

FACTORS OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA: AN AHP ANALYSIS

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Abstract

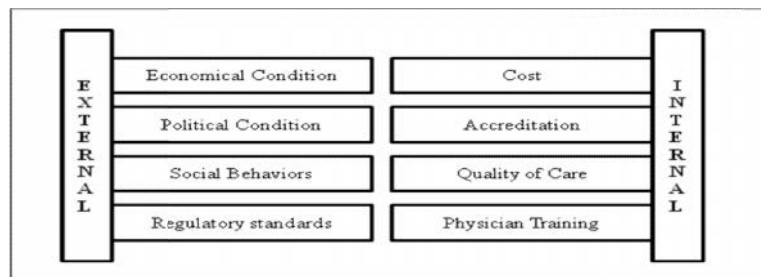
Medical Tourism is defined as a blend of tourism and health, together known as health or medical tourism. It is an act of travelling abroad to seek medical services that promote the well-being of the patients. Various factors of medical tourism have been identified which are responsible for the patient to pursue medical tourism as an alternative medical care. (Forgione and Smith 2017) have categorized these factors into external and internal factors which force patients to undergo medical tourism. The trend in the globalization of healthcare has enabled many people worldwide to opt for healthcare services in other low-cost destinations. While developing the theoretical framework on the research methodology we found that AHP (Analytical Hierarchy Process) is used around the world in a wide variety of decision situations, in fields such as government, business, industry, healthcare, shipbuilding and education. In our study, we have used AHP analysis to set the priority among the factors of medical tourism in India.

Keywords: Medical Tourism, AHP Analysis, Healthcare Tourism Factors of Medical.

Introduction

Various factors of medical tourism have been identified which are responsible for the patient to pursue medical tourism as an alternative medical care. (Forgione and Smith 2017) have categorized these factors into external and internal factors which force patients to undergo medical tourism. External factors include economic conditions, political condition, social behavior and regulatory standards. Internal factors represent four factors. These factors are responsible for affecting the patient's choice of an international facility. They are cost, accreditation, quality of care & physician training.

Factors of Medical Tourism: Classification



Sources: - Smith and Forgione, 2007

“The literature should indicate how the variable has been defined previously. And how many dimensions or components it has” (Churchill’s 1979. P67)

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Keeping this in mind we have used multi-sourced approach to create items related to both internal and external factors after conducting literature search and review we have consulted with industry experts to assess our list of items. Experts were all familiar with the industry. Following (Smith and Forgione, 2007) categorization of factors we have tried to combine both external and internal factors so as to develop a list of items and variables related to each factor for a better and deep understanding of medical tourism. An effective tool Analytical Hierarchy process (AHP) (by Thomas Saaty 1980) have been used to set priorities by reducing the complex decision to a series of pair wise comparison and then the results have been synthesized. The following table shows the factors and the variable (items) related to each of it.

Variable to the Corresponding Factors

Factor	Variables
Destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularity • Climate • Attractiveness • Alternate treatment • Culture & Natural Attraction
Destination environment & culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Political & Economic stability • Exchange Rates • Image • Safety & Security • Corruption • Legal compliance • People • Hospitality • Staff Treatment with Patient's Companions
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment • Equipment • Health care • Accommodation • Transport • Cost of Medicine • Equipment • Food and Drinks
Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient Privacy • Emergency Handling • Friendliness of Nurses and Physicians • Medical VISA
Information & Communication Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites & Advertising Broachers • Online prior Consultation • Online Information about Geography • Electronic Receipting • Booking • Possibility of follow up Care after Discharge • E. Services

Combining both external and internal factors of medical tourism total six major factors have been recognized with the help of related literature review and expert opinion the six factors are (1) Destination (2) Destination Environment and culture (3) Cost (4) Quality (5) Facility (6) Information and Communication Technology. Total 49 items were determined which define all the six factors of medical tourism.

Priority Scores for factors of Medical Tourism

Medical Tourism (Factors)	Group Priority	Factors within Group	Factor Priority (within)	Priority (Overall)	Rank
Destination	0.1099	D ₁ .Culture and Natural Attractions	0.0887	0.0097	5
		D ₂ .Alternate Medicine	0.2519	0.0276	2
		D ₃ .Attractiveness	0.1277	0.0140	4
		D ₄ .Popularity	0.3178	0.0349	1
		D ₅ .Climate	0.2137	0.0234	3
Environment and Culture	0.0526	E ₁ .Corruption	0.0644	0.0033	7
		E ₂ .Political & Economic Stability	0.0341	0.0017	8
		E ₃ .Legal Compliances	0.0257	0.0013	9
		E ₄ .Staff Treatment with Patients	0.1320	0.0069	4
		E ₅ .Image	0.0759	0.0039	6
		E ₆ .Staff Treatment with Companions	0.1139	0.0059	5
		E ₇ .Language	0.1484	0.0078	3
		E ₈ .Exchange Rates	0.0215	0.0011	10
		E ₉ .Hospitality	0.1762	0.0092	2
		E ₁₀ .People	0.0178	0.0009	11
		E ₁₁ .Safety	0.1896	0.0099	1
Cost	0.2849	C ₁ .Treatment	0.2424	0.0690	2
		C ₂ .Healthcare	0.2879	0.0820	1
		C ₃ .Accommodation	0.1744	0.0496	3
		C ₄ .Transport	0.0420	0.0119	6
		C ₅ .Medicine	0.1660	0.0472	4
		C ₆ .Equipment	0.0656	0.0186	5
		C ₇ .Food and drinks	0.0212	0.0060	7
Quality	0.3012	Q ₁ .Treatment	0.2332	0.0724	1
		Q ₂ .Physician Expertise	0.1625	0.0489	3
		Q ₃ .Quality Care	0.0914	0.0275	6
		Q ₄ .Accreditation	0.0233	0.0070	9
		Q ₅ .Success-failure Rate	0.1873	0.0564	2
		Q ₆ .Accommodation	0.1018	0.0306	4
		Q ₇ .Transport	0.0243	0.0073	8
		Q ₈ .Hygiene	0.0975	0.0293	5
		Q ₉ .Post-Procedure Care	0.0639	0.0192	7
		Q ₁₀ .Information	0.0143	0.0043	10
Facility	0.1993	F ₁ .Physician training	0.1442	0.0287	3
		F ₂ .Expertise	0.1980	0.0394	2
		F ₃ .Quality indicators	0.1085	0.0216	6
		F ₄ .Physician image	0.1007	0.0200	7
		F ₅ .Patient's privacy	0.1236	0.0246	4
		F ₆ .Emergency handling	0.1618	0.0322	1
		F ₇ .Friendliness of nurses and Physician	0.0695	0.0138	8
		F ₈ .Medical Visa	0.0933	0.0185	5
Information & Communication Technology	0.0518	IT ₁ .Booking	0.1389	0.0072	3
		IT ₂ .Websites and advertising Broachers	0.3402	0.0176	1
		IT ₃ .Online information about geography	0.0506	0.0026	7
		IT ₄ .E-Services	0.0992	0.0051	4
		IT ₅ .Electronic Receipts	0.0842	0.0043	5
		IT ₆ .Possibility of follow up care after discharge	0.0604	0.0031	6
		IT ₇ .Online prior consultation	0.2262	0.0117	2

Conclusion

The study was primarily undertaken owing to the fact that medical tourism is a fastestescalated segment of the tourism industry. In the past few years, medical tourism in India has grown to become a first-string destination for healthcare tourism. The range of factors

determining the overall quality of care gives India a very high score. One should know that it not a single string like tourism it provides many permutations to different chunks which come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, appear from different geopolitical regions and demand a range of products. The general perception is that it is about traveling for treatment from one place to another, the dynamics of medical tourism, however, is much more beguiling than what everybody thinks. There are many factors which determine medical tourism in India, high-quality treatment at the lowest price with almost no waiting time is the prime healthcare tourist motivation. Thus medical tourism in India has a huge demand. The medical tourism industry is not a single string. It is a combination of industries i.e. For India Medical tourism industry means Healthcare industry hospitality industry and transport industry together. Medical Tourism in India provides large numbers of procedures with high quality but at comparatively low cost, alternative treatments for the same diseases are the specialty of India. Vibrant Economy, high potential for all kind of tourism, especially medical tourism. India provides a great opportunity to combine medical tourism with a vacation. Variety of existing tourist attractions available in India for recuperating patients. Poor image of being unhygienic and patient's safety are the major constraints in the path of development of medical tourism in India. Government and the people involved in this business need make a lot of efforts.

A number of countries engaged in medical tourism is very large customers have plenty of choices to select their destination for medical tourism. Most of the governments of developing countries are taking maximum possible initiatives for exploiting the benefits of this Industry as they realize the potential and benefits of the sector. In case of India, the efforts taken by the government seems not enough. Apathy on the part of Government healthcare institutions, Horrible Conditions of the world heritage sites and prominent historical monuments, Lack of centralized administrative support and problem like corruption. There are various suppliers available across the globe they cannot raise the cost as the medical firms may not remain with the suppliers. However, the bargaining power rises with the specialization of the treatments. If any country provides any kind of specialized treatment suppliers also presses moderate bargaining power. Although India is one of the largest pharmaceutical industries and drug producer in cases of advanced medicine and equipment it lags behind when compared to its immediate competitors like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Rise in healthcare expenditure and the high cost of medical surgeries in developed countries is triggering the growth of the market. Increasing number of uninsured populations, rising cost of treatment and Absence of high-quality services and infrastructure in some countries is also one of the strong reasons for the new entries in this industry. In case of India, there has been a minuscule percentage of investments and lack of synergy among the various players in the industry. The threat of substitute is significantly low in case of the medical tourism industry. Most of the time medical treatments depend upon the performance of the specialist/surgeon. Competitors may have best medicine and technology best still required a qualified doctor to operate or prescribe medicine. Technological advancements would avoid foreign patients travel abroad. India has the best doctors in the world it just needs to improve its infrastructure and its image with the help of destination branding.

Intense competition has been seen among various countries engaged in medical tourism. They are setting up strong infrastructure and adding new services lines to attract medical tourism from foreign countries. They are doing all the possible efforts to attract patients from all over the world. In addition, these countries are also investing a big portion of capital for promotional activities. In the current scenario, the success and failure of any destination depend upon the nature of its promotional activities. A separate budget needs to be allotted for destination branding and its promotion after it is all about the business of medical tourism. Countries like Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia have moved far ahead than India. The study finds that the medical tourism in India is a swiftly growing cluster with the strong efforts of private sector players of the industry and weak support of the government. Although it is lagging behind the regional rivals such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Strenuous cluster-based efforts are required to be made so as to encourage the connection between the healthcare sector, tourism sector and other supporting industries like hospitality transport, telecommunication, and advertising. Medical tourism in India should specialize in those products and services that it can produce relatively more efficiently than other countries or other healthcare destinations. This means that despite absolute cost disadvantages in the production of healthcare services a destination can still export those health care services in which its absolute disadvantage is the smallest and import products with the largest absolute disadvantages. Further, it also implies that a medical tourism destination with cost advantages in all its healthcare services will specialize and export those products and services where the absolute advantages are the largest on the other hand side it with import products with the smallest absolute advantage.

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