



MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the second largest growing business area after information technology in the global economy. Many of the economies are successful in marketing their country as destination and generating a substantial amount of foreign exchange from tourism sector. Even countries with poor level of infrastructure and facilities are able to attract investors to invest money in their country for tourism promotion. Tourism promotion, like other forms of marketing, largely depends on the customer traffic- If there is a growing customer traffic trend then more and more money shall flow to an economy in the form of gross revenue earnings and also as foreign direct investments for tourism destination marketing. The rich cultural heritage of India has always evoked a sense of great awe among people all over the world. Preserving this heritage should be an integral part of modern tourism management. People and customs, myths and legends, rites and rituals, festivals, pilgrim centers, Ayurvedic medicine and Yoga of India have rich potentials for achieving diversification of tourism products packages and circuits. Proper researches conducted on these will provide new insights to those who are actively involved in tourism industry and other industries related to tourism, which will help them to introduce qualitative and quantitative changes in their packages.

MEDICAL TOURISM:

Medical tourism is a term that has risen from the rapid growth of an industry where people from all around the world are traveling to other countries to obtain medical, dental, and surgical care while at the same time touring, vacationing, and fully experiencing the attractions of the countries that they are visiting. Medical tourism (also called medical travel, health tourism or global healthcare) is a term initially coined by travel agencies and the mass media to describe the rapidly growing practice of traveling across international borders to obtain health care. Such services typically include elective procedures as well as complex specialized surgeries such as joint replacement (knee/hip), cardiac surgery, dental surgery, and cosmetic surgeries. However, virtually every type of health care, including psychiatry, alternative treatments, convalescent care and even burial services are available. Over 50 countries have identified medical tourism as a national industry. Factors that have led to the increasing popularity of medical travel include the high cost of health care, long wait times for certain procedures, the ease and affordability of international travel, and improvements in both technology and standards of care in many countries.

MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA:

India is known in particular for heart surgery, hip resurfacing and other areas of advanced medicine. The government and private hospital groups are committed to the goal of making India a leader in the industry. The industry's main appeal is low-cost treatment. Most estimates claim treatment costs in India start at around a tenth of the price of comparable treatment in America or Britain. India is becoming the destination of choice for US citizens seeking complicated, high-end medical procedures. India has one of the best pools of qualified professionals in every field of health care domain combined with world class Medical facilities comparable with any of the western countries. India has state of the art hospitals and the best-qualified doctors.



The health care sector in India has witnessed an enormous growth in infrastructure in the private and voluntary sector. The private sector, which was very modest in the early stages, has now become a flourishing industry equipped with the most modern state of the art technology at its disposal. It is estimated that 75-80 per cent of health care services and investment in India are now provided sector. The privatization of the Medicare sector has brought with it five-star facilities and world class treatments.

Health tourism is a developing concept whereby people from world over visit India for their medical and relaxation needs. Most common treatments are heart surgery, knee transplant, cosmetic surgery and dental care. The reason India is a favorable destination is because of its infrastructure and technology in which is in par with those in USA, UK and Europe. India has some of the best hospitals and treatment centers in the world with the best facilities. Since it is also one of the most favorable tourist destinations in the world, Medication combines with tourism has come into effect, from which the concept of Medical Tourism is derived

In India, medical treatment is not only fast but also costs a fraction of what it costs in USA or Europe. Even tele-consultancy is available for expert opinion and transmission facilities. Some of the states have already established themselves as destinations for health care and medical tourism. The growing need is for high level specialized treatments like transplantation of vital organs, cancer treatment, neuro surgery, cardiac surgery and many more. India is promoting the "high-tech healing" of its private health care sector as a tourist attraction.

The Government hopes to encourage a budding trade in medical tourism, selling foreigners the idea of traveling to India for low cost but world-class medical treatment. Dr. Naresh Trehan, executive director of Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre, a leading private healthcare provider, says India has established world-class expertise in practices such as cardiac care, cosmetic surgery, joint replacements and dentistry. "Health tourism is going to play a major role in the days to come," said Union Health Minister Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss. But we have to improve infrastructure for that. To improve infrastructure, the public sector needs a certain budget allocation, though in the private sector they have no problems with going ahead.

In fact, health care is the world's largest industry today. In India, it is worth about Rs 80,000 crore and accounts for nearly 5 per cent of the GDP. According to a study on health care by the Confederation of Indian Industry and McKinsey, a consultancy, medical tourism can generate an additional Rs 15,000 crore by 2018 and will account for 5-6 per cent of the market.

"At this juncture we cannot sit back," said Dr Prathap C. Reddy, chairman, Apollo Hospitals. "We have everything to move ahead." The private sector has already rolled out the red carpet. The makeover is striking: hospital floors are squeaky clean and interiors compete with those of five-star hotels. Many hospitals have prayer rooms, translators, visa extension and currency exchange services. Some hospitals are also tying up with travel agents and insurance agencies. "We are planning charter flights between Dhaka and Bangalore and talking to two or three airlines," said Shetty, whose hospital had 8,000 patients from Bangladesh last year. Apollo Chennai is planning to send some patients for alternative therapy to Soukya, a holistic health centre in Bangalore.

But all this is only in addition to quality medical care. "Professional expertise in the country is as good as in the best hospitals abroad," said Dr S.K. Sama, chairman of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi. "We give personalized attention at much lower costs but provide top-of-the-line services. In five years, things would be totally different. Europeans would be seeking health care here." The reputation of Indian medicos the world over is helping. For instance, when US-based Yonke Stephan, 40, was found unconscious in his hotel room while



in Mumbai on work, his family, who rushed to his side, decided to get his stroke treated in India (at Lilavati Hospital). "We had the choice to take him back, but we had immense faith in the doctor. Even back home we may have got an Indian doctor, said Pauline Mangwa Yonke, stephan's mother.

Equally happy is 59-year-old Thadeo B.M. Buggingo of Tanzania about his month long stay at Manipal Hospital in Bangalore, where his cancerous larynx was removed. "Tanzania about his month long stay at Manipal hospital in Bangalore, where his cancerous larynx was removed. India is well-known in Tanzania for it, affordable treatment, wrote Buggingo as he could not speak- " I have never seen such kindness. Imagine the doctor assisting me with medicines from his sample kit and waiving his charges to lessen my financial burden. My expenditure would come to around \$2,000 (Rs 91,700), including air fare. I had got a quotation of \$3,700 [Rs. 1,70,000) for four days from hospitals in South Africa and Kenya.

One person who is actively involved in promoting medical tourism in the capital is Dr Naresh Trehan, cardiologist and executive director of Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre. "We want to promote independent accreditation to identify hospitals that meet international standards, grade hospitals according to their facilities and fix costs "said Trehan, who is president of Indian Health Care Federation, an autónomous body of hospitals and equipment manufacturers that, along with the CII, is looking into the scope of medical tourism. In Mumbai the Fedaration of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry formed a 22-member council for promotion of medical tourism.

The government, which is launching an international ad campaign next month, too has recognized the potential of the industry. A few months ago, Union Minister for Tourism, Smt. Ambika Soni said in Parliament that medical tourism was an evolving concept and some states—like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Delhi --with medical facilities of international standards were promoting it. Karnataka has been showcasing its health services at travel marts in Bahrain and the UK. "We took out advertisements which said Rahul Dravid invites you home," said Mahendra Jain, Karnataka's commissioner for tourism. Patients, on their part, are spreading the good word about Indian health care. Buggingo, like Proffitt, is planning to write about his stay in India. Helen Collie of Seychelles will make her three children read her diary on her month long treatment at Apollo Chennai for cancer.

EMERGING TRENDS IN MEDICAL TOURISM:

India is no doubt emerging as the fastest growing place for Medical treatments. With world-class medical care, equipment and facilities now available in India, patients from the United States, European and other developed countries are coming here for treatment. American citizens not covered by insurance or those in countries such as the United Kingdom where there are long waiting lists for many National Health services prefer to receive treatment in a country like India where top tier institutions can provide high quality health care at a fraction of the cost. Our training standards for doctors and nurses are those equaling to U.S. levels. Indian doctors have established their credentials all over the world. Today, 7 percent of doctors in America are Indians and 11 percent of the specialists are Indians.

Language is another big advantage in India. Doctors and nurses are all Indians but since most of them are trained in United States and United Kingdom people visiting India for treatment do not have any problem understanding them. The most important factor for treatment in India is the cost factor. If we compare the cost of treatment in United States and other European countries, the cost spend in India for treatment including 5 star category boarding, lodging and transportation along with the cost of return air ticket from your country is just a fraction of what you would have actually spent in your country just for the treatment. Several medical experts say India has established expertise in practices such as cardiac care,



cosmetic surgery, joint replacements, and dentistry. And it has immense potential for medical tourism as medical costs skyrocket in the United States and other developed countries.

HOLISTIC TOURISM IN INDIA :

India is now known in particular for Curative and Rejuvenative Ayurvedic Treatment. The Holistic tourism is increasing day by day in the country for this there are many variations of Spas came out and promoting holistic and rejuvenating tourism. Some are fitness oriented, others dedicated to holistic health, and yet others focus on pampering body and soul. You can relax for a few hours at a nearby spa or head to the hills to escape the world for a week or more. As you begin your search for the best spa that suits your life style and needs. The recent surge of interest in alternative medicine and the search for traditional and natural remedies has resulted in the opening up of spas offering Ayurvedic oil massage and other related treatments across India. These are the few top most spas:

The Spa at Devi Garh-Udaipur

Away from the stress of city life, Devi Garh is the perfect place to optimize your well-being. It is the best place to soothe your body, stimulate your mind and strengthen your spirit. Along with a gymnasium/steam/ sauna, "OcuZZi and beauty parlor/ the spa offers complete ayurvedic therapies. The therapists use medicated oils and herbal pastes for different therapies ranging from relaxing massages to complex treatments. The enveloping silence is only broken by the occasional sound of running water in the courtyards. For the renewal of energies one needs an environment of total harmony to reach inner peace. Experiencing yoga and meditation in the ramparts of the palace during sunrise further enhances the calming effect of the white rooms of the palace resort. The tranquil atmosphere helps you feel rejuvenated and refreshed and gives the feeling of being at harmony with yourself.

Club One Fitness Centre and Spa - Crown Plaza Surya, New Delhi

With an accent on 'complete' health and detoxification as opposed to plain workouts and musclebuilding, this spa club is designed as a holistic health and fitness centre. The club combines fitness, membership programmes, physical therapy, cardio-pulmonary rehabilitation, weight control programmes and ayurveda in a balanced manner. The interiors offer an instant calming experience owing to the use of colour and music therapy. The centre offers a full-fledged ayurvedic treatment centre-cum-spa, as an extension of the overall holistic healing theme. The centre has been designed by Total Integrated Designs, Singapore. There are many pampering therapies to choose from including, Abhana or rejuvenation therapy, Sroc/hora, PizhicM or oil bath, Tarponam to de-stress eyes, Kizhi or herbal bun therapy and Leepanam or body wrap therapy. There is also a cardiovascular section and a separate power workout area.

Ayurvedic Spa - Ayura/ The Heritage Village Club-Goa

The spa specializes in health and rejuvenation treatments through massages and steam therapy. Cure for ailments like arthritis, rheumatism and stress, and even chronic ailments through high quality ayurvedic medicines, oils and lotions is available. The therapies offered include medicated oil massages, herbalised steam and dry massage, using powers for ailments as chronic as cervical and lumbar spondylosis, diabetes, stress, obesity, sinusitis and psoriasis. Guests can choose from special treatment packages that can be an individual session, three to six day package or an intensive 12 day-treatment deal.

The Angsana Oasis Conference and Spa Resort, Bangalore

At the resort's Spa Pavilion, you can unwind in the privacy of your personal massage room while experts soothe your nerves with the massages of your choice. The prominent highlight of the resort is the signature spa and ayurvedic treatment centre set in natural surroundings. The spa pampers you with an extensive range of holistic ayurvedic treatments such as luxurious body wraps, invigorating massages, body scrubs and facials while at the



some time offering traditional Indian massages. The spa resort is owned and conceptualized by the Prestige Group and will be managed by Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, Singapore.

Spa Oasis/Grand Hyatt, New Delhi

Pamper yourself in one of the nine treatment rooms and then sample the beauty salon to experience the top stylists and beauticians. Located within 10 acres of landscaped gardens/Spa Oasis is spread over a spacious area of 11000 square feet. Treatments are a blend of various traditional and oriental rituals with a modern scientific basis. Different varieties of herbal products have been sourced from traditional sources like Kerala and the Himalayas to give an authentic touch to your spa experience.

The best of the east and the west have been brought together and you can take your pick from lifestyle consultations stress busting yogic sessions and workshops, aqua aerobics/ cardiovascular conditioning, muscle building and toning/ sauna/Turkish baths, herbal mud baths and a large variety of massages.

Oberoi Spa by Banyan Tree, New Delhi

Feel the tension leave your body as trained Thai therapists restore the natural balance of your body with personalized holistic therapies based on both ayurveda and Western therapies. Unwind in the steam rooms/ sauna and Jacuzzi, indulge in rejuvenating beauty treatments or restore your inner balance with a session of yoga in natural surroundings. Apart from the Indian ayurvedic system, the Oberoi spas give you a choice between Thai, Balinese and Hawaiian holistic treatments.

Ananda — In the Himalayas

The Ananda Spa is dedicated to restoring balance and harmonizing body energies with holistic therapies and activities, incorporating the healing principles of the east and the west with specific focus on Ayurveda and Aromatherapy along with the contemporary spa technology. Personalised therapy activities and programmes designed to meet individual needs and health goals along with guidance on nutrition, exercise, stress management, detoxification, deep relaxation and anti-ageing, complete the spa experience. The healing process involves following the principles of diet/ yoga, herbal medication/ massage/ periodic excretion of toxins by Panchkarma and meditation.

Somatheeram/the Ayurvedic Beach Resort, Thiruvananthapuram

Described as the abode of ease/ calm and comfort, Somatheeram is a happy harmony of tradition and elegance offering a variety of therapeutic packages for all seasons. The programmes include rejuvenation therapy, various clinical treatments and beauty care. An in house production unit at Somatheeram ensures the quality of medical preparations. A carefully nurtured garden of rare and precious medicinal herbs is the source of Somatheeram's ayurvedic concoction and oils. The prime ayurvedic treatments embrace body purification therapy, body longevity treatment, slimming programme/ beauty care and spine and neck core programmes among others. The treatments and therapies help to rejuvenate the body, revitalize the senses and appease the soul.

CONCLUSIONS

The product marketing does not involve much complexity like tourism marketing. Medical Tourism marketing is a very complex phenomenon because the number of uncontrollable factors is more than the number of marketing mix variables. Though the conventional marketing wisdom says that larger social and political factors affect the marketing offer in product marketing but it is more prominent in the case of health tourism marketing.

People and customs, myths and legends, rites and rituals, festivals, pilgrim centers, kings and queens of India have rich potential of achieving diversification of tourism products, packages and circuits. Proper researches conducted on these will provide new insights to those who are actively involved in medical tourism industry and other industries related to



tourism, which will help them to introduce qualitative and quantitative changes in their package.

This will also help in creation of 'Special Tourism Areas' for investment and development, which will reduce the burden on existing circuits. Medical Tourism products based on cultural heritage are unending. Cultural tourism products are to be developed in order to assimilate and support local needs and aspirations. These new products must promote local cuisine, the use of local materials and handicrafts, and develop a whole range of other participating tourism services viz. local folkloric performances, hand-crafts demonstrations, cultural and recreational activities, heritage walks, etc. It must also encourage the creation and development of tourism enterprises operated and owned by local people.

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