



HEALTH TOURISM – AN EMERGING SERVICE PACKAGE IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT Health Tourism is a multi-composite package of services offered to the tourists those who are seeking medical treatment along with tourism services. There are four different players significantly contributing to design the health services combo, viz-a-viz, health care, travel, and hotel and Tourism service operators. Indian Government also had taken initiative measures to probe the health tourism all over India and even beyond the border of India, to attract the foreign tourists. The configuration of services specially made to meet out the special requirements of the medical tourists to consider the health care as the prime. It is agreed that, the health tourism is contributing towards the economic growth and development both directly and indirectly. It needs to evolve like distinctive services to explore the incredible nature of India.

KEYWORDS : ForEx, Healthcare, Health Tourism, Insurance, M-Visa, Travel

INTRODUCTION

In India, tourism service sector had ancient history; there are varieties of tourism services are emerged in recent days. The reasons for the emergence of different variety of tourism services are purely to meet out the specific requirements of the customers. Now-a-days the tourism packages are configured based on the requirements of the customers. One stamp package will not be suitable to fulfill the expectations, desire and interest of the variety of customers. It is inevitable to plan and design according to the desire of customers to boost up the progress of tourism industry. The following table describes the different types of tourism services with its proper description offered by tourism service providers in India.

Table 1 – Tourism Types

Type of tourism	Description
Rural tourism	15 eco-holiday sites across the country
Cruise tourism	Along Cochin shores; international liners also allowed up to 2012
River cruise	Along the Brahmaputra river, Assam; Godavari and Krishna rivers, Andhra Pradesh; Ganga, West Bengal; Mandovi and Zuari rivers, Goa; Kerala backwaters
Adventure tourism	Several locations across the country for mountaineering, water sports, skiing, river-rafting, trekking, camel and jeep safaris
Camp sites	Camp accommodation for environment friendly tourism at popular but remote locations
Caravan tourism and caravan camping parks	Proposed for development under public-private partnership
Tiger and wild life tourism	Across the country's National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries
Accessible tourism	Barrier free access for older and differently-abled tourists
Luxury trains	Four luxury trains heritage destinations
Lifestyle tourism	Royal retreats, beaches, medical, wellness and spirituality tourism

Source: IBEF – Health Tourism, 2019

The media, life styles, experience, knowledge, Google, Social Network Sites all plays hidden role in influencing the choice of tourism, these are inherently nurturing the viewers to explore different part of the world, to gather different experience, and to enjoy, and these configurations are need of the hour contribution from tourism industry.

Literature reviews

The following are related review of literatures identified and portrayed for Health tourism related study made in domestic as well in other part of the world.

Padmasani and Remya V (2015), underlines the main reason for the increasing trend is the high cost of treatment, long waiting time, less

insurance coverage in developed countries and the attitude of people to spend holidays in a quality manner with the aim of improving health. In India, Kerala is emerging as a prime health tourism hub for its Ayurveda packages. The state attracts millions of foreign and domestic tourists to visit the state's incredible heritage and experience the traditional nature based treatment therapies.

Kee Mun Wong, Peramarajan Velasamy, Tengku Nuraina Tengku Arshad (2014) highlighted the growth of global medical tourism in the recent years had spurred the interest of many governments to join in the bandwagon, particularly from Asia. Using the SWOT analytical model, this paper provides pertinent comparative analysis of the medical tourism destinations here being Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and India. Each destination possesses its own value propositions to convince the demands of medical tourists. Malaysia and Thailand have a good mixture of elements (medical, tourism and wellness) to be an excellent medical tourism destination while Singapore and India need further development in some of these elements.

John Connell (2006) explore the growing importance of health care tourism through where patients travel overseas for operations, has grown rapidly in the past decade, especially for cosmetic surgery. High costs and long waiting lists at home, new technology and skills in destination countries alongside reduced transport costs and Internet marketing have all played a role. Several Asian countries are dominant, but most countries have sought to enter the market. Conventional tourism has been a by-product of this growth, despite its tourist packaging, and overall benefits to the travel industry have been considerable. The rise of medical tourism emphasises the privatisation of health care, the growing dependence on technology, uneven access to health resources and the accelerated globalisation of both health care and tourism.

Some research pioneers are referring the term as health tourism, some other as medical tourism, but at the out said every one agree that the need for health tourism services are plenty. To procure the exclusive demand of the health tourists, the industry should evolve in to different format.

Statement of the problem

The tourism services offered with health care services with proper health treatment is a viable way to attract the patients at different part of the world to India and specific state within India. In Practice, these kind of exclusively design services which is cent per cent meet out the requirements of the customers are not exist in India. If India, plans these kind of services with the support and collaborators effort of different services sector players, it will be make out he synergy effect in the progress, there is no doubt in it.

Objectives of the study

The study is made with the following two objectives,

- To study the current health tourism services status in India
- To explore the variety of services offered by the services partners under Health Tourism services

With these fine tune objectives, to know and aware about the different services designed and offered by different partners under health tourism services are studied.

Research Methodology

This study is purely based on conceptual framework. It is an attempt made by the researcher to know about the health tourism services industry, the major players in the health tourism services industry, the variety of services promised and delivered by these service partners in India. The data required for the study is observed from the authenticated published secondary data resources of Ministry of Tourism and the published survey report of Indian Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF)–Health Tourism report, 2019. This study focussed to list out the variety of services offered under health tourism packages to both domestic and foreign health tourists, which is under the boundary of government regulations time-to-time. The range of services listed here may vary based on the policy changes of government with respect to healthcare, travel, hotel and tourism industry in India. This study is narrating the current situation prevailing India pertaining to Health tourism services, it may or may not reflect the future scenario.

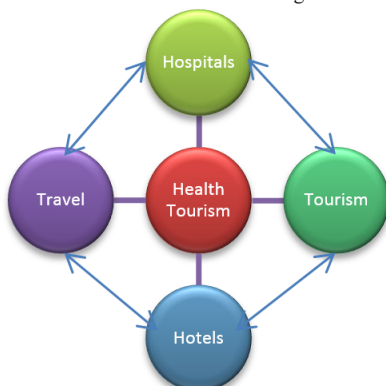
Emergence of Health Tourism

Based on the report of Ministry of Health tourism, there are plenty of services being offered through health tourism as a package of services. It is the combination of two different versatile sectors under services industry, hospital and tourism services. It is the way of attracting both domestic and foreign tourists to India and different states with in India. The patients would like to travel to different destinations for getting the proper and appropriate health care services, if it is being offered with other ventures like travel arrangements, accommodation arrangements, and site seeing arrangement will help them out to claim the services in most excited way.

Moreover the combined packages of services like tourism, travel, hotel and healthcare services will directly supports for the high promotional opportunities for the particular state as well it will help out to generate new form of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. The service sectors are contributing more towards the economic growth by means of improved rate of employment, consumption, money flow, material flow and whole price index of the economy. The improved version of packages will offer collectively different services by making special arrangements and coordination with the experts of other services to provide better experience to the patients.

The Quadrangular model of Health tourism industry

There are four important services are incorporated or coordinated with each other be making proper arrangements to facilitate better and improved services to the patients seeking differences in their experiences. The new and effective model will provide growth for all the involved sectors eventually to generate the different kind of services collaborated with each other. The participants of the Quadrangular model are hospital industry, Travel Industry, Tourism industry and Hotel Industry. The tourism board will offer a variety of possibility for the players in these industries to register themselves to play and promote their offerings in coordinated format. The synergy effect will flourish when everything is executed in proper and prompt way. Even the patients also get benefits like cost effectiveness, guidelines, experiencing the new world, governance, etc. The following diagram will explore the interconnectivity for offering the health tourism services both domestic and foreign medical tourists.

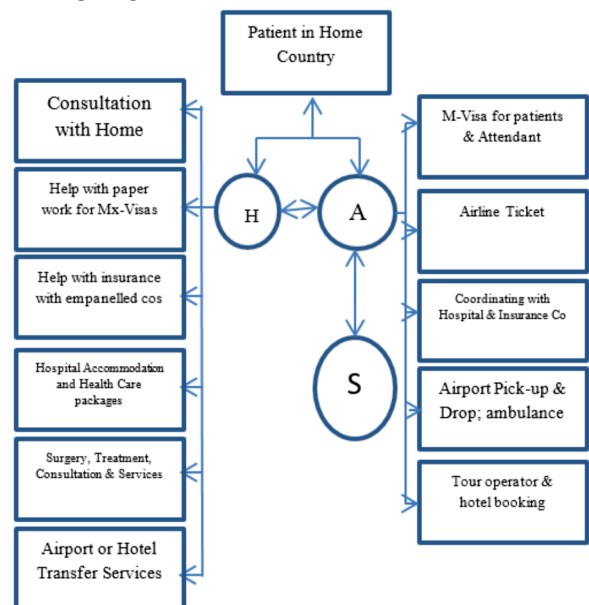


Source: Author

All the industries are promised to cover certain range of services to design the health tourism packages at different levels. The price range determines the composite of different services and it is purely based on the affordability of the medical tourists. The range of services under different combo is varied with respect to price, place of offering, days of offering, customers' expectations, behind all the health care services plays a predominant role in determining the entire combos services. The design gives first priority to the health care services like pre-treatment, post-treatment, hospitalization services, surgery, and its effect on the health of the patient and facilitates the other services partners to design the services accordingly.

Health tourism services and commitment of the partners

The following are the health tourism related services offered in general by various partnering organizations to define and offer the combo services packages under health tourism services.



Source: IMaCs Research

Range of services promised from Hospitals

Hospitals are prim facia organization attracts, offer and decide the health care related services. The health care services industry includes enormous services as listed out by the medical council of India Pre-treatment services

The services to health tourists started even before the commencing the actual health tourism packages. They are interesting to convert the prospects in to customers, by undergoing the services before initiating the treatment for their health issues, it may range like

- Providing information for creating awareness
- Website content development
- Brochure supplement
- Free Contact facility
- Insurance Schemes availability
- Online diagnosis
- Establishment of Overseas network
- Follow up an Commitment

Hospitalization services

The health tourists are often worries about their stay and accommodation in different destination far away from their hometown. The safety and security plays a vital role in determining the choice of hospitalization to get the treatments. They are seeking safety and security provisions not only for themselves inside the treatment centre but also for the attendees who accompanied with them. Again the food and connectivity and local accessibility also the major problem very often explained by the health tourist. During the hospitalization, they are always expecting the good approach from physician, nurse, pharmacist, technician and other persons who are in their approachable proximity. The dimensions of service quality such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are tested, experienced and moreover impacted during the hospitalization services state.

Post-treatment services

The services which are offered by the treatment centres and hospitals after the hospitalization, post-surgery and follow-up services extended to the patients like maintaining the treatment history of the patients, sharing the treatment with the local doctors for further maintenance, online verification and consultations, clearance from the hospitalization procedures, maintaining the secrecy of records, offering and assisting in claiming the insurance services, and so on. It will help to improve the satisfaction level of the patients, and again act as booster to improve the loyalty and brand ambassador for the hospital. It will further induce them to plan their revisit to India, by achieving their delight in services.

Range of services promised by Agency partners

The agency partners are playing inevitable role in designing the combo service packages of health tourism. They are promoting the different culture, dynamism, historical monuments and incredibility of the particular state and entire India as well. The ministry of tourism also initiate important innovations and promotional plan to invite the tourists from local and international level. There are plenty of services are rendered from the travel partner like

- Arrangement of M-Visa for the patients, if suppose they are seeking services from foreign land
- Arrangements of travel plan, travelling vehicle, etc.,
- Pick-up to drop services from the day 1 to end of the packages
- Choice to arrange the different mode of transportations
- Arranging the guide to help the tourists to reach and explore the particular destinations
- Local guide with multi-linguistic talents
- Safety and secured travel arrangements
- Different combo offering, will facilitate the tourist to pick based on their convenience
- Complete coordination with Health-care and hotel and Tourism operators
- Foreign Currency Exchange services
- Foreign currency inward and outwards services through Money transfer
- Detailed description plan before initiating the travel plan

Range of services promised by Tourism providers

There are other kind of services extended by the tourism provides to explore different seasonal celebrations, heritages, culture, ancient monument's, historical places, hills, sea-shore and coastal regions, sea-sun-soil combo, etc., the tourism service providers also come out with different combo and offering the customers to pick from that to have a different experience in any particular state or all over India. The tourism operators are most of the time arranging the local tourist guide to explore the uniqueness of the place of visit, and they will look after the internal arrangements like conveying, permission, staying, food, etc., at the tourism destinations.

Range of services promised by the hotel industry

Hotel industry are arranging a special stay-in facility, sometimes they are offering other unique services like log-in and log-out through online, accepting and dealing with international currencies, tighten safety and security mechanisms, presenting drama, get together, camp-fire, mount climb, dining, dancing, party hall, cultural presentation, etc.,

Apart from the specific services rendered by the different partners of health tourism services, there are other facilitating services and agency services also be extended from the other partners like banking and Insurance Industry. Without the intervention of banking industry the financial commitment and money transfer cannot be effected in prompt and procedural way. Under Health tourism, the insurance industry is playing a very important role; either the private partners or government insurance policies, cards, plans and other coverage extend the helping hand to the patients to claim the right amount for their treatment, so that they can feel financially equipped to spent for other services in health tourism packages.

CONCLUSION

Dominant opportunity for multiple industry, assured growth that too under eventual manner can be visualized through the health tourism services packages. It is a new form services, will facilitate the WIN-WIN situation to both providers and services seekers. Multi-fold developments and contributions initiated from different industry towards the economic growth also visualized through this health tourism service package. To prove the saying "Change is Permanent",

the designing and offering of services under different sectors are enveloped and adjusted with special configuration of the customers to give better satisfaction level.

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