

Medical Tourism Industry in India: Opportunities & Challenges

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Abstract: Now days, the economic position of any country are defined by the input of the foreign exchange in the money market of that country easing the flow of money rotation. Tourism industry is one of the factors of foreign exchange in economy of that nation and it should be well administrated by government and their authorities. In that Medical Tourism has emerged as the fastest growing section in India. People around the world are now travelling to India to avail the opportunity of the world class healthcare service offered by the best experience's healthcare professionals with technologically most advanced medical facilities in very affordable costs. Number of people visit here because of low priced treatment options, availability of range of treatment, improved infrastructure in terms of health facility and beautiful location where they can spend time after treatment. Various organisation including government of India with help of their tourism board with some of the private sector hospital exploring medical tourism industry for tremendous opportunities. As a result, India has now emerged as 2nd most preferred medical tourism industry around the Globe. Within Asia, India, Singapore, Thailand are the top three medical tourism destination which has account 60% of the total revenue in Asia. Developed countries like Canada, UK, USA, Europe etc. travel to India for the low-cost medical surgery treatments. Beside this medical tourism industry has its own weakness and threats. Measures are to be taken for the sustainable growth of medical tourism. This paper is an attempt to analyse opportunity and challenges of medical tourism in India. This research also discusses the key factors that will make India most attractive medical tourism destination.

Key Words: Medical tourism, Medical destination, Global Medical Fraternity.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Medical tourism refers as a travel with the precise purpose of obtaining health services abroad. India is one of the growing destinations for medical tourism as around 1.5 million medical tourists visit every year to India for their treatments. In the medical tourism industry, the leading country in medical tourism are India, Singapore, Thailand, Argentina, Malaysia and Jordan. India ranked 2nd in the world and its growing with a pace of 25% per annum in last few years. As a result, India's health tourism industry has produced the revenue of INR 1,55,650 Crore and the annual growth rate is expected to be increased by 25% in 2018. The current size of medical industry in value terms in India is estimated at a USD 3 billion. As per the study in India, states like New Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra has emerged as best medical centres with good hospital and clinics. The number of foreign tourists comes for medical purposes in the year 2015 was 130,000 which increased by 50% in year 2016 which was 200,000 and till now for the year 2016-17 is about 170,000 tourists who came to India for their treatments. This clearly shows that India is the fastest growing sector in medical tourism.

Since the time of independence Indian hospitals have shown a remarkable progress only few Indians has to go to abroad for their medical treatment. Hospitals in India has specialised in both modern as well as traditional treatment, doctors are specialised in plastic surgery, heart surgery, bone marrow transplant, cancer treatment, orthopaedic treatment and eye care treatment. Difficult surgeries like bone marrow transplant, liver transplant, cardiac surgery are now regularly carried out across the country at lowest cost. The cost of medical treatment in our country is on average one eighth to one fifth of those in western countries. So, many foreigners travel to India for their treatment. India is full of trained and qualified experiences experts and doctors. Most of the doctors have their degree from abroad. Doctors in India are most knowledgeable and that help the country making a money-spinning destination for the people who want to undergo medical treatment. Hospitals in India are well equipped with advance infrastructure facilities that help in providing best treatment to patients. Hospitals have experienced professionals like staff, nurses, cosmetic and dentist surgeons. The staff of hospitals are fully dedicated to their patient's treatment with utmost sincerity.

Although the hospitals have worked according to the International benchmark set by the Global Medical Fraternity, where they have maintained a high level of medical services meeting all the requirement set by Joint Commission International and International Organisation for Standardisation certification. Presently, in India, nineteen hospitals have been qualified by Joint Commission International and 155 by National Accreditation Board for Hospital and Healthcare providers.

2. MEDICAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

In India, medical tourism industry has seen a remarkable growth in past few years. From the ancient time India is well-known for its traditional treatment therapies and establish a recognisable place in medical literature by providing ayurvedic, homeopathic, allopathic medicine not only for Indians but as well as for foreigners. Millions of people across the globe have benefited with the medicinal knowledge of our experienced medical experts. In India, tourist who come for their treatment not only cure their disease but also enjoy the benefits of beautiful scenes, spas, natural beauty and very pleasant weather. States in India known for providing specific fragment of medical treatment as like country capital Delhi who is specialise in providing care for cardiac, mental trauma, orthopaedic and other kind of allopathic treatment, state like Uttarakhand is famous for healing the patient with yoga, meditation and natural medicines, state like Karnataka and Kerala is famous for providing ayurvedic treatment which helps in healing the patient with natural herbs, Tamil Nadu is known for their eye care treatments etc.

Every year people around the globe comes to India for their treatment because Indian Hospitals now provide world class services at a very nominal cost as compare to other countries. The Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) during the year 2016 was 8.80 lakh as compare to the year 2015 which was 8.03 lakh and 7.68 in the year 2014. There has been the growth of 5.0% in the year 2016 over year 2015. The share of (FTA) in India during the year 2016 among the top 25 source countries was highest from USA (17.25%) followed by UK (12.56%), Bangladesh (10.23%), Canada (5.32%), Australia (4.54%), Russia (4.10%), France (3.86%), Germany (3.43%), Sri Lanka (3.0%), Malaysia (2.99%), Japan (2.87%), China (2.55%), Korea (1.99%), Afghanistan (1.89%) and Oman (1.67%).

3. OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA

India has developed himself as a leading and most attractive destination for the visitor around the world. This is not only for the heritage attraction of the country but due to growing medical tourism facility in India. The table below show the Foreign Tourist Arrival in India for the treatment from the year 2014 to 2016.

TABLE-1

FTAs in India along with Growth Rates

FTAs in India along with the Growth Rates Year	2014	2015	2016
Provisional FTAs (in millions)	7.46	8.03	8.80
Growth rate (%)	5.4	5.1	7.1
Final FTAs (in millions)	7.65	8.16	8.91
Growth rate (%)	4.3	5.9	9.3

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Gov. of India, Press release dated 27-12-2016

TABLE- 2

Foreign Tourist Arrival in India for Medical Tourism

MONTH/YEAR	FTA (in Lakhs)
January 2014	7.59
January 2015	7.90
January 2016	8.45

Source: Indian Tourism Statistics 2016

The above table clearly shows that the number of foreign tourist arrivals is increasing year by year. Foreign Tourist Arrivals register a growth of 9.3% in 2016 over 2015 and 2014. A large number of foreigners are coming to

India to avail best quality of medical treatments with a very low cost as compare with other countries, especially in the field of cardiac surgery, joint replacement, cardiology, pathology, ophthalmology and various other treatments. As a result, medical tourism industry is becoming a good source of foreign exchange. During the month of January 2016, the Foreign Exchange Earnings were Rs. 13,669 crores as compare to Rs. 12,100 crores in January 2015 and Rs. 11,664 crores in January 2014. The growth rate in FEEs in term during 2016 over 2015 was 13.0% as compare to 3.7% in January 2015 over 2014 as shown below in the table.

Table-3
Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism in India

MONTH/YEAR	Revenue (in Crores)
January 2014	11,664
January 2015	12,100
January 2016	13,669

Source: Indian Tourism Statistics 2016

The main reason for the growth of India’s destination as a hub of healthcare is it doctors who are famous worldwide. There are over 40,000 specialty of doctors of Indian origin in USA alone. Indian nurses are also most required because of their caring approach towards their patients. Not only this, hospitals in India are also very much expert in the area both in traditional as well as modern medicine and the doctors of Indian origin are expert in plastic surgery, cancer treatment, heart surgery, cardiology, eye treatment and various other treatments. The difficult surgeries like cardiac, bone marrow transplant and liver transplant are now routinely carried out with a very low cost. India in fact shines among other developed counties because of this flowing region.

1. Top diagnostic equipment from wold international companies is available at many Indian hospitals.
2. The doctors and surgeons working in the hospitals are well trained and are hardworking and have worked in various intuition in Europe, USA and other top countries.
3. The facility of nursing is of very good quality.
4. There is a very little time to wait to avail medical services.
5. The cost of medical treatment in Indian hospitals is very low as compare with other developed countries. (shown in the table given below)

Table-4
Cost Compare between various other countries of selected surgeries in (US \$)

Source C.B. Venkata Krishna Prasad

PROCEDURE	USA	INDIA	THAILAND	SINGAPORE	MALAYSIA	SOUTH KOREA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	UAE
Heart Bypass	133,000	7,000	22,000	16,300	12,000	31,700	27,000	24,100	40,900
Heart valve replacement with bypass	140,000	9,500	25,000	22,000	13,400	42,000	30,000	30,000	50,600
Hip Replacement	57,000	7,020	12,700	1,200	7,500	10,600	13,900	11,400	46,000
Face Lift	16,000	4,800	5,000	7,500	6,400	6,600	11,300	4,900	n/a
Lap. Gastric Bypass	52,000	9,300	13,000	16,500	12,700	9,300	11,000	n/a	n/a

Generally, patient travel to India to get medical treatment because of low cost, better quality care, no waiting time and more polarised care. Therefore, in last few years Government of India had taken various steps in improving the condition of the healthcare industry so that they can improve their ranking in near future. As a part of this initiative government had open the foreign direct investment to 100% from the year 2000 which help hospital to provide good quality of treatments and services to the patients.

Monitoring stake is also permitted in hospital for foreign investors, with this foreign companies can invest in the healthcare sectors through capital investments, technology exchange and joint venture across all the section of healthcare industry including medical equipment, diagnostics, hospital and education and trainings.

4. LEADING MEDICAL HOSPITALS IN INDIA:

- Andromeda Andrology Centre (All India Institute of Medical Sciences)
- Apollo Hospitals
- B.M. Birla (C.M.C Vellore)
- Tata Memorial Hospitals
- Indraprastha Medical Corporation
- Institute of Cardiovascular Disease
- Escorts Health Institute and Research Centre
- Kalra Hospitals
- Institute of Child Health and Hospital for Children
- PG Chandigarh

5. CHALLENGES BEFORE INDIAN MEDICAL TOURISM INDUSTRY:

Beside the opportunity, the Indian medical tourism industry grieves from some major restraints that is non-availability of ample infrastructure including suitable air seat capacity, approachability of tourist destination, accommodation and trained manpower in adequate number. The poor tourist experience due to poor hygienic conditions and incident of taunting and harassment of tourist in some places are factors that underwrite to poor visitor experience. Some other reasons are lack of community participation and awareness, lack of funding, lack of involvement from rural sector, lack of concern for sustainability, difficult visa procedure and lack of good language translators all are serving as a limitation in the way of medical tourism. Hospitals in India are missing behind in providing the hygienic medical facilities and room services including hygienic food for the patients, as a result Indian hospital are losing trust of foreign patients. The major challenges face by the Indian Medical Tourism are:

1. Commercialisation of the profession in which doctors are not comfortable as the personal doctor-patient relationship is been hampered.
2. Problem in insurance cover.
3. Poor power supply to the hospitals.
4. Differences in the medical services provided by government and private hospitals.
5. Brain drain from government sector to private sectors.

Government of India is trying to improve the statues of medical industry by removing political instability, bureaucracy, taxation but still more work need to be done for the betterment of the Indian Medical Tourism Industry.

6. CONCLUSION:

In Indian, Medical tourism industry has shown a tremendous growth in providing good quality services to the patients. World class treatments and highly advanced healthcare infrastructure is the main reason for concentration on promotion of this kind of tourism in India. Indian healthcare industry is the prime destination for medical tourist by upgrading its technology, have improve its image in terms of quality and cost. Booming software industry in India has facilitated technological revolution in healthcare industry. In fact, after the software industry healthcare industry has contributed majorly to India's fast-growing economy. The number of foreigners has increased for medical treatment because of cost of medical treatment is much lower as compare to other countries worldwide. Strong academic and research base studies in healthcare industry has contributed in generation world class medical forces (Surgeon's, Physicians and Nurses). Fast growing economy has led to privatisation and corporatisation in the field of healthcare, that leads to setting up of world class hospitals that provide highly advance treatment through high end technology and best forces of doctors. With this India has a strong healthcare industry as comparing with other foreign industry that further strengthen the healthcare with good technology and latest discoveries that endeavour India with other western countries.

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