



A Study on Health and Medical Tourism and its Marketing Strategy in Rural Area in Ernakulam District

KEYWORDS

MNC, USP, TARIQA

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ABSTRACT Ernakulam District is a district of the state of Kerala in southern India. Ernakulam, the commercial capital of Kerala, served by an international airport, fine communication facilities, excellent accommodation, modern amenities and a lot of attractive tourist places gives a breathtaking experience for its visitors and settlers. The district took its form on 1st April 1958, by carving out the areas of erstwhile Travancore, Kochi & Malabar kingdoms. The word Ernakulam was derived from a Tamil word 'Erayanarkulam' which means 'Lord Shiva's abode'. The commercial capital of Kerala and the most cosmopolitan of Kerala's cities, Cochin is a fascinating blend of cultures. From time immemorial, it has been the favorite destination of globe-trotters and explorers. Blessed by one of the finest natural harbors in the world, Cochin has been eulogised as the Queen of the Arabian Sea. Most of the MNC's is having their offices in Cochin. The USP and TARIQA used by these MNCs attract even the rural population to their product especially in the case of medical tourism. In and around Cochin are several cities of monumental value, but step into Fort Cochin, and you are in a totally different world. Health and medical tourism is perceived as one of the fastest growing segments in marketing 'Destination India' today. While this area has so far been relatively unexplored, we now find that not only the ministry of tourism, government of India, but also the various state tourism boards and even the private sector consisting of travel agents, tour operators, hotel companies and other accommodation providers are all eyeing health and medical tourism as a segment with tremendous potential for future growth. The main aim of this project is to find out the scope and Importance of Health Tourism in India Particularly with special importance giving to Ernakulam District.

Ayurveda is considered to be the most ancient medicinal form. It mainly developed during Vedic times; the origin can be traced back to more than 5000 years. Etymologically it is composed of two words Ayur and Veda. Ayur means life and Veda means science or knowledge. Hence, literally Ayurveda means Science of Life. Ayurveda is not only a medicinal system it is a way of life, a philosophy. Life according to Ayurveda is a combination of senses, mind, body and soul. It deals not only with the physical aspect but also spiritual health too. The laws of the nature govern it. The ayurvedic treatment not only cures a particular disease but also goes deep into the root cause. The concept of ayurveda is to promote health rather than just treat disease. All the remedies and suggestions are solely based on nature. It cures a particular disease not just from the physical aspect but it also takes the mental, emotional and spiritual well being into account. According to ayurveda the structural aspect of every individual is made up of five elements, namely: earth, water, fire, air and space.

The functional aspect of the body is governed by three biological humors. Traditional techniques and processes are used to prepare the medicines at home, while certain amount of mechanization is inevitably used for large-scale production. The beauty of the therapeutics is that they contain the active principles in their natural forms and their administration in prescribed doses does not cause any side effects to the patients. India is known worldwide for its ayurveda treatment. There are various centers across the country, which gives an authentic ayurveda treatment. Kerala is the most famous destination for ayurveda treatment in India. It attracts tourists not only from other parts of India but also from different countries. The treatment mainly comprises of powders, tablets, decoctions, medicated oils etc. prepared from natural herbs, plants and minerals.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the Importance of Health Tourism with special reference to Ernakulam District
- To Understand the entire process of Health Tourism
- To find out satisfaction level of domestic as well as foreign tourists with respect to Health care sector in rural areas in Ernakulam District

- To study about Marketing Strategies adopted by different agencies

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among foreign as well as domestic tourists who prefer Ayurveda treatments. The survey was conducted in Cochin air port, Beaches in Ernakulam District. The sampling technique used was simple Random Sampling. In simple random sampling each item in a population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample. Each individual is chosen randomly and entered by chance, such that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process.

Services Marketing: The Present Scenario

Every thing boils down to 'marketing'-business or non-business activity. Services are, undoubtedly an integral part of a business offering. Therefore marketing of services altogether becomes more important in the context of development of an economy. Today you name any area and there is a service industry pleasing all with its charming hospitality. Services is not confined to only set four walls, but it has opened its arms to all outside these walls. They range from financial to travel and tourism to consultancy to higher educational services. The 21st century may be termed as the age of speed. In this era, there is fierce competition with uncertain environment. So there is a growing concern about marketing of services and improving the quality of current volatile market. The ever changing trends in marketing of services has necessitated the strategies to cope with these challenges. In the race to provide customer delight, the companies are emphasizing on building up customer service packages.

Healthcare Services

'Health is Wealth'—an old but true saying. Therefore healthcare becomes one of the most essential services in any economy. Healthcare is a universal phenomenon with no boundaries. Healthcare industry comprises of hospital services, healthcare equipment, managed care system and pharmaceuticals. In India too, from the inception of the first five year plan; emphasis has been creating an enduring health delivery—primary; secondary; and tertiary to address the

health needs of our population. In the challenging healthcare scenario, building assured relations with the customers is certainly one of the major strategies for growth of healthcare service industry.

Health Tourism: an emerging Sector in Tourism

Every individual has one or the other ambition of visiting a foreign country once in his life time. This dream only leads to a flourishing tourism business. Tourism industry is one of the biggest revenue earners for any country. Every year, a good number of tourists visit India. To make this sector more prosperous a strong tourism base multiplied with invaluable hospitality is required. Tourism industry only makes a country shine to the outside world.

Health travelers fall into four distinct geographical categories—the Americans, the British, people from the Middle East and people from the less developed countries. There are three broad areas of consideration for healthcare providers: 1) Medical Quality, 2) Supporting services, 3) Marketing Reforms. It points out that healthcare providers are starting to offer non-medical services such as logistics arrangements and hospitality services, as discerning patients are increasingly demanding a total consumer experience even when seeking medical treatment. Health tourism or medical tourism as the term goes relates associated with medical treatment, rejuvenation and undergoing wellness therapies. Although the term is used largely in the context of cross-border travel, it could also be used to signify domestic travel especially where cities/towns have emerged as healthcare hubs. Many are uncomfortable with the use of the word 'tourism' along with 'health'. They question whether a patient traveling to avail of treatment can at all be termed a 'tourist'.

Evolution of Health Tourism

The earliest form of health tourism—visiting mineral or hot springs—dates back to the Neolithic and Bronze ages in Europe. In the 1700s and 1800s "taking the waters" at spa towns such as Baden-Baden in Germany was popular with the high classes of society in Europe and America. Again in the 19th century the British and the French traveled to Egypt to get treatment for various diseases by taking advantage of the subtropical climate on the banks of the Nile. Since then national of developing countries have sought medical treatment in the more advanced facilities of industrialized countries for diseases, cure for which could not be found in their own country. In recent years however the flow of traffic for medical treatment has reversed: nationals of developed countries now seek medical treatment and wellness therapies in world-class facilities in developing countries, which come at a price that is a fifth or sixth of what they would pay in their own.

Health tourism as such is in line with the current trend of globalization of markets and easy access to information via the internet has much more enabled the health traveler to select the destination of his choice. While travel for medical treatment or accessing a wellness therapy is not a new phenomenon the sector has in recent years come into focus thanks to the prospects of substantial earnings it holds for private hospitals and of inflows of vital foreign exchange for developing countries. Governments of a number of developing countries have recognized the potential health tourism holds for their economies and have taken a lead in aggressively promoting it.

Rural Market an over view

Rural India has changed tremendously. The data published by the National Council of Applied Economic Research shows that in the last ten years, the income of rural India has grown several-fold. There is a definite shift from middle to upper middle class and from lower to middle class segments. Rural Customers are aware that branded goods are of better quality. However marketers must guard themselves against various fake and deceptive brands imitating the original brands.

This can cause heavy damage to the brand image over and above the lost sales. A creative mix of the often-used communication tools and some novel ones may be more effective than using only the regular ones.

Is the urban-rural divide in India thinning now?

The urban-rural divide is still there, but the divide between urban and rural India is thinning among the top segment of rural India. The rural rich are almost like urban India. Rural India is like a pyramid. The rich farmers and businessmen occupy the top of the pyramid. They may constitute around 5 per cent of the population. The next level belongs to those with a regular income and the vast majority of the people who are daily wage labourers occupy the base of the pyramid. So we cannot say that the urban-rural divide has melted. It is still there. But there is hope with the growing emphasis on education.

How would you categorize different parts of rural India?

In India, we have the developed rural India and undeveloped rural India. Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and parts of Maharashtra come under the developed rural India but the rest of the states are undeveloped where power, infrastructure, etc are big problems. The prosperity of Kerala has come from the NRI income and not from agriculture. Today, there is hardly any village in Kerala. Tamil Nadu is prosperous as power and good roads are available. All the villages with proper infrastructure have developed. In such villages, people also have better access to towns and cities.

What are the major reasons for the change in the lifestyle of the developed rural India?

Television has done wonders to rural India. Today, especially in the south, the penetration of satellite television is very high, which is around 50 per cent unlike 25-30 per cent in the rest of the country. These people may not be literate in the true sense but they know what is happening around the world because of television. They know how the rest of the country live. Another influence is due to the growth of rural youth. The new forces of social change, politicization and media exposure have changed youth's values and social psychology throughout the country from villages to the town and to the metropolis. The globalization of the economy and the decentralization of the production of goods and services by the multinational corporations have totally altered for these youth the project of their future and the perception of their Life-World.

Rural –Urban Disparities

Of the total estimated gross income generated in the household sector, the share of rural income accounted for 55.6 percent with 74.6 percent of country's population which was 66.8 percent in 1975-76 with 79.1 percent of population. The rural share of income seems to have gone down during the last two decades resulting in wider disparities in income distributions between rural and urban India. On average one in every 25 households in rural areas has an income of more than Rs.72, 000 while every fourth household in urban India rose and in the highest income brackets more than two-thirds of the households reside in cities and towns.

So the corporate world cannot ignore rural India?

Yes, they cannot afford to ignore rural India. Unfortunately, they are only talking about it, they are not investing enough to get the maximum mileage out of it. For them, rural India is an unknown entity even today, and it calls for a lot of investment. Initially, the ratio between investment and returns will not be the same as you see in urban India. For urban India, one television spot is enough but it's not so in rural India. You have to slog it out there. But eventually, you will get the returns. In today's corporate world, all the managers, especially those working in the MNCs depend on their quarterly results. They only look at what gives them immediate success. Freebies have no meaning in rural India. You have to give value for money for the brand you are selling.

Marketing Strategies in Rural Areas (Ernakulam District)

Dynamics of rural markets differ from other market types, and similarly rural marketing strategies are also significantly different from the marketing strategies aimed at an urban or industrial consumer. This, along with several other related issues, have been subject matter of intense discussions and debate in countries like India and China and focus of even international symposia organized in these countries

Rural markets and rural marketing involve a number of strategies, which include:

- Client and location specific promotion
- Joint or cooperative promotion..
- Bundling of inputs
- Management of demand
- Developmental marketing
- Unique selling proposition (USP)

The Basics of Rural Marketing

Marketing in rural areas has a lot in common with warfare .Both are challenging in nature and one cannot win over unless he has a sound knowledge of the terrain weather conditions and above all the main target ,the mind of the consumer or the enemy as the case may be .

- Simplicity in product strategy and designing.
- Simple and well defined goals. What is your ultimate aim and correct idea of the aim?
- Theme Selection. A simple and deep penetration theme aimed at the mind of the rural consumer.
- Synergistic survey and research.,Marketing research as we may term it .
- Direct relationship with mass.Rural marketing has to be a system that the mass beckons you whole-heartedly.
- An effective public relation.Can be linked to the above point as well.
- Feedback.Do it before you launch yourself they will give you the actual on ground requirement and not in thin air.

A Key To Rural Marketing

Rural marketing by and large is simple provided you have the

aptitude for it without utlising high-sounding tooth breaking termonologies.In hindi there is a popular word called TARIQA meaning the way to execute.

T—Truth based A---Assurance R—Realibility I---Ingenuity
Q---Quality
A—Acceptability.

Findings

- Most of the people who prefer Health care systems belong to domestic tourists.
- Almost all the domestic tourists visit Kerala twice in a year.
- Tourists prefer ayurveda in kerala because of its quality and cheapness.
- Marketing Strategy is not effective
- Advertisements are very less
- Rural area's potential is not fully utilized

Suggestions

- Needs more tie ups with international travel agencies
- International quality facilities should be provided in their resorts.
- Language interpreters should be their in the resorts.
- They have to go for more advertisements and other publicity techniques.
- Needs to find out more quality doctors and staffs.
- Health care services should be of top quality

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of health and medical tourism and its marketing strategy with special reference Ernakulam District. The survey is conducted is on the basis of this and data's are collected and analysis is done according to the various information's collected. The study was very useful and informative. It gave me an idea about tourism in Kerala particularly the importance of Health and medical tourism. After the survey I was able to understand the role of tourism in a states economic policy. If great care is given tourism in kerala can become the largest source for foreign money.

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