

A Study on Endpoint Marketing in Indian Medical Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Destination Marketing is a way of promoting destinations which includes a city, town, region or a country by attracting tourists worldwide. Destination marketing plays an important role in the tourism industry. It provides not only promotional tool but also strategic planning for the management to sustain its place in competitive global era. Medical Tourism is the emerging sector which contributes the foreign reserves of a country. Many corporate medical centres are having high priority for marketing their products and services. Destination marketing strategies will help to identify the internal and external factors which would attract the tourist seeking cure to medical ailments. The aim of this conceptual paper is to investigate the destination marketing strategies adopted by medical centres and to identify services provided by various corporate medical centres to retain its goodwill in tourism industry.

Keywords: Destination Marketing, Corporate Hospitals, Medical Tourism, Strategic Planning,

I. INTRODUCTION

Destination marketing plays a predominant role in tourism industry giving ideas, strategies and promotional techniques in order to sustain in the competitive economy. Destination marketing not only concentrate on recreational tourism but has made its contribution to health and wellness tourism. In India, tourism industry is the emerging sector which contributes the foreign reserves to the country. Many tourists are travelling to destinations like India for health care services which is cost effective than in their home countries. Corporate hospitals promotes medical tourism by providing quality health services at a lower cost with advance technologies. In recent years, many corporate hospitals have made medical tourism as packages which includes learning about the hospitals, selecting the treatment and doctors, direct contact with medical assistance, arrangement of travel plan, accommodation and post treatment services. Corporate hospitals and policy makers are having high priority to create India as a destination for medical care at international standards.

Destination Marketing

Destination marketing is a way of promoting a destination which includes a city, town, region and a country by attracting tourist worldwide. In India, destination marketing is used for strategic planning for developing the destination which includes a state or region having a competitive advantage. In Kerala, AYUSH treatment is an advantage sector, where the policy makers and medical centres can create strategies to retain Kerala as an Ayurveda treatment destinations. The aim of this destination marketing strategy in tourism is to successfully facilitate the city, town or region to direct and manage the economic advantage of tourism. It will support the development of branding of tourism and tags that are reliable across the whole of the destination tourism, corporate marketing and promotional campaigns (David Ducanson et al., 2010).

Medical Tourism in India

Medical tourism industry has an unwavering growth in India which contributes to the GDP of the nation by bringing foreign capitals. Cost effectiveness, good ambience and advance technology are the major factors for India being a medical tourism hub. India known for diverse culture has also bought its way to health tourism. Many tourist from Western countries visit India for spa and yoga as a part of vacations. Tourists from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria and Pakistan were travelling to India for cure of medical ailments in the year 2015-2016 mainly for orthopedics, cardiology and neurology treatments according to the survey done by (Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, which is part of Ministry of Commerce). Corporate hospitals in India are successful in marketing their services in international markets. India has huge prospect to attract global market because it enjoys a unique place as it provides an exclusive services which includes AYUSH treatments (Mahesh Uniyal et al., 2014).

States like Tamil nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, NewDelhi and Maharashtra are the emerging destinations for medical tourism. These states are known for hospitals with best infrastructure, quality treatments with cost effectiveness.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the destination marketing strategies adopted by the top corporate hospitals.
- To identify services provided by various corporate medical centres to retain its goodwill in tourism industry.

The Following Are Considered To Be the Advantages Of Medical Tourism Destinations

Growth in Economy: Medical tourism destination create a market where both domestic and international reserves flows to a country which gradually increases the GDP of a nation and ultimately the economy will grow.

Increase in employment opportunities: Destination in medical tourism not only focus on one service but it is a coordination of all services including food, hospitality and aviation industries. Therefore it creates employment opportunity and also spread tourism to a larger extent.

Developments and facilities: Destinations involved in marketing must have buildings with best infrastructure and facilities like medical assistance, post treatment services etc., which should be provided for both domestic and international patient tourist.

Stimulus of Industries: Medical tourism acts as a stimulus for various industries including hotel and hospitality industries, aviation industry, insurance and pharmaceutical industries by creating employment opportunity and also growth in service sector.

Reversal of brain-drain: Many medical professionals who are presently working in developed countries would come back to their home town due to the demand and potential on health care services.

Though Medical Tourism is a Growing Sector In India, It Has Disadvantages Too

Lack of Government support: Government had no strong initiative to promote medical tourism in earlier days. Medical tourism in government sector is low than in private hospitals. In India, private corporate hospitals are having advantage on creating medical marketing at global level. Many patients feel that there is medical negligence in the government hospitals.

Low coordination: The service providers in the industry including aviation, hotels and hospitality, travel agents, and hospitals lack coordination in India as they feel individualism is a better scope of earning profit.

No regulatory system: In India there is no proper accreditation and regulatory systems for hospitals. Only 198 NABH accredited hospitals in India (Mahesh Uniyal et al., 2014).

Marketing Strategy Adopted By Indian Hospitals

In India, Destination marketing concept is not highly followed, many corporate hospitals followed niche marketing form of tourism which displays the products and services rendered by them. This creates a transparency over the products offered by medical centres where a tourist can easily make decisions regarding the treatment to be made. In India medical tourism is done as package which includes various services from knowing the hospital to return journey of the patient tourist. As India is a land of diverse culture, people opt for quality treatment along with leisure services which includes shopping, spa and wellness therapy, yoga and meditations etc.

Niche tourism in medical industry is a strategy followed by Indian private hospitals to retain its patient tourist from both domestic and international borders. At present, corporate hospitals follow system called “packages” for medical treatments which includes various services like

- Learning about the hospitals.
- Selecting the medical professional for required treatments.
- Direct communication with medical assistance with the concern hospitals.
- Arrangement of travelling plan including M-visa and conveyance facilities.
- Healthy Food and accommodation.
- Post treatment services which includes recreational visits, shopping, yoga classes etc.

Services Provided By Indian Hospitals

In India, the top corporate hospitals like Fortis, Apollo, MIOT International and Madras Medical Mission provide services which retains its goodwill in the industry. An attempt is made to list out various strategies adopted by leading corporate hospitals to market their tourism products.

International Standard Healthcare: Corporate medical centres highly focuses on international standards to create a market in the present competitive era. Many hospitals have international patient service office where special facilities and information's will be informed exclusively to the international patient tourist seeking medical aids.

Clinical Excellence: International tourist can choose the doctor before arriving to India in the packages offered by the hospitals. Hospitals with good rapport are chosen by patient tourist in order to get cure for medical ailments. Patients can have good inter-personal relationship with doctors and can gets appointment if needed.

Language assistance: Language acts as a barrier in communication in many scenarios but in case of medical advices and ailments is it quiet serious. Though English language is well known for the doctors in India, many tourist patients has problems in communicating in English. So to reduce the risk and to facilitate, corporate hospitals have arranged language assistance who helps in guiding them with doctor for treatments.

Hospitality and Care: People seeking medical aid always need good hospitality and services. Many corporate hospitals provide better facilities which includes good diet based food, conveyance facilities, well maintained rooms and lodging arrangements for patients relatives, accession of internet etc.

Low cost quality care: Many tourist patients from Western countries come to India for its low cost on treatment than in their home country. In India only one-tenth cost is incurred for medical treatments.

Fortis Kiosk: One of the leading hospital Fortis has a unique service of Kiosk 24/7 in Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi for Patient assistance. Help desk staff will coordinate with the hospitals and patients to ensure that best services are provided for them while travelling abroad.

Currency Exchange: Fortis has a currency exchange hub inside the hospital premises for the foreign patients.

Relationship Manager: In corporate hospitals, each tourist patient has an individual relationship manager for better services. They coordinate with the patients for non-medical assistances like formalities for registration, admission and discharge, language assistance and other external requirements.

III. CONCLUSION

Medical tourism is a growing sector which creates opportunities for various industries by therefore contributing to nations GDP. Many hospitals in India has its place in international levels for its services and facilities. In India destination marketing strategy is not highly followed but niche tourism is practiced by corporate medical centres by creating transparency on products and services provided by hospitals. In the present competitive era, India will be on its highest place for providing best cost effective treatments for tourist seeking medical aids.

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