and cultural adaptation can provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the industry in various contexts.

Overall, this study serves as a foundational resource to inform future research endeavors, policy interventions, and strategic planning initiatives within the industry. Its aim is to foster sustainable growth and cultural inclusivity in postpartum care centers worldwide, thereby contributes to the enhanced health and well-being of women and infants.

Limitations and Future Study

Given the current absence of market academic research in the postpartum care center industry, the information and data available in this article are extremely limited. The market performance of industry development represents only surface-level insights, and a more in-depth exploration is essential. The success of an emerging industry is determined by numerous factors, and forthcoming market research will delve into the business model of

postpartum care centers from the operators' standpoint. We will also scrutinize consumer motivations and intentions regarding service usage. It is through these efforts that aim to make meaningful contributions to the industry's growth and, ultimately, enhance the well-being of mothers and infants, delivering more significant value.

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