

Growth and Development of Wellness and Medical Tourism in India

¹Mr. Sunil Kumar, ²Dr. S.K. Gupta

¹Research Scholar

^{1,2}Centre for Mountain Tourism and hospitality studies,

HNB Garhwal university (A central university) Chauras campus Srinagar Tehri Uttarakhand -249161 India

Abstract:

India has been a regional of healthcare hub for neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and the Middle-East since ancient times and it also had a strong background for developing a unique medical treatment which had been patronized by the kings and merchants and others during the historical periods. Ancient Indian literatures like *Upanishads*, *Bahamians* and others were strongly advocated the supremacy of medical treatment and medicines used were prepared mostly using herbs and shrubs collected from nature across the India this wonderful country is a treasure trove of health, as it had been since from thousands of years. India history in medicine dates back to the Atharva Veda, the first Indian text dealing with medicine and treatment and it is truly awe-inspiring with its traditional treatment therapies such as the Ayurveda , Yunani, homeopathy and siddha which have been passed down through hundreds of generations and still are very effective for humans being and other creatures. Historical accounts of India as narrated by different foreign travelers disclosed that free medical treatment was offered to the foreign patient in the olden days, such facility was also provided to the other courtiers, for the needy people at free of cost. During early mid Mughal period Delhi was emerged as a well-known Centre for conclaves of physicians and surgeons, Traditionally some unique treatment methods was developed starting from Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) in our country. Such system has been evolved through an evolutionary phases. India was one of the first Asian countries to recognize the export potential from medical tourism. Since 2002, after the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) produced a study on medical tourism in collaboration with Mc Kinsey management consultants, the Indian Government has strongly supported the development of the wellness and medical tourism in India. Moreover, this is helping in improvement of infrastructure, development of economy and the marketing of Indian medical treatment abroad. Between 2009 and 2011, the number of medical tourists seeking treatment in India increased by 30%. Based on past growth, the number of medical tourists going to India is estimated

to grow to nearly half a million annually by 2015. Since after the 2015 medical tourism is going like anything in India and millions of foreign tourists are going annually for various medical purposes and improving their health.

Keywords Medical Tourism, Well Tourism, AYUSH, Holistic health,

Introduction

Wellness Tourism is a term used to describe the rapidly growing practice of travelling across international borders to seek Wellness & Medical services. Services typically sought by travelers include elective and essential procedures as well as complex surgeries etc. India attracts patients from all over the world. The indigenous or traditional healthcare practices like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Naturopathy, and Yoga provide uniqueness. According to a study, the global wellness tourism industry is estimated at \$439 billion, representing 14 percent of all tourism spending. Medical India tourism is mainly for medical, dental and surgical treatments that may not be available in other places. Even though it may be available, it will surely cost more than the Indian fee. Coming to India for treatment has become a popular mass culture. In the past few years, we have seen a significant growth in the medical tourism in India. The business is growing rapidly at the rate of 30 % every year. One of the main reasons is that the standards of the treatment and hospital facilities have improved in the country. Thus, you can proudly say that India is ranked 2nd in the world medical tourism.

Globalization is one of the main factors that helped this sector grow. Not only does the medical field grow, but it also helps other industries such as hotel and travel also grow. Medical tourism, basically, consists of bio-medical procedures in the field of cardiology, cosmetics, dental, orthopedics, cancer, fertility, weight loss, etc. Health care and tourism are the largest industries in the world, and when they are both combined, it will surely create a phenomenal change in the global market. Many other countries such as Greece, Singapore, South Africa, Jordan, Malaysia, and the Philippines offer medical treatments at lower rates. Though India has entered into this field much later than the other countries, it is catching up fast.

Why India is most preferred destination for Medical and wellness Tourism

1. Yoga and Ayurveda

India's wellness offerings include yoga, meditation and Ayurveda, these things are really resonating with people. People in the West have a lot of interest in the Indian system of medicine such as Ayurveda and yoga. Yoga & meditation helps people to detoxify themselves and be in a state of mindfulness. Visitors coming to India for wellness-based trips, often spend a fair amount of time visiting here, learning about the ancient arts of yoga and meditation, as well as Ayurveda. Thus, it is providing an opportunity to earn a good amount of foreign exchange. The country's high-profile wellness travelers include Steve Jobs, Oprah Winfrey, Prince of Wales, Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

1. Reduced Cost

India has significantly reduced the cost of international travel and tourism. India has all the facilities in bulk which are required by the tourists. There are a growing number of convenient, inexpensive non-stop or one-stop flights to India. The country had long been attracting hikers and travelers staying at low-cost ashrams. All these results in low cost of tour packages to India, which directly attract people from around the world.

2. Availability of Healthcare Alternatives

Due to fast-paced lifestyle now in developed countries, there is an increase in the demand for alternative healthcare practices. India's healthcare & wellness offerings go beyond Yoga & Ayurveda. The country is the hub of some of the unique alternative healthcare services such as homoeopathy, naturopathy, traditional spas and organic diets offer more diverse experience to customers. These are increasingly becoming popular among foreign patients as a non-surgical treatment for various ailments.

3. Quality of care

India has 33 JCI accredited hospitals, however, for a patient traveling to India, it is important to find the optimal doctor-hospital combination. After the patient has been treated, the patient has the option of either recuperating in the hospital or at a paid accommodation nearby. Many hospitals also give the option of continuing the treatment through telemedicine. The city of Chennai has been termed

'India's health capital' Multi- and super-specialty hospitals across the city bring in an estimated 150 international patients every day. Chennai attracts about 45 percent of health tourists from abroad arriving in the country and 30 to 40 percent of domestic health tourists, Factors behind the tourist's inflow in the city include low costs, little to no waiting period, and facilities offered at the specialty hospitals in the city. The city has an estimated 12,500 hospital beds, of which only half is used by the city's population with the rest being shared by patients from other states of the country and foreigners. Dental clinics have attracted dental care tourism to Chennai. Moreover, there are various other reasons for visiting India most for wellness and medical tourism; (1) Great expertise of doctors, the doctors hold degrees from reputed colleges across the world. They also have great experience in the field. (2) Cost effectiveness, the treatments will cost you very less than in any other country. The cost difference when you compare India and other countries is huge. If a treatment costs \$70,000 in the UK, it will cost \$1, 50,000 in the US, but the same treatment will cost only from \$3000 to \$10,000 in India. (3) Availability of treatment very rapidly, (4) lesser waiting time. (5) Hospitality to the family accompanying the patient (6) No language problems as there are fluent English speaking professionals. (7) There are many attractions for tourism. Along with treatments, the people can also enjoy some sightseeing. (8) There is political transparency. All the paperwork is easy and fast. Thus, India is an emerging destination for people who want to get better health treatments. One day, it is going to be the most preferred country for healthcare facilities.

Challenges for India to overcome

In spite of so many advantages that create wider medical tourism opportunities for India, there are certain aspects that can hinder its effort in the field. An important concern is its infrastructure that lacks at some places to provide better flight connectivity, proper roads, and healthy water and food. If infrastructure development were targeted, it would support India in attracting more tourists. In addition, many medical facilities are still not internationally accredited in India. This is a good area to work in, as making these facilities meet higher healthcare standards can add extra facilities to its kitty. Apart from the above factors, patients are concerned about hygiene levels in medical facilities. Thus, medical attendants need to be made more aware of it. They also require to be trained for better interpersonal and communication skills. Additionally, there is good scope for improvement in the area of service marketing. People in other countries

need to know how India can help them effectively regarding their healthcare issues. Some joint ventures with medical care firms in other countries would also support its marketing efforts. There is an overall better review of bureaucratic policies required to grow in the medical tourism industry. Thus, opportunities can be well cashed-in if the country overcomes its limitations.

Opportunities and Advantages

With a good level of contribution to the global medical tourism industry by attracting patients from various first-world countries, India has displayed great potential for leading the healthcare markets. Various factors can become great opportunities for India regarding the future growth and development of medical tourism in the country. One major advantage is the cost factor. The treatment in India costs about 1/10th of what a developed country offers, even when talked about a complex medical surgery. Due to better research and development in the pharmaceutical industry and low drug development costs, India has also been able to provide cost-effective medication. Another advantage of India is in the quality of healthcare it offers. There are various state-of-the-art medical facilities and immense talent in terms of internationally trained healthcare professionals. The caregiver staff and professionals are competent to communicate in English that gives them an edge while interacting with medical tourists from all global destinations. The involvement of private sector in the healthcare field has also created a great opportunity for India to place itself well in the medical tourism industry. In addition, India has always attracted tourists through its rich and luxurious culture, as well as its alternative medical techniques like yoga and spiritual healing.

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