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Title

**CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS MEDICAL TOURISM:
THE NEXT BIG LEAP**

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Abstract:

In a recent advertisement in a national daily, a reputed hospital chain promoted its “birthing boutique”, which promises five-star luxury and home comforts along with modern operation theatres, neonatal ICU, and best doctors for the soon-to-be mothers. This is just one example of leading Indian health care institutions, equipped with the latest technological advances, aggressively promoting their capabilities. The country boasts of an emerging healthcare sector marked by highly rated, technologically advanced private healthcare systems. In fact, it is now attempting to position itself as a much sought-after ‘medical tourism destination’, attracting foreigners with its low-cost, world-class medical treatment. According to a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-McKinsey’s study, medical tourism can contribute Rs.5,000-10,000 crore additional revenue for up market tertiary hospitals by 2012. In fact, medical tourism will account for 3-5% of the healthcare delivery market in this period, says the study. India is believed to have the potential to attract one million tourists per annum, generating up to \$ 5 billion. In India, a heart bypass costs \$8,000 to \$15,000, cataract surgery \$500 per eye, and a root canal \$80 to \$225 per tooth. Those prices are a fraction of what U.S. hospitals or dentists might charge. Many patients from neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and even from West Asia prefer coming to India for treatment rather than going to Europe or North America. A number of world-class hospitals and super specialty clinics have come up in places like Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai and Delhi. For example Apollo Hospitals, Chennai based MIOT Hospital and CMC hospital, Vellore are playing very important role in health care tourism in India. Hence, an attempt is made in this study to analyze the customer perception on medical tourism at Vellore District, Tamil Nadu.

Key Word: Medical Tourism

INTRODUCTION:

Medical tourism – The provision of 'cost effective' private medical care in collaboration with the tourism industry for patients needing surgical and other forms of specialized treatment. This process is being facilitated by the corporate sector involved in medical care as well as the

tourism industry - both private and public. Medical or Health tourism has become a popular form of vacationing, and covers a broad spectrum of medical services. It combines leisure, recreation and restoration together with wellness and healthcare. The idea of a health holiday is to offer you a pleasant getaway from your daily routine and an opportunity to relax, recharge and refresh in a calm as well as serene environment. Here one can enjoy proximity to the beach and the mountains. At the same time benefit from the uncompromising high standards of health facilities that cater to your specific and general well-being. A rejuvenation and recuperation process on all levels - physical, mental and emotional. India is poised to emerge as a premier medical tourist destination in view of the high quality expertise of medical professionals, backed by the fast improving equipment and nursing facilities, and above all, the cost-effectiveness of the package.

COMPETITIVE COST ADVANTAGE:

The low cost of treatment in India attracts many foreign patients from all over the world. The following slogan is absolutely true for India: “First world treatment at third world price.” The research undertaken by industry experts shows that treatment costs in India are around a tenth of the price for comparable treatment in the US or the UK. Exhibit 1 show the wide differences in the treatment costs. Some Third World countries like South Africa, Thailand, and Malaysia were the first to try and tap medical tourists, and all of them geared their systems to attract the growing American clientele. India also has a big opportunity in promoting a wide variety of treatments like ayurveda, yoga and even modern treatments. Dr. Reddy says: “Beauty, youth and wellness is a huge area for growth and we need to promote it aggressively.”

EXHIBIT 1. Comparative Charges for Selected Procedures in India and the UK

S.No.	Procedure	United Kingdom (\$) Approx	India (\$) Approx
1	Open Heart Surgery	18,000	4,800
2	Cranio-Facial Surgery and Skill Base	13,000	4,500

3	Neuro-Surgery with Hypothermia	21,000	6,800
4	Complex Spine Surgery with Implants	13,000	4,600
5	Hip Replacement	13,000	4,500
6	Simple Spine Surgery	6,500	2,300
7	Simple Brain Tumor – Biopsy	4,300	1,200
8	Simple Brain Tumor – Surgery	10,000	4,600
9	Parkinson's – Lesion	6,500	2,300
10	Parkinson's – DBS	26,000	17,800

Source: <http://www.india-medical-tourism.com>

NEED FOR STUDY:

Indian corporate hospitals are at par, if not better than the best hospitals in Thailand, Singapore, and the country is fast emerging as a preferred medical destination. In addition to the increasingly top class medical care, a big attraction for foreign patients is also the very minimal waitlist as is common in European or American hospitals. In fact, priority treatment is available today in Indian hospitals. All medical investigations are conducted on the latest, technologically advanced diagnostic equipment. Stringent quality assurance ensures reliable and high quality test results. CMC Hospital in Vellore excels in cardiology and cardiothoracic surgery, joint replacement, orthopedic surgery, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, transplants and urology to name a few. Vellore, promotes medical tourism through CMC, is well connected by rail and bus routes to major towns of the neighbouring states like Andrapradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and other northern states. The history of the district, assumes great significance and relevance, as the glorious past is unfolded. The movements found in the district give a vivid picture of town through the ages, and the following places of interest for tourists are situated in and around of Vellore. They are Vellore Fort, Jalagandeswar temple, Yelagiri Hills, Palamathi Hills, Javadhu Hills, Rathinagiri Murugan temple, , Morethana Dam, Amirthi Forest and Bapu Observatory. No

doubt Vellore is tourist attraction center besides providing quality health care to the people from North India and Abroad. In this context, a study has been conducted to examine the customer's perception towards medical tourism in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Liz Mathew (2005) examined that tourist numbers saw a growth in 2004 and 2005. In 2004, a large share of tourist arrivals (57%) corresponded to leisure, recreation, and holidays. Business travel accounted for 16%, Visiting friends and relatives, pilgrimages, and medical tourism accounted for 24% and the remaining 8% was unspecified. A new category of visa, the M-visa, which allowed a medical tourists and their companion a long stay in the country, was introduced in 2005. **Lavanya Anuradha (2006)** highlighted that, medical tourism, according to some estimates, had the potential to bring in an additional Rs.100 bn in foreign exchange into the country annually. **Sampad Kumar Swain (2007)** found that no active co-operative support from government to promote medical tourism. **Rabia Jahani Farzana (2008)** study focused that there are growing accusations that profitable, private-sector medical tourism is drawing medical resource and personnel away from the local population, although some medical organizations that market to outside tourists are taking steps to improve local service. **Renu Verna (2008)** investigated on various push-and-pull factors responsible for the development of the medical tourism industry in India and the promotional role played by the government and private sectors. It also throws light on the key issues and challenges faced by the industry and suggest various measures to develop it. **Sujit Chatterjee (2008)** expressed that an overseas traveler comes in with a perception of a hospital that can be compared to western standards. When the patient can actually see glimpses of the hospital here in India as well, they feel satisfied.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the demographic profile of the respondents
1. To identify the customer perception on medical tourism in Vellore District.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Design: Research design is descriptive in nature.

Sample Design: In this study the population consists of the patient who came to CMC hospital for medical treatment in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India. The sample size is 100. Convenience sampling method is adopted for selecting samples for the study.

DESIGNING OF QUESTIONNAIRE:

The information available was used to design a questionnaire for carrying out the research. Before conducting the field study, the questionnaire was pre-tested. A few modifications were made as a result of the pretest exercise. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data for the study. The questionnaire consists of both open-ended and close-ended questions.

DATA COLLECTION:

Both, primary and secondary data were collected and used for the study. The required secondary data were collected from various journals, magazines, newspapers, books, reports etc. The required primary data were collected from the respondents by face-to-face approach using the questionnaire. To collect primary data a detailed questionnaire was prepared covering most of the aspects of the objectives of the study.

STATISTICAL TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS OF DATA:

1. Frequency distribution and Graph were used to analyze the collected data.
2. Pearson Chi-square test, Contingency coefficient and Lambda were used to measure the level of significant relationship between age and customer perception towards tourist place visited during medical treatment in CMC Hospital, Vellore District.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The study is limited to Vellore District, Tamil Nadu only. Samples have been selected from the respondents getting treated in CMC Hospital, Vellore.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION - FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION:**Table 1. AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15 – 25	27	27
26 – 35	15	15
36 – 45	21	21
46 – 55	24	24
Above 56	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

From Table 1, it is seen that 27% of the respondents are between the age of 15 and 25 years. 15% of the respondents are in the age group of 26 to 35, 21% of the respondents are in the age group of 36 to 45, 24% of the respondents are in the age group of 46 to 55 and 13% of the respondents fall under the age group of above 56. The same results are also exhibited in graph 1.

Graph 1. AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

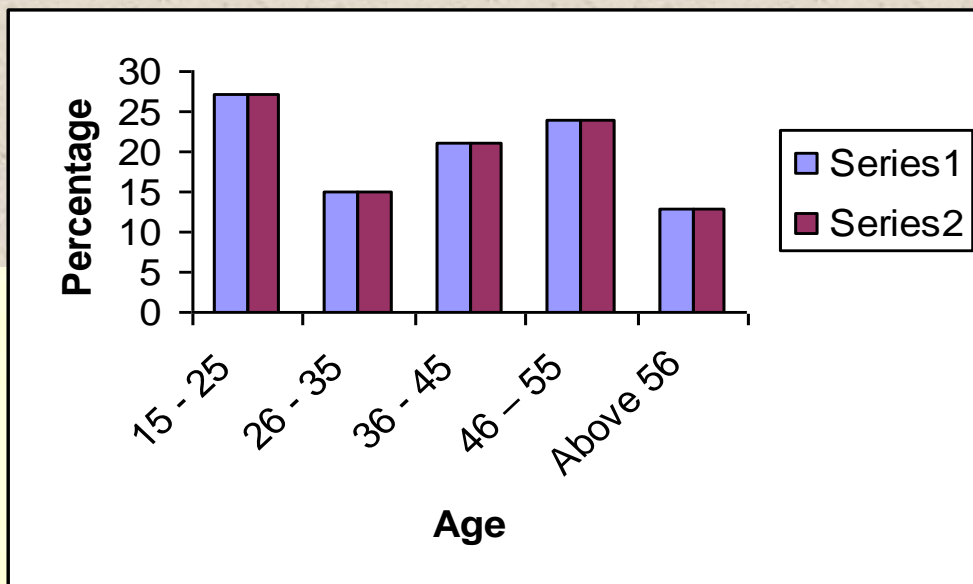


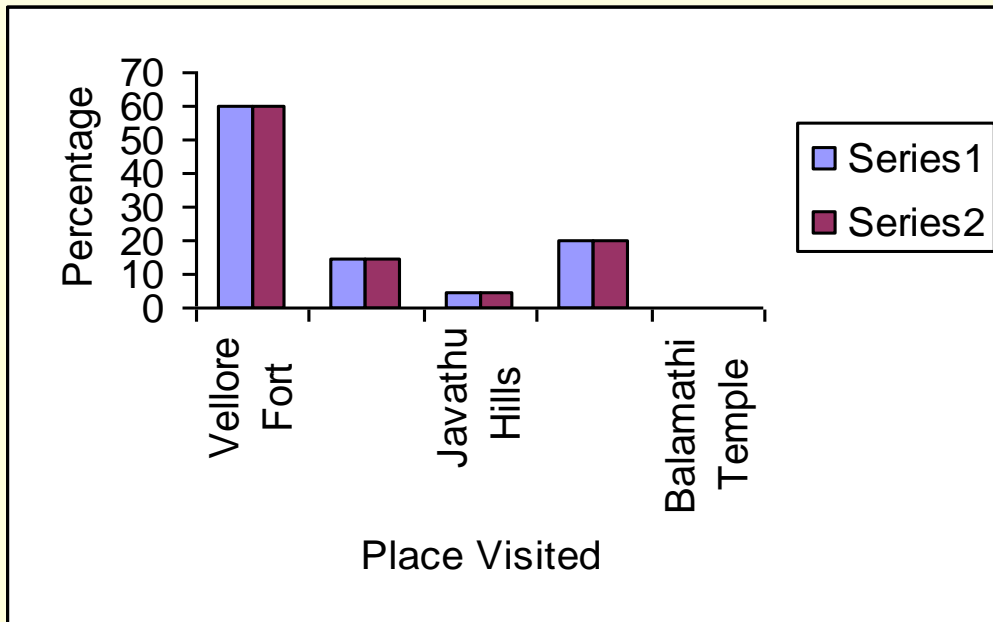
Table 2. TOURIST PLACE VISITED DURING MEDICAL TOURISM

Place Visited	Frequency	Percentage
Vellore Fort	60	60
Yelagiri Hills	15	15
Javathu Hills	5	5
Rathinagir Temple	20	20
Balamathi Temple	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2, reveals that 60% of the respondents visited Vellore Fort, 15% of the respondents visited Yelagiri Hills, 5% of the respondents visited Javathu Hills and 20% of the respondents visited Rathinagiri Murugan Temple. The same results are also exhibited in graph 2.

Graph 2. TOURIST PLACE VISITED DURING MEDICAL TOURISM



TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS:

Null Hypothesis Ho: There is no significance relationship between age and customer perception towards tourist place visited during medical tourism in Vellore.

Alternative Hypothesis H1: There is significance relationship between age and customer perception towards tourist place visited during medical tourism in Vellore.

Table 3. CROSS TABULATION

Age	Place Visited				Total
	Vellore Fort	Yelagiri Hills	Javathu Hills	Rathinagiri Temple	
15 - 25	27	0	0	0	27
26 - 35	15	0	0	0	15
36 - 45	18	3	0	0	21
46 - 55	0	12	5	7	24
Above 56	0	0	0	13	13
Total	60	15	5	20	100

Source: Out put of SPSS

Table 4. CHI - SQUARE TEST

Variable	Degree of freedom	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Contingency Coefficient	Lambda	Result
Age and Place Visited	12	134.613	.757	.478	Accepted

Source: Out put of SPSS

INFERENCE:

CHI – SQUARE

The calculated value of chi-square between age and tourist place visited during medical tourism is 134.613 which is more than 5% level of significant value 0.05. Therefore, we accept null hypothesis. Hence, there is no significance relationship between age and tourist place visited during medical tourism in Vellore.

CONTINGENCY CO-EFFICIENT

From Table 4, the contingency co-efficient value is greater than + 0.5. Hence the variable is strongly associated.

LAMBDA VALUE

The lambda asymmetric co-efficient value (with age level dependent) is at 0.478 which means 47.8% (0.478 X 100) of the error are reduced in predicting age when they respond towards tourist place visited during medical treatment in CMC Hospital in Vellore.

FINDINGS:

1. The study shows that, 27% of the respondents are in the age group of 15 to 25 and 24% of the respondents are in the age group of 46 to 55 have been treated in CMC Hospital.
2. During medical tourism 60% of the respondents who stayed in Vellore had visited Vellore Fort, 20% of the respondents had visited Rathinagiri Murugan Temple and 15% of the respondents had visited Yelagiri Hills.
3. The study shows that, customers who came to CMC Hospital for medical treatment had visiting atleast one place during their stay in Vellore.

CONCLUSION:

Vellore District is blessed with Cultural, Heritage, Pilgrims, Wild life sanctuaries and Hill station. Due to lack of publicity, the medical tourists are unaware of beautiful sights in the

District. The study revealed that the words of mouth is the most influential media among the tourists. Medical tourists are ambassadors in their own countries. They will be the one to tell others of their experience, good or bad. Mass media also plays an important role in promoting medical tourism. There are number of magazines that describe medical tourist attractions. Major drawbacks of medical tourism in Vellore District pointed out by the patients are lack of proper infrastructure, inadequately maintained roads, very high rates of air fare, lack of tourist information centers, good middle class accommodation, pollution, unsafe drinking water and non-availability of hygienic food stuff. The development of medical tourism depends upon the marketing strategies adopted by Government, Tour operators and Facilitators.

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