A STUDY ON AYURVEDIC MEDICINES IN MEDICAL TOURISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Travelling around the globe for medical treatment is becoming more and more prevalent these days. Kerala, as one of the several major destinations in medical tourism industry that is rapidly developing, is creating worldwide trademark as “The Medical Hub of Asia”. The objective of this research study is to determine the influencing factors that lead international medical tourists to choose hospitals in Kerala as their medical tourism destination. These factors will be ranked according to importance so as to assist in determining which point the hospital should focus on.

Keywords: Medical tourism, Customer preference, Marketing Mix, Kerala tourism, Ayurvedic tourism

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic medicine is a system of Hindu traditional medicine native to the Indian subcontinent. Practices derived from Ayurvedic traditions are a type of alternative medicine. Ayurveda is a discipline of the upaveda or "auxiliary knowledge" in Vedic tradition. The origins of Ayurveda are also found in the Atharvaveda, which contains 114 hymns and incantations described as magical cures for disease. Kerala lies on the southwest coast of the Indian Peninsula, stretching 360 miles along Malabar Coast and has been noted as the paradise of tourism. Kerala is a prime high-end tourism in the Indian subcontinent and has been rated as “one of the fifty destinations to be visited in one’s lifetime”. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) is the leading agency responsible for the development of standardized tourism definitions. This agency states that tourism is defined as “the set of activities of a person travelling to a place outside his or her usual environment for at least one night, but less
than a year, and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. The phrase “usual environment” excludes trips within the person’s community of residence and routine connecting trips. The phrase “exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. This however does not apply to business related travel such as sales calls, installation of equipment, or convenience where the travellers are located elsewhere then the place visited. Moderate climate, rich art, colourful festivals, diverse natural and cultural attractions with a physical quality of life comparable to developed nations are causing tourism industry to flourish in Kerala. Compare to other states in India, Kerala is unique for its interesting geographical diversity. This diversity offers tourists a range of attractions and experience such as beaches, backwaters, wildlife sanctuaries, evergreen forests and diverse flora and fauna of Kerala. It is often projects as the “Green Gateway” to India.

Tourism has been a major growth industry globally for over five decades. Factors underpinning this growth include the growth of incomes and wealth, improvements in transport, changing lifestyles and consumer values, increased leisure time, international openness and globalization, immigration, special events, education, information and communication technologies, destination marketing and promotion, improved general and tourism infrastructure and so on. Tourism is one of the few sectors where Kerala has clear competitive advantages. Kerala has natural advantages in this industry, in terms of beautiful hills and valleys, lakes, waterfalls, backwaters, lagoons, and beaches. The state is also well-known for its manmade natural advantages, such as national parks and wild life sanctuaries. Kerala’s traditional dance forms, cultural festivals, temples, and traditional medicine are major tourist attractions. Kerala is also India’s most advanced society in terms of educational attainment.

1.1. Importance of Tourism
It is worth analysing the performance of the tourism sector in Kerala against the backdrop of its dismal performance in South Asia in general and India in particular. At the outset it seems pertinent to point out that this discussion is marked by deep crevasses in the development paradigm that underlie Kerala’s social transformation in the post-colonial period. The celebrated ‘Kerala model’ of development seemed to have reached its logical conclusion by the late 1980s. Advances made in the social sectors are receding against a shattered productive base. Declining agricultural and stagnating industrial growth in Kerala has made observers forecast a bleak outlook for the state. The situation is compounded by globalisation, as trade liberalisation has made Kerala’s export dependent economy shatter. From the early years of the 1990s tourism was identified as a sector that could provide a fillip to Kerala’s economy by enhancing foreign exchange earnings and generating employment opportunities. The new initiatives in the tourism sector coincided with the second-generation liberalisation policies at the national level beginning in 1991.

1.2. Kerala’s Tourism Assets
Categorization The various tourist attractions in Kerala can be classified broadly as cultural attractions and natural attractions.

1.3. Achievements
Rapid growth in tourist arrivals Over the past more than one and a half decades, the total number of tourists increased sharply in Kerala. Between 1997 and 2011, it almost doubled from 51 lakh to 121 lakh, registering an annual growth rate of 9.3 per cent (Figure 11.1). While the number of domestic

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It is significant to note that Kerala is able to capture an increasing percentage of the national pie in foreign tourist arrivals. Its share in India’s foreign tourist arrivals has grown from less than 8 per cent in 1997 to 12.1 per cent in 2012. Clearly, foreign tourist flow has been growing faster in Kerala than at the national level.

1.4. Ayurveda Tourism
There has been a spontaneous growth in Kerala for Ayurveda which has no competition in the Whole world. By unorganized but collective effort the name Ayurveda got branded all over the world. With Ayurveda rejuvenation treatments becoming available widely in different parts of India and abroad, Kerala would have to strengthen its positioning as the real destination for Ayurveda. Traditional Ayurveda treatments in Kerala are famous among the tourists.

The origin of Ayurveda traces back to Vedas: the oldest existing body of knowledge. Through all these 5000 years, in spite of all the negative attitude and rather killer instinct of the foreign invasions and equally worse neglect from our own government in the recent past, this very old traditional medical system of India has survived through ages fulfilling the mission of helping the ailing population through the ways of nature. Tourism is traveling for predominantly recreational or leisure purposes or the provision of services to support this leisure travel. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". Globally, Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. In 2006, there were over 842 million international tourist arrivals. (Tourism, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Tourism is subdivided into: Leisure Tourism Pilgrimage Health Tourism Winter Tourism Mass Tourism Tourism is further subdivided into 31 sub divisions as follows: Accessible tourism Adventure tourism—Hiking, Tramping, Mountaineering Agritourism Archaeological tourism Backpacker Tourism Bicycle touring Bookstore tourism Cultural tourism · Dark tourism Disaster tourism Drug tourism Ecotourism · Extreme tourism Female sex tourism Free Independent Traveller Garden tourism Heritage tourism Literary tourism Medical tourism Music tourism Naked hiking Pop-culture tourism Perpetual tourism Pilgrimage Sacred travel Safaris Sex tourist Space tourism Sustainable tourism Volunteer vacation Wine tourism. (Wikipedia, Free encyclopedia)

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
- To identify the factors that drive Medical Tourism in Kerala.
- To identify the treatments for which the tourists are attracted.

2.1. Medical Tourism in Kerala
Kerala has established itself as a prominent Destination of world leisure tourism for its natural beauty and cultural assets. The growth of Tourism in Kerala has been induced by the buyer driven factors. The collective marketing effort through the tourism department has been limited. The scenario of Medical Tourism is also not much different from leisure tourism. Medical tourism in Kerala grew without much will full collective effort. It was recognized as an opportunity by some sectors, particularly the Ayurveda sector who took some collective effort to convert Kerala a source for Ayurveda treatment. Then came Dentistry and Modern Medicine.
A combination of many factors has led to the increase in popularity of medical tourism in Kerala:

- Traditional systems of medicine like Ayurveda and Siddha are widely popular in the state, and draws increasing numbers of tourists
- High costs of healthcare in industrialised nations
- Ease and affordability of international travel
- Improving technology and standards of care.

2.2. The major specialties of Medical Tourism in Kerala
Modern Medicine Cardiac Care, Orthopaedics, ENT, General Surgery, Cosmetic Treatment, Urology, Ophthalmology, Fertility Treatment, Neurosurgery, Dental care, Alternate Medicines Ayurveda Homoeopathy, Sidha Naturopathy.

3. METHODOLOGY
1. Printed Schedules were circulated through enumerators
2. Additionally questionnaires were emailed to all the 78 Ayurveda institutions engaged in medical tourism that have quality certification from the tourism dept.
3. Interviews with Resource Persons actively involved in the promotion of Medical Tourism.

3.1. The Population of the study
1. Hospitals engaged in catering to Medical Tourism with minimum 200 beds offering services in modern medicine in different districts of Kerala.
2. Hospitals of Alternate Medicines including Ayurveda, Sidha, and Homeo Medicines engaged in Medical Tourism in different districts of Kerala.

The Responses
1. 33 responses were received in the category for printed questionnaires
2. 3 responses were received from the e-mail category
3. 2 Resource Persons viz., Dr. Philip Augustine, Managing Director of Lakeshore Hospital P. Ltd. and Dr. Rajkrishnan, CEO, Dr. Rajkrishnan’s Dental Clinic were interviewed. Both of them are very active promoters of Medical Tourism and members of the sub committee for Medical Tourism Development formed by CII. Dr. Philip Augustine is the chairman of this sub committee for Health Tourism Development.
4. A few officials of the Tourism Department of Government of Kerala were also interviewed. Presentation and Analysis General Categories of Respondents Out of the 36 respondents, 17 (47%) are from the Modern Medicine and 19 (53%) from the Alternate Medicine sector. The sample units belong to almost all the major cities in the state and cover 9 districts. Annexure 2 gives the list of the participating medical institutions. The Country-wise Distribution of Health Tourists An attempt was made to analyze the country-wise distribution of Health Tourists. But due to the insufficiency of data it was not possible to arrive at an accurate distribution pattern. Also there is no secondary data available with the Tourism Department regarding Medical Tourism. Subject to this caveat, we present here the findings of our study. In the absence of more reliable data it may be taken as indicative.

Research Methodology
The research methodology used for the purpose of this study was essentially an exploratory research, wherein the hospitals, the medical tourist patients as well as the agents / tour
operators in India and abroad were contacted and issues discussed. A total of around 35 such personnel were contacted. The breakup of these personnel was as follows:

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**3.2. Discussion Relevance of Health Tourism in Kerala**

Kerala is an established tourist destination. Ayurveda is already popular and Kerala is recognised as the number one source for Wellness solution. The Alternative medicine sector led by Ayurveda has been showing vibrant growth in recent years. There is also tremendous scope for Modern medicine including Dentistry in the state. The Advantages of Kerala in Medical Tourism

Nobody can beat India Kerala cost-wise. Our doctors and nurses are accepted all over the world. We are known as compassionate people (even Thailand lack this) Kerala Hospitals give many consultancies under one roof Offer eco friendly environment NRIs all over the world function as ambassadors for Kerala Some US NRIs function as Entrepreneurs facilitating Medical Tourism to India & Kerala: (18 NRI Travel Agents operate in Medical tourism arranging to and fro travel, treatments and sight seeing).

**4. REVIEW OF LITRATURE**

Tourism sector has emerged as one of the devices of economic development, poverty alleviation, employment generation and sustainable human development. Tourism has become the second largest net foreign exchange earner for the country. “Tourism Sector is a major generator of employment. As a highly labour intensive activity, tourism and tourism support activities create a high proportion of employment and career opportunities for low skilled and semi-skilled workers, particularly for poor, female and young workers. Women make up 70 percent of the labour force in tourism sector and half of all tourism workers are 25 years or under. The tourism sector can be an important source of employment for many of the unemployed youth and consequently reduces the poverty in the society” (UNCTAD, 2010).
There are a few studies which discuss the differences between health tourism and medical tourism. Carrera and Bridges (2006) and Connell (2006) have identified „health tourism” with general health and wellbeing, while in „medical tourism”, tourism is combined with medical, surgical or dental intervention to improve or restore health in the long term. International trade in medical services has vast economic potentials in developing countries. Medical tourism is not a universally feasible growth strategy as it is successful only in countries with economic and political advantages that enable them to navigate around international and domestic obstacles to trade in medical services. For a successful medical tourism industry, when coupled with private and public partners, it may lead to public health improvements in developing countries (Bookman 2007). The scope of expanding medical tourism has been increasing due to certain reasons related price and wages. „Emerging” nations have far lower costs of living compared to western countries, because of which wages are far lower. On the other hand they have all the modern facilities which are as good as any western countries along with educated medical professionals who can offer medical procedures for less than half the price Rollyson (2010).

5. PROSPECTS OF HEALTH TOURISM IN KERALA

- Kerala, the beautiful Southern State of India, is a tourists’ paradise
- Kerala as one of the top three tourism destinations in the world
- one of the fifty "must-see” places in the world.
- ideally suited for medical tourism because of its moderate weather throughout the year
- advanced hospitals with world-class facilities, renowned doctors specialized in major disciplines, trained Para medical staff and technicians, and International connectivity.
- Health tourism was one among the 10 key areas that former Indian President A P J Abdul Kalam suggested to develop Kerala.
- Kerala has strongly focused on Ayurveda and its wide array of treatments and medications, world-class facilities are also available in other traditional forms of medicine as well as in modern medical treatment
- Specialty hospitals in Kerala are at the forefront of medical tourism.
- Kerala has a reputation for being a cost-effective destination for modern medicine and Ayurveda.
- The lengthy coastal belt, geographical location, backwaters, large number of beaches, serene hillocks, moderate climate throughout the year and a highly literate population are among the attractions
- Kerala tourism is marketing several Ayurveda & health packages
- got tremendous potential to boom in the medical tourism arena.

Treatment cost saving

- Treatment cost saving is the reason why patients avail medical tourism in Kerala
- Indian hospitals offer low treatment cost for various surgeries at different standard hospitals in India
- Different hospitals in Kerala seem to offer surgeries at cheap cost and reliable services
- The standard of treatment procedures at different Indian hospitals are at per to the international standards
• So, the patients can ensure best treatment facility in Indian hospitals

6. CONCLUSIONS
Kerala is recognized as one of the best tourism destinations in the world. Emerging trend of healthcare travel gives Kerala an opportunity to become world’s best health tourism destination as number of factors favorable Kerala in this regard. It has enough potential in the field of health tourism. It can highlight Ayurveda to attract health tourists. Tourists travelling with different purposes including leisure tourists can be attracted to Ayurveda rejuvenation therapy. Majority of people are unaware of the fact that Ayurveda is very effective for complex diseases also. Kerala is unique in its 265 health tourism potentials. We can see a blend of tourism resources and health care resources in Kerala. It is blessed with different forms of tourism resources such as back waters, beaches, farms, hill stations etc and health care resources both modern and traditional such as Ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha, kalari treatment etc. Vast opportunities exist in health tourism such as preventive health care, music therapy, stress relief programmes etc. Factors hindering the development of Kerala health tourism are bad condition of roads, lack of direct flights, shortage of power, environment pollution, and frequent hartals announced by political parties, un-hygienic and under developed public healthcare system etc. Criticisms against health tourism that it will lead to sex tourism and affect public health care system can be overcome by prohibiting illegal massage parlours and compelling health tourism providers to contribute a percentage of profit to public health care fund and adopt a village to ensure healthcare of the local people.

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