



CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS AYURVEDA IN CENTRAL SUBURBS OF MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT Ayurveda, the science of life provides preventive healthcare possibilities to people who are looking out for natural, organic, herbal products amidst plethora of allopathic, scientific options available to them. Ayurveda has origins in Ancient Indian scriptures and is a knowledge, traditionally passed down generations. The Government of India is undertaking various initiatives to promote India's traditional medical practices. Ministry of AYUSH standing for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy is one such endeavor. Yoga has in recent times taken over the imagination of the world, Ayurveda in comparison is still lagging behind. This paper is an attempt to understand the perception of people towards Ayurveda in contemporary metropolitan area and to figure out measures to popularize Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS : Ayurveda, Consumer perception, Traditional medicine

Introduction

Ayurveda which means 'Science of Life' is a traditional Indian science with all natural, no side effect and non-intrusive treatment procedures. In today's scenario people are moving to organic products and alternate healing methods. Just as Yoga as an alternative health care practice has caught the imagination of the world, there is a need to understand the perception of consumers towards Ayurveda so that the strengths and opportunities can be harnessed and challenges and weakness be worked upon to promote this indigenous service.

The Indian healthcare market is estimated to be around Rs 8.6 trillion (US\$ 133.44 billion) by 2022. In 2017 the medical tourism in India was growing at the rate of 22-25 per cent and was expected to reach a market of US\$ 6 billion by 2018. The healthcare spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is rising, the Government of India is planning to increase public health spending to 2.5 per cent of the country's GDP by 2025.

The trend of people travelling to seek medical treatments has led to the formation of 'Medical tourism' industry. India is one of the three major destination in Asia for medical tourists apart from Singapore and Thailand. To promote its traditional medical practices, India has established a separate ministry known as AYUSH standing for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. Initially the department was christened as the department of Indian system of medicine in March 1995 and in Nov 2003 renamed to AYUSH. The planning for these systems of medicine was a part of five year planning process since 1951. As per the eleventh five year plan the vision is to make the system globally accepted. The AYUSH system is a part of major health system implemented under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) currently established in 2005.

Considering the growing importance to healthcare system government has taken up other initiatives like launching of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), to provide health insurance worth Rs 500,000 (US\$ 7,124.54) to over 100 million families every year. In August 2018, the Government of India sanctioned the Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission as a centre sponsored scheme, with contributions from the states and union territories. Apart from these two health centered schemes, the government also launched an immunization scheme called Mission Indradhanush with the aim of achieving 90 percent immunization in the country by December 2018. With growing levels of stress, imbalance diet and techno-centric lifestyle affecting the psychosocial wellbeing of the people, there is a trend of people moving towards health consciousness, organic food and seeking out places for health and leisure tourism. Consumers of Ayurveda tourism come from all walks of life and there has been an increase in international tourists coming to India every year. Ayurveda is popular in UK, France Spain, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia and UAE, with Germany providing the biggest chunk of Ayurveda tourists. Ayurveda Tourism is growing at the rate of 20-25%. The major attraction towards Ayurveda is because of all natural ingredients and no side effects. With global demand on the rise there is a need to bring in standardization of quality and building the brand image of Indian Ayurveda at international levels. There are vast opportunities for

exploring the healthcare market in both urban and rural India.

Research Problem

Despite being the hub of Ayurveda and the Indian government creating a separate ministry AYUSH for promotion of Ayurveda and other traditional practices of India, there is less enthusiasm and consumption of Ayurveda treatment amongst the masses. There is a need to study the perception of people towards traditional health care system and devise appropriate strategies to popularize the indigenous healthcare options.

Objectives of the study

To understand the perceptions and beliefs of the respondents towards Ayurveda treatment.

Research Methodology

Research Approach: Exploratory research is used to study the trends in Ayurveda tourism.

Area of Study: Central Suburbs of Mumbai.

Selection of Sample: Convenience sampling was done.

Tools of Data Collection:

Primary Data: Collected from potential customers through online survey questionnaire.

Secondary Data:

Collected from existing research work in the area, government sources, journals, newspapers, magazines, survey reports, websites and other sources of information from Department of tourism, Ministry of Ayush, Indian Tourism Development Corporation, etc.

Relevance of the study:

With an increase in consumerism, people are becoming more aware of their options. There is a growth in trend of people seeking natural, herbal, organic products and services. The study will help to find out the perception of people towards Ayurveda treatments since it is the study of life involving treatment from natural resources. Yoga practices have caught on the fancy of the world, it is the right time to promote Ayurveda with its all natural, non-intrusive, minimal side effect treatment to the consumers over the world. The study will help identify the areas of improvement in promotion and acceptance of Ayurveda.

Limitations of the study:

The study was done in the central suburban area of Mumbai using convenience sampling and therefore may not be indicative of other parts of the city or the country. The consumer perception survey is done through online forms and therefore was open to people from different demographic profiles. Mumbai being a metropolitan city with high levels of medical facilities and modern outlook may not be particularly conducive to traditional means of healthcare.

Review of Literature

Muralidhar & Karthikeyan (2016). This study identifies the scope of growth of Ayurveda and the apparent lack of awareness amongst

people about the effectiveness of Ayurveda. It further recommends the promotion of Ayurveda at national and international levels and suggests the need to standardize the services and setting up of government regulatory authorities.

Arya,V, Kumar.S & Kumar.S. (2012). In their study, it was found that people of Joginder Nagar Himachal Pradesh consumed Ayurveda products and medicines on a regular basis. Brands like Himalaya and Dabur were popular. People also took over the counter Ayurveda medicines for common ailments like cold, cough, joint pain, headache etc.

Sen S, Chakraborty R. 2016). The researchers noted the importance of herbal medicine in maintaining health in rural and remote areas. They also recommended application of traditional medicine in clinical practices and the need to tackle issues like quality control and standardization. They also emphasized the need to disseminate proper and complete knowledge about the traditional medicines among common people in order to promote them.

Subrahmanian and Venkatesan (2011). They concluded that positive perception and awareness levels were higher amongst elderly men and not so much amongst people of younger generation. Also, lack of knowledge about availability of herbal products was a major reason for low popularity of herbal products. The study also highlights the fact that people are using the preventive therapy of Ayurveda instead of the curative therapy that is available in modern medicine.

Data Analysis:

Consumer Perception or what consumers think about a product or a service helps understand the buying decisions of consumers and it is influenced by many intrinsic and extrinsic factors like demographics, knowledge, education, geographical location, economic conditions, religion etc. of the responses collected from 100 respondents through online survey questionnaire, 48.7% were females and 51.3% were males. Majority of people who responded i.e. 69.2 % were in the age group of 41 to 50 years, 12.8% were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, 10.3% were in the age group of 60 years and above, 7.7% were in the age group of 20 to 30 years. Of these respondents 41% had undertaken Ayurveda treatment. Of the total respondents 38.2 % of these respondents had sought Ayurveda services for medical reasons and 14.7% for well-being, leisure and beauty treatment. For the respondents who had not undertaken any Ayurveda treatment/services, 36.4% said they were not aware of Ayurveda services, 15.2% said they have more faith in modern/scientific medicine and 3% said they see it as an alternative when modern medicine does not seem to work. In terms of source of awareness about Ayurveda treatment facilities, 51.4% said they had heard from friends, 21.6% got to know about the services through advertisements, 2.7% through internet based search and 2.7% through recommendations by doctors. 13.2 % respondents had travelled out of station to seek Ayurveda treatment. Of the total respondents, 14.1 % had least faith in Ayurveda treatment and 8.8% had the highest confidence in the Ayurveda services. 38.2% had given a score of 4 out of 5 for confidence in Ayurveda. 68.6% said 'yes' they would recommend Ayurveda treatment to others and 31.4% said 'no'.

Recommendations:

It is found that 36.4 % of respondents were not much aware about the presence and benefits of Ayurveda treatment. At 51.4%, close friends and family members were the most important source of information when it came to Ayurveda services. This has implication on promotion strategies adopted by Ayurveda providers. There should be more emphasis on customer service and relationship management in order to build loyal customers and increase word of mouth publicity.

Medical reasons also turned out to be the biggest factor (38.2%) for seeking Ayurveda services as against Ayurveda for leisure and well-being (14.7%). This again opens a wide scope for promotion of Ayurveda services. 36.4 % respondents had not heard of Ayurveda services and 15.2 % had more faith in modern medicine therefore they did not opt for Ayurveda treatment. This finding suggests a lack of awareness amongst probable consumers about the benefits and availability of Ayurveda services. Only 13.2 % respondents had travelled out of their home town to seek Ayurveda services, suggests that consumers do not undertake extra efforts to avail specialized Ayurveda services available at certain renowned Ayurveda centers in India. This indicates the need for focused promotion by the Ayurveda service providers in order to get domestic medical tourists.

8.8 % respondents had absolute confidence in benefits derived from Ayurveda treatment and 38.2% had high levels of confidence in the services. This suggests the need to promote and create awareness about the benefits of Ayurveda in today's times. Just as Yoga has caught the fancy of the world due to its non-intrusive benefits, Ayurveda too needs to be promoted as a safe option to consumers. Of those who have taken Ayurveda treatment, 68 % said they would recommend Ayurveda treatment to others, this means that the satisfaction levels of 31.4 % of Ayurveda consumers was low. This needs to be addressed, customer feedback is important for bringing in customer satisfaction.

Scope for further research:

A detailed study on Ayurveda service providers in the region and their promotion strategy can be studied to identify the service gap present in the region with respect to available Ayurveda services. Also an in-depth study of the Ayurveda patrons can be undertaken to understand the service gaps present and identify measures to fill the gap.

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