

Developing sustainable health tourism practices and programs in regions of the Rajasthan State

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on developing sustainable health tourism practices and programs in Rajasthan, India. The study explores the potential of the region's traditional healthcare systems, including Ayurveda and Yoga, to attract health tourists and promote sustainable tourism development. The paper discusses the key challenges facing the industry, such as the lack of standardized regulations, infrastructure, and qualified healthcare professionals. The research methodology involved conducting interviews with stakeholders in the industry and reviewing existing literature on sustainable tourism and healthcare practices. The paper proposes several recommendations for developing sustainable health tourism practices and programs in Rajasthan, such as promoting responsible tourism practices, developing partnerships between the public and private sectors, and investing in infrastructure development and capacity building. The findings of this paper can be used to guide policymakers, industry stakeholders, and tourism operators in developing sustainable health tourism practices and programs in Rajasthan and other regions with similar characteristics.

Keywords: Sustainable health tourism, region's traditional healthcare systems, health tourists, guide policymakers, industry stakeholders, tourism operators, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism and healthcare are two essential industries that have become increasingly intertwined in recent years. Health tourism is a growing trend in the travel industry, whereby people travel to other countries or regions for medical treatment, wellness, or alternative therapies. This sector is estimated to grow rapidly, driven by an aging population, increasing health consciousness, and rising medical costs in developed countries. However, the potential negative impacts of health tourism on local communities, cultural heritage, and the environment cannot be ignored. Therefore, developing sustainable health tourism practices and programs is crucial to ensure that the benefits of this industry are maximized while minimizing its negative impacts.

Benefits of Sustainable Health Tourism: Sustainable health tourism practices and programs can bring multiple benefits to destinations, visitors, and the healthcare industry. First, sustainable health tourism can generate significant economic benefits for local communities, create new jobs, and stimulate entrepreneurship. Second, it can improve access to quality healthcare services, especially for those who cannot afford medical treatment in their home countries. Third, it can promote cross-cultural understanding and exchange, enhance global health diplomacy, and promote sustainable development. Fourth, sustainable health tourism can contribute to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, promote environmental awareness, and reduce carbon emissions.

Challenges and Risks of Health Tourism: Despite the potential benefits of health tourism, there are also significant challenges and risks associated with this industry. First, health tourism can create inequalities in access to healthcare, whereby only the wealthy can afford medical treatment abroad. Second, it can contribute to brain drain, whereby healthcare professionals from developing countries migrate to developed countries, leading to a shortage of skilled workers in their home countries. Third, health tourism can lead to cultural erosion and commodification of traditional healing practices, reducing the authenticity and value of local cultures. Fourth, health tourism can have negative environmental impacts, such as excessive water consumption, waste generation, and energy consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper "Developing sustainable health tourism practices and Programs in Rajasthan" focuses on the importance of sustainable tourism in promoting health and wellness tourism in the Indian state of Rajasthan. The following literature review highlights key studies and research relevant to the topic of sustainable health tourism practices in Rajasthan.

Sustainable tourism and health tourism

Sustainable tourism is a crucial aspect of the tourism industry, and it is defined as tourism that minimizes the negative impact on the environment and local communities while promoting the benefits of tourism for local economies and communities. Health tourism, on the other hand, is a subcategory of tourism that emphasizes medical treatments, wellness, and other health-related activities. Both sustainable tourism and health tourism share the common goal of promoting responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

Health tourism in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is a popular destination for health tourism, with many travelers visiting the state to seek Ayurvedic treatments, yoga, and meditation. In recent years, the state government has made efforts to promote health tourism and develop infrastructure to support it. However, there is a need to ensure that health tourism practices in Rajasthan are sustainable and do not have negative impacts on the environment or local communities.

Sustainable tourism practices in Rajasthan

Several studies have focused on sustainable tourism practices in Rajasthan. These studies highlight the need for responsible tourism practices that preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the state. Some of the sustainable tourism practices that have been identified in Rajasthan include community-based tourism, ecotourism, and responsible wildlife tourism.

Developing sustainable health tourism practices in Rajasthan

There is a need to develop sustainable health tourism practices in Rajasthan to ensure that the benefits of health tourism are maximized while minimizing negative impacts. One study suggests that a sustainable health tourism model should focus on developing infrastructure, promoting local products, and involving local communities in the development of health tourism activities. Another study highlights the need for collaboration between the government, tourism industry, and local communities to develop sustainable health tourism practices.

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the importance of sustainable tourism practices in promoting health tourism in Rajasthan. It is essential to develop sustainable health tourism practices that benefit both tourists and local communities while preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the state. Further research is needed to develop effective strategies for developing sustainable health tourism practices in Rajasthan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY Research methodology included a convenient sample of 70 inbounds (Foreign and Regional) medical tourists availing of hospital services in the city of Jodhpur. All the medical tourists had flown to India for allopathic treatment including surgeries. They included 62% of males and 38% of females. The sample respondents were chosen from world-class hospitals namely Government Hospitals, Goyal Hospital, M.D.M Hospital, and many more. Questionnaires were administered to collect responses on the demographic profiles of these respondents, their perceptions, and satisfaction with medical tourism products of hospitals. The data generated by this pilot survey was analyzed by a simple percentage method.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The respondents' profiles revealed that more males traveled to India for medical tourism than females and 72% of the respondents belong to the age group between 20 and 40 years.

Table No.1:- Geographic Profile Of Respondents (Medical Tourists) In %

Gender	Male	62	Female	38
Age	18 years	18-40	40-60	Above 60 years
Education	Below X class	Graduation	Post Graduation	Above Post Graduation
	15	60	15	7
Occupation	Employee	Self Employed	Professional/Independent	Dependents
	40	10	21	25

Govt. Hospital, Ratanada	Govt. Hospital, Pavota	Govt. Hospital, Shastri Nagar	Govt. Hospital, Matta ka than	Govt. Hospital, BJS
16	45	25	05	01

It was focused that 55% of medical tourists have only one companion in travel and 25% travel with their friends or family members.

Table No.2: Tourism-Related Profile In % Of The Respondents

Companion	None	1	>2	Relative
	8	70	10	30
Mode of Transport	Air	Rail	Hired Vehicle	Govt. Transport
	20	30	0	45
Place of accommodation	Hospital	Hotel	RSTDC Hotel	Relatives
	42	5	0	45
Duration of Stays	Till Care	Less than Week	One Month	More than Month
	33	17	25	25

When asked the question “Do you plan to visit other tourist places in Rajasthan?” 56% of them gave positive responses.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Sustainable health tourism practices and programs can bring significant benefits to destinations, visitors, and the healthcare industry while minimizing negative impacts. However, developing sustainable health tourism requires a comprehensive and collaborative effort among various stakeholders. By adopting the strategies outlined above, governments, healthcare providers, travel agencies, local communities, and visitors can work together to promote sustainable health tourism, enhance cross-cultural exchange, and contribute to sustainable development.

While the healthcare industry cannot be considered a revenue generator, medical tourism may be viewed as a significant foreign exchange earner. The government should reconsider the policy and focus on improving the major infrastructural drawbacks relating to connectivity from the homeland to choice destinations, such as poor roads, risky sanitation and hygiene, telecommunication blockades, and so on, which lead to a smaller selection of hospitals as medical tourist products. Furthermore, hospitals' non-uniform accreditation adds to the uncertainty and distrust. Healthcare services can be accredited in a consistent, world-class manner. Healthcare marketers can address cultural issues such as emotional attachment between the medical tourist and the Medicare provider on an individual basis.

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