

AN EVALUATION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES TOWARDS MEDICAL TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Medicine and healthcare are categorized by medical tourism marketing as goods and services that may be traded openly. One of Madhya Pradesh's fastest-growing economic areas is medical tourism. Medical tourists that seek treatment in Madhya Pradesh benefit from quick turnaround times, reduced expenses compared to the west, and convalescence times that are decided by the patient rather than the hospital. Given the many research gaps, this study focuses on the management and organization of medical tourism in Madhya Pradesh. The conceptual model has 10 dimensions. The dependent variables are customer happiness and the quality of the services. The independent factors include medical treatment, hospital ambience and security, hospital location, hospitality, registration and networking, tour and travel amenities, testing facilities, pricing, and payment.

KEYWORDS: Marketing Strategies, Medical Tourism, healthcare, medical tourism marketing

INTRODUCTION

The word "tourism" has a variety of meanings, each of which reflects the many features of the activity as well as the personalities and preferences of those who engage in it. Over the years, scholars have made several attempts to interpret the phrase, each using a different approach and point of view. Since the 1800s, tourism has been a feature of everyday life and a perk for the affluent. People would go to far areas to see works of art and architectural wonders as well as to experience diverse cultures and cuisines. The popularity of tourism has increased recently and has expanded to a variety of activities, including (to mention a few) space, medical, spiritual, wildlife, and naval travel. This further muddies up how the phrase should be understood. On the supply side, tourism is a distinct business that must be defined in the context of all the parties involved in making it run well. The author made an effort to provide a thorough and useful definition of tourism after examining and interpreting earlier definitions.

Traveling to new locations was always thought of as a luxury, but in the frantic and fast-paced world of today, it has become an essential part of existence. The demand for travel has increased significantly in recent years, and the industry has adjusted accordingly. The socioeconomic changes taking place in many nations are mostly to blame for this transformation. Socio-cultural developments like dual income homes, nuclear families, and consumerism are brought on by economic advancement and are made possible by industrialization and the easing of cross-border restrictions. People's conviction in the relevance of travel and tourism increased as a consequence of the move to global businesses and the ensuing focus on people and motivation management. Technology advances have made it easier than ever to organize a trip, which has increased people's desire to travel. Tourism destinations that cater to certain client demands and ambitions have increased as a consequence of the spike in demand.

The tourism sector has developed into a cutthroat one that demands adaptability on a daily basis to keep a close link with customer pleasure, safety, and enjoyment. One of the contemporary era's sectors that is growing the fastest is tourism. It is crucial to the development of many nations because of the enormous influx of capital and job prospects in related service sectors. Among the 13 service sectors are those providing transportation services like taxis and airlines, housing like hotels and

resorts, and entertainment venues like amusement parks, historic sites, shopping centers, music venues, and casinos, among others. The Indian tourism sector is making the most of India's great potential to become a top international tourist destination.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM

The psychological component of tourism is typically what makes it unique. The following definitions of tourism are on a spiritual, emotional, and abstract level. In his book *A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Dean McConnell (1976) said that tourism is a "modern phenomenon in which visitors are on a search to reclaim lost authenticity: it provides a chance for modern man to explore the "real existence" of others." This definition has placed a strong emphasis on the visitor experience, and the goals are stated as a "desire to reclaim lost authenticity." A tourist is someone who is curious in other cultures and lifestyles. The suggestion may be a reference to looking for one's real self and the meaning of life. There is a history to every area of the world that explains how it came to be. Some nations with long histories turn into places where "modern man" may learn about their culture and develop an understanding of the past.

According to the author, tourism is associated with locations and places that have a distinct personality due to their rich cultural and historical heritage. The term "lost authenticity" may also refer to the way that the travel and tourism sector pushes travel destinations to conserve and reestablish their distinctive cultures. Millions of dollars are spent by a number of nations to protect and preserve their cultural heritage. To meet the expectations and perceived needs of the visitor, places, things, people, and behaviors are altered and stylised to seem ethnic. On the other hand, tourists consume these displays with their eyes, sometimes unaware that they have been customized to their requirements in order to be attractive and persuade them to purchase a souvenir and snap a picture. According to Mac Connell, authenticity is turning into a commodity, which aids in the "reconstruction of ethnic identity." The author defines cultural tourism and connects it to a number of travel-related reasons. According to Valene Smith (1977), "a temporarily leisured individual who voluntarily travels a distant destination with the intention of enjoying a change." In addition, he talks about "a tourist typology based on the features of culture being investigated and the tourist's motivations: ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, or recreational." According to the author, traveling is a pastime. We can see that the definitions are constructed emotionally, expressing a person's deliberate actions to experience change as a departure from routine activities.

The idea of tourism is that it is a trip that one would take to relax and renew themselves after the strains of everyday life. According to personal interests and preferences, Valene Smith makes distinctions between various forms of tourism (ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, or recreational), as well as the motivations for travel based on many factors that are dependent on the location. On the other hand, Smith seems to have totally disregarded the possibility of business or other types of travel. Maxine Feifer (1985) added the "post-tourist" phenomena to the traditional definition of tourism, seeing it as a game and an essentially false way to experience a different culture. This term refers to a "modern tourist" who chooses "artificial" locations like theme parks like Disney World or other such buildings that have been carefully designed to appeal to the general public. Maxine Feifer refers to them as "post-tourists" and says they "enjoy the non-authenticity and artificiality of these environments." These visitors are fully aware that they are searching for a top-notch experience catered to their requirements when they go to such places.

MEDICAL TOURISM

Globalization has increased the popularity of medical tourism. According to Sheppard et al.'s definition, it refers to those who "purposefully travel from their own province or country to obtain medical care." One of the fastest-growing sectors in the world, medical tourism attracts many people who want to receive medical services (such as cosmetic, dental, optical, and surgical operations) that are unavailable or expensive in their home countries. ³ For several poor nations, medical tourism is proven to be a reliable source of income. ⁴ It is anticipated to be worth between \$38.5 and \$55 billion and is growing between 15 and 25 percent annually. ⁵ Among the most popular locations for medical tourism are Hong Kong, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Turkey. More hospitals and medical facilities are providing their services in these locations so that people may completely benefit from healthcare.

Medical tourists go to foreign or exotic locations for a number of reasons, such as the freedom to do so, the flexibility to arrange for medical care anywhere in the world, and the high expense of health insurance in their own country. Additionally, medical tourists are more likely to get an upfront cost estimate from foreign healthcare providers. Medical travelers may thus obtain treatment abroad without having to compromise on quality thanks to medical tourism. Medical tourism travel companies and facilitators may now provide packages to travelers who desire to get medical treatment in another nation as a result of the globalization of healthcare. These medical tourism businesses have put a lot of effort into connecting with other medical professionals and offering medical tourists top-notch travel goods and services. In order to build, administer, evaluate, and improve a customer relationship system—which is essential for achieving competitive advantages in the medical tourism industry—they usually collaborate with health examination facilities.

Medical tourism is a complex sector, much like other industries, and it depends on other industries, such as business-to-business (B2B), information technology (IT), services, housing, and finance, to deliver goods and services to medical tourists. Many nations are creating legal frameworks and operational plans to assist their expanding medical tourism sectors. As was already said, it has also grown to be a significant source of income for several nations. These nations have kept up significant investments in medical tourism across the board (including IT, social, and human resources). These businesses may be able to reduce marketing costs, boost customer loyalty, and acquire a steady stream of long-term clients by employing effective relationship marketing methods and techniques. The key is to carefully evaluate these IT systems and to ensure the creation of a connection or relationship based on trust, which is formed by the regular provision of high-quality goods or services that at the very least meet customer expectations.

From the standpoint of health providers (such as hospitals and medical examination facilities), medical tourism is about building connections with both medical tourists and its operators. Similar to how effective customer relationship and marketing strategies, advertising, and word-of-mouth promotion can aid in luring customers to other industries, effective customer relationship and marketing strategies, advertising, and word-of-mouth promotion can aid in luring customers to the medical tourism sector. Relationship elements including the standing of healthcare providers, recommendations from friends and family, and doctor recommendations have all influenced recurrent international travel. Relationship marketing may thus be helpful in the medical tourism industry.

RESEARCH IN MEDICAL TOURISM AND RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

The advancement of healthcare information technology has led to an overall rise in life expectancy in the majority of nations. Demographic shifts are anticipated to affect people's desire for travel, way of life, and social structure. Many healthcare systems are unable to keep up with the growing demand, which leads to subpar healthcare services, exorbitant costs, and lengthy wait times. This is true even when hospitals and healthcare facilities have formed strategic collaborations. Many individuals are driven to explore for alternatives to domestic health care by traveling overseas to get medical treatment due to the decrease in cross-border interaction through the Internet (such as websites and emails) and the decreased cost of air travel. According to Smith and Forgone, the patient's decision of where to go was impacted by a number of variables.

According to Bookman and Bookman, there are three types of medical tourism: invasive, diagnostic, and lifestyle choice. In order to assess the obstacles and driving forces behind medical tourism, Ye et al. performed a case study based on the push-and-pull incentive theory. They discovered four sets of antecedents to perceived discrimination: cultural, employee, tourist, and situational variables. Caballero-Danell and Mugomba created a market distribution model that takes into account all of the market's participants and factors, including consumer benefits, branding, infrastructure, the legal system, products, communication channels, intermediaries, target markets, operators, and social issues. Heung et al. created an integrated medical tourism model to analyze the industry in terms of supply and demand.

The supply side of medical tourism is influenced by a number of factors, including hospitals, clinics, private involvement, public engagement marketing strategy, community groups, international activities, certification and verification, communication, and language. A review and identification of the critical elements influencing medical tourism are necessary given its expanding significance and

the sizeable expenditures made in it by diverse stakeholders. By 2021, healthcare and medical treatments will be the world's biggest sector, with tourism coming in second. This is according to Lister. Harker and Egan contend that a complete examination of the scope, methods, and applications of relationship marketing is necessary to properly appreciate the influence of relationship marketing on the medical tourism industry. As a consequence, the goals of this study are to:

(1) Explore the connection between relationship marketing strategies and the medical tourism industry; and

(2) Aid medical tourism operators in recognizing some of the key challenges facing the sector

ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING MEDICAL TOURISM MARKETS

It is generally known how people move between countries of origin and destinations. For instance, most of the patients seeking medical care in Indore are from Western Europe, while other nations profit from enduring historical ties between nations like Malta and the United Kingdom or the United Kingdom and Cyprus (cf. Muscat, 2006). Other people from Western Europe profit from the improved understanding that has resulted from the opening of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (for instance, between the UK and Poland). However, more exact information on patient movements between continents and nations is needed. Estimates are based on industry sources that may be biased and inaccurate, despite the fact that any global map of medical tourism destinations would include Asia (including India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand), South Africa, South and Central America (including Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Mexico), the Middle East (particularly Dubai), and a variety of European destinations (including Western, Scandinavian, Central and Southern Europe, and the Mediterranean). According to Exworthy and Peckham (2006), physical proximity is an important, but not essential, element that affects people's choices to go to certain treatment facilities.

Uncertainty surrounds whether this indicates the "tourism" component, which denotes that individuals are visiting for purposes other from receiving medical care, such as elements linked to improved tourist chances. Most certainly, the distance traveled affects how much it costs to travel. According to Mac Ready, Gray, and Poland (2008), the demand for services may fluctuate, with consumer preferences, currency rates, and domestic and international economic factors all having an impact on travel. Providers and national governments may challenge current suppliers, such as fertility clinics in Latin America (Smith et al., 2010). Additionally, some nations are advertising their healthcare facilities, and booming consumer markets are being supported by brokers, websites, and trade exhibitions.

Currency fluctuations may increase or decrease a country's financial allure, while travel restrictions and security worries may prompt customers to shop in other markets. Furthermore, it is still unclear whether medical tourism qualifies as a luxury product. How does service use vary with price (price elasticity) and does a worsening of the overall economy have an adverse effect on medical tourism demand? Do customers spend proportionally more on treatments as their income increases? A declining economy may have the opposite impact, leading patients to seek care overseas to avoid lengthy wait times and tougher eligibility requirements at home.

CONCLUSION

The entire potential of healthcare tourism yet to be discovered. The industry may reach its full potential with the help of marketing strategies. People are becoming more health conscious as the prevalence of health problems associated with modern lives and habits increases. Like everyone else, they eventually become bored and want to see the world. This has led to the development of other forms of tourism. As a relatively new subset of tourism, healthcare travel is quickly gaining popularity. It's the best of all worlds, a vacation and medical treatment. The purpose of this study is to analyze and provide feedback on the current marketing strategies used by healthcare facilities in Madhya Pradesh. Based on the research conducted and findings drawn, it can be claimed that healthcare tourism is expanding rapidly. Brand growth is possible if the company takes into account the demands of present and future health consumers and responds with treatments that are realistic, quick, and successful. As a result, the country's market share, brand loyalty, and income will all improve.

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