

Prospects of Ayurvedic Health Tourism in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an antique art of healing that has been run-through in India for more than five millennium. The negative impacts of modern life such as air effluence, contaminated water, adulterated food and hectic life style etc. causing damages to the natural environment and human health is growing matter of concern requiring immediate remedies. Being a more sustained restorative system, Ayurveda provides a holistic mechanism for leading a healthy life .With this avowed goal, there are large number of health care centers and hospitals have kick started for promoting Ayurveic health tourism catering to the ever increasing requirements of people both from within and outside in India. The study signals that there exists a spacious scope for growing the picture of Kerala as Ayurvedic health tourism destination as the patients are more or less satisfied with the with different treatment parameters. It is decisive that the prerequisites which are significant to create a center of attention, should be communicated to the tourists in the most excellent way to move towards and practice what is being offered.

1. Introduction

Medical tourism, a subject of health tourism, is a new-fangled and burgeoning sector in India. The turnaround may be attributed to cost effectiveness, high quality health care, specialized treatment options, efficient management of languages, minimum waiting queues and offering of good holidays arrangements. According to the government's Make in India report, the wellness industry in India is worth INR 490 billion, and wellness services alone comprise 40percent of the market. In India the state of Kerala with huge potential is emerging as a prime health tourism hub for its Ayurvedic packages.

Ayurveda is an antique art of healing that has been run-through in India for more than five millennium. It is often considered as the medical surface of yoga and is highly effective in dealing with chronic illness; maladies of chemotherapy and metabolic problems. The negative impacts of modern life such as air effluence, contaminated water, adulterated food and hectic life style etc. causing damages to the natural environment and human health is growing matter of concern requiring immediate remedies. Ayurveda seeks to address these issues with a workable proposition providing practical guide to our life regarding the arrangement of food, body work, rest period and work to achieve balance of body, mind and soul so as to weathering the deleterious environmental impacts and lifestyle diseases. To prevent deceases by balancing body, mind, soul and environment is the motto of every Ayurvedic hospitals and centers. Being a more sustained restorative system, Ayurveda provides a holistic mechanism for leading a healthy life .With this avowed goal, there are large number of health care centers and hospitals have kick started for promoting health tourism catering to the ever increasing requirements of people both from within and outside in India.

2. Profile of Ayurvedic Health care Tourism in Kerala

Kerala is perfectly suitable for medical tourism given that Kerala's ideal weather conditions throughout the year, superior hospitals by means of outstanding amenities, well known doctors devoted in foremost discipline, well qualified paramedical workforce and technicians, global association and overall the Vedic hegemonic legacy the country enjoys in Ayurveda. Kerala is also endowed with appreciably elevated grade of sanitation actuated by well-established resorts and hotels that are providing the health care services in Kerala. The age old folklore of classical Indian Ayurveda turns Kerala into worldwide tourism hub.

As it is evident from Table 1.2 that the number of foreign tourists visited Kerala in 2017 were 10, 91,870 which shows an increase of 5.15percent over the previous year's figure of 10, 38,419. Domestic tourists visited Kerala in 2017 were 1, 46, 73,520 which shows an increase of 11.39 percent over the previous year's figure 1, 31, 72,535. Foreign exchange earnings for the year 2017 were 8392.11 crores showing an increase of 8.29 percent over the year 2016 which stood at Rs 7749.51 crores (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Earnings from Tourists

year	Foreign Exchange Earnings (Rs. in Crores)	Percentage Variation over previous year	Total Revenue generated from Tourism (Rs. in Crores)	Percentage Variation over previous year
2008	3066.52	16.11	13130.00	14.84
2009	2853.16	-6.96	13231.00	0.77
2010	3797.37	33.09	17348.00	31.12
2011	4221.99	11.18	19037.00	9.74
2012	4571.69	8.28	20430.00	7.32
2013	5560.77	21.63	22926.55	12.22
2014	6398.93	15.07	24885.44	8.54
2015	6949.88	8.61	26689.63	7.25
2016	7749.51	11.51	29658.56	11.12
2017	8392.11	8.29	33383.68	12.56

Source: Kerala Tourism Statistics 2017

Table1.2: Trends in domestic and foreign tourists arrivals

year	Domestic	Percentage Variation over previous year	Foreign	Percentage Variation over previous year
2008	7591250	14.28	598929	16.11
2009	7913537	4.25	557258	-6.96
2010	8595075	8.61	659265	18.31
2011	9381455	9.15	732985	11.18
2012	10076854	7.41	793696	8.28
2013	10857811	7.75	858143	8.12
2014	11695411	7.71	923366	7.60
2015	12465571	6.59	977479	5.86
2016	13172535	5.67	1038419	6.23
2017	14673520	11.39	1091870	5.15

Source: Kerala Tourism Statistics 2017

Table 1.3: District wise Foreign and Domestic Tourist Arrivals in 2017

Sl. No.	Districts	Foreign	Domestic
1	Alappuzha	75037	433456
2	Ernakulam	453973	3285088
3	Idukki	42285	1090086
4	Kannur	5123	695655
5	Kasaragod	1115	263459
6	Kollam	6227	381829
7	Kottayam	32350	468593
8	Kozhikode	13106	932345
9	Malappuram	18451	520832
10	Palakkad	1711	474180
11	Pathanamthitta	2003	164494
12	Thiruvananthapuram	420719	2505333
13	Thrissur	10775	2642546
14	Wayanad	8995	815624
	Total	1091870	14673520

Source: Kerala Tourism Statistics 2017

It is clear from the above table that majority of the tourists (both Foreign & Domestic) visited Ernakulam districts more than any other districts in 2017 as the district has exceptionally distinguishing role in Ayurvedic tourism.

3. Importance of the study

Health tourism in Ayurveda is gathering phenomenal momentum in Kerala now days. In past few years, Kerala has originated as one of the most important hubs for Ayurvedic medical tourism because it has several pull factors like excellent medical treatment at low cost, easy accessibility, picturesque locations for excellent holiday and a combination of medical packages offering leisure, fun and fitness to make it complete tourism material for the patients across the globe. It ensures life long relief to the entire body free of side effects, availability of different strategies for discouraging infection, relief from tension and makes the body younger. The global tourists have recognized these benefits of travelling to Kerala for Ayurvedic medical tourism and thus Kerala has achieved international recognition in this field, also fetching as a renowned medical tourism hot spot. In these circumstances it is worthwhile to identify the profile and level of satisfaction among tourists visiting Kerala for Ayurvedic treatment. As observed earlier, in Kerala Ernakulam district has a cutting edge in Ayurvedic medical tourism in contrast to other districts in the

face of tourists visiting Kerala for ayurvedic treatment. Cent percent literacy rate, better transportation facilities, own culture along with hospitality, proximity to Ayurvedic medicinals and real authentic Ayurveda attracts tourists both foreign and domestic. NRIs are also attracted to Ernakulam to heal their body as a whole for Ayurvedic medical treatments, since Ayurveda is a holistic system of wellness. Consequently, the study mainly focuses on Ayurvedic Health Tourism in Ernakulam district of Kerala.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To study the Ayurvedic health tourism in general
2. To identify the level of satisfaction of tourists visiting Kerala for ayurvedic treatment.

5. Research methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data required for the study were collected by administering structured interview schedule among 38 patients in the Ayurvedic hospitals in Ernakulam. Secondary data were collected from books, reports, journals and periodicals, infliibnet, Internet sites like Wikipedia, investopedia. Data were analyzed by using percentages, averages and standard deviation.

6. Gender wise details of tourists

Gender wise details of tourist considered for the study is given in the table No: 1.4. It is clear from the table that out of the total respondents interviewed, 44.7 percent are males while 55.3 percent are female tourists.

Table1.4: Gender wise details of tourists

	Frequency	Percent
Male	17	44.70
Female	21	55.30
Total	38	100.00

Source: Field Data

7. Nationality

Nationality of tourists considered for the study is given in Table 1.5. It is clear from the table that most of the respondents came from Italy & Spain, followed by Germany, France & Dutch. Three persons from Japan, from Saudi Arabia & Iran two persons and from Austria, Abudhabi, USA, Denmark one person visited Kerala for Ayurvedic health care tourism. Only a few Indians are in the fray as they might be led by the dictum "familiarity breeds contempt".

Table1.5: Nationality of tourists

	Frequency	Percent
Italy	6	15.80
Austria	1	2.60
France	4	10.50
Spain	6	15.80
India	3	7.90
Suadi Arabia	2	5.30
Germany	4	10.50
Abudhabi	1	2.60
USA	1	2.60
Japan	3	7.90
Iran	2	5.30

Dutch	4	10.50
Denmark	1	2.60
Total	38	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table 1.7 shows the position of companions accompanied the tourists. It may be observed that 55.3% of the respondents came alone, 26.3% came with spouse, 10.5% accompanied by family members and 7.9% accompanied by friends & relatives.

Table 1.7: Person Accompanied with tourists

	Frequency	Percent
Single	21	55.30
Spouse	10	26.30
family Members	4	10.50
Friends & Relatives	3	7.90
Total	38	100.00

Source: field Data

8. Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification of the respondents as depicted in Table 1.6, shows that Majority of the respondents are Graduates (71.1%) while only 13.2% of the respondents represent Post Graduates and rest of them belongs to higher secondary (7.9%), Secondary (2.6%) and Below Secondary (5.3%) level. It follows that graduate rule the roost.

Table 1.6: Educational Qualification

	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
Below Secondary	2	5.30
Secondary	1	2.60
Higher Secondary	3	7.90
Graduate	27	71.10
Post Graduate	5	13.20
Total	38	100.00

Source: field Data

10. Treatment undergone by the tourists

Table 1.8 shows different types of treatments undergone by the tourists. We cannot pin point the particular treatment undergone as most of them underwent multiple treatments. Among the total tourists interviewed 50% have gone for pizhichil, another 50% have undergone for thalam, 52.6% have undergone for kizhi, 31.57% went for nasyam and 36.8% availed other kinds of ayurvedic treatments. It is seen that Kizhi is more popular with its rarity and valour.

9. Person Accompanied with tourists

Table 1.8: Treatment undergone by the tourists

Type of Treatment	Availed		Not availed	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Pizhichil	19	50.00	19	50.00
Thalam	19	50.00	19	50.00
Kizhi	20	52.60	18	47.36
Nasyam	12	31.57	26	68.40
Others	14	36.80	24	63.18

Source: field Data

11. Reasons for choosing treatment in Ernakulum

In Table 1.9 the reasons for choosing treatment in Ernakulum district is under pinned. In order to identify the reasons for choosing Ernakulum district for availing ayurvedic

treatment five variables were used. Majority of the tourists (78.9%) opined that high quality of health care is the main reason for selecting Ernakulum districts for availing treatment.

Table 1.9: Reasons for choosing treatment in Ernakulum

Variables	Reason		Not a Reason	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Long waiting time in Home country	1	2.60	37	97.40
High quality of health care	30	78.90	8	21.10
Cost competitive advantage	2	5.30	36	94.70
Offering of good holidays	3	7.90	35	92.10
Other reason	7	18.40	31	81.60

Source: field Data

12. Sources consulted for selecting Ernakulum for medical treatment

Table 1.10 represents the Sources consulted by the tourists for selecting Ernakulum for medical treatment. The main source the tourists consulted for medical treatment is medical tourist guide. All of them agreed that the main source they consulted is medical tourist guide. Friend and relatives (47.4%)

were the other major source. They were negligibly influenced by other sources like websites (31.6%) and doctors (18.4%). Advertisement is not at all considered as a source of consultation for ayurvedic treatment by the tourists.

Table 1.10: Sources consulted for selecting Ernakulum for medical treatment

Variables	Source		Not a Source	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Medical tourism guide	38	100.00	0	0.00
Medical tourism operator	4	10.50	34	89.50
Hospital websites	12	31.60	26	68.40
Friends and relatives	18	47.40	20	52.60
Doctors	7	18.40	31	81.60
Advertisements	0	0.00	38	100.00

Source: field Data

13. Mode of organising medical accommodation and travel

Table1.11 depicts the Mode of organising medical accommodation and travel. Majority of the respondents(78.9%) prefer to travel directly with the provider Only 15.8 per cent

would like to go with friends and relatives while only a negligible part wants to travel with medical tourism operators.

Table1.11: Mode of organising medical accommodation and travel

	Frequency	Percentage
Directly with the provider	30	78.90
Through medical tourism operator	2	5.30
Friends and Relatives	6	15.80

Source: field Data

14. Analysis of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is studied by asking statements in five point likerts scale. Values were assigned based on five point likert scale as 1 for very poor, 2 for poor, 3 for moderate, 4 for good and 5 for very good. Mean is calculated for quantifying the likert scale .This score was classified into one of the four groups as 'not satisfied' if the mean is less than 2,'less satisfied' if the mean is between 2 and 3, 'Satisfied' if the

mean lies in the interval 3 to 4 and 'highly satisfied' if the mean above 4.

14.1. Tourist's opinion on different services

Table1.12 shows Tourist's opinion on different services provided by the hospitals. They were highly satisfied with clinic and physician, arrangement and confirmation of appointments and obtaining visa. In the case of arrangement of country transportation they are satisfied.

Table1.12: Tourist's opinion on different services

	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Satisfaction
Match you with appropriate clinic and physician	4.78	0.866	Highly satisfied
Arrange and confirm appointments	4.92	0.280	Highly satisfied
Obtain Visa	4.83	0.447	Highly satisfied
Arrange in country transportation	3.26	0.345	Satisfied

Source: field Data

14.2. Opinion on services related to treatment

Table1.13 shows Tourist's opinion on services related to treatment. They are highly satisfied with the Counselling, Doctors experience Medicines used. The Tourists are just

Satisfied with the equipments used by the hospitals for treatment. In the case of technology used they are less satisfied.

Table1.13: Opinion on services related to treatment

	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Satisfaction
Counselling	4.94	0.232	Highly satisfied
Technology used	2.80	0.229	Less Satisfied
Doctors experience	4.21	0.123	Highly satisfied
Medicines	4.23	0.182	Highly satisfied
Equipments	3.20	0.211	Satisfied

Source: field Data

14.3. Opinion about post treatment services provided

Table1.14 shows Tourist's opinion about post treatment services provided by the hospitals. All the post treatment services are highly satisfactory to the tourists.

Table1.14: Opinion about post treatment services provided

	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Satisfaction
Nursing care	4.92	0.553	Highly satisfied
Doctors follow up	4.12	0.513	Highly satisfied
Dietary	4.23	0.218	Highly satisfied
Pharmacy	4.11	0.277	Highly satisfied

Source: field Data

14.4. Opinion about different facilities

Table1.15 showsOpinion about different facilities provided by the Ayurvedic health care hospitals.The respondents are highly satisfied with Drinking Water, Security Services &

Personalized care, Satisfied with Sanitation Laundry & Transportation, And Less Satisfaction with Entertainment.

Table 1.15: Opinion about different facilities

	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Satisfaction
Sanitation	3.21	0.277	Satisfied
Drinking Water	4.95	0.229	Highly satisfied
Security Services	4.86	0.419	Highly satisfied
Laundry	3.21	0.232	Satisfied
Entertainment	2.13	0.277	Less Satisfaction
Transportation	3.22	0.164	Satisfied
Personalized care	4.97	0.167	Highly satisfied

Source: field Data

14.4. Opinion on cost of medical treatment

Table1.16 shows the opinion of the respondents on cost of medical treatment offered by the Ayurvedic health care hospitals. All the facilities accommodation, food, consultation

fee, medicine, counseling& follow up cost imposed by the hospitals are affordable to the respondents and that they are highly satisfied with it.

Table 1.16: Opinion on cost of medical treatment

	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Satisfaction
Accommodation	4.23	0.212	Highly satisfied
Food	4.12	0.289	Highly satisfied
Consultation Fee	4.95	0.232	Highly satisfied
Medicine	4.95	0.112	Highly satisfied
Counselling & follow up	4.95	0.114	Highly satisfied

Source: field Data

15. Conclusion

Robustness and beauty consciousness of the individuals have covered the means for growing up the significance of Ayurvedic health tourism. The current study makes an attempt to understand the level of satisfaction of tourists visiting Kerala for ayurvedic treatment. The overall study be signals that there exists a spacious scope for growing the picture of Kerala as

Ayurvedic health tourism destination as the patients are more or less satisfied with the with different treatment parameters. It is decisive that the prerequisites which are significant to create a center of attention, should be communicated to the tourists in the most excellent way to move towards and practice what is being offered.

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