



A Critique on How to Overcome Slack in the Medical Tourism Post Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 is the worst happened for the fragile tourism and hospitality industry. The catastrophic coronavirus heavily traumatized the medical tourism sector and the possibility of further slack in present and future adaptability of the sector. The critique addresses two important concerns, first, pertains to the major challenges that hospitality and tourism industry faces amid current conditions; and second relates to the vital learnings for the industry to overcome and sustain post pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, Hospitality, Tourism, Industry.

Introduction

COVID-19, is a disease which started in China, and later gobbled the whole world in a year. Countries irrespective of the continents faced the severity of the pandemic due to lack of monitoring and isolation of the affected ones. It further amplified the unstoppable spread of the disease in the months to come (Kaushal, 2021). COVID 19, the latest version of SARS which also characterized by its rapid spread, which led to travel advisories issued by World Health Organisation (WHO) (Chuo, 2007). Travel restrictions and advisories have again revealed the vulnerability of the tourism and hospitality industry.

Increase in healthcare costs in advanced nations and the difficulties in accessing quality medical services in many other countries, contributed to the development of medical tourism industry, wherein people travel to different cities within a country or between different countries across the world to access quality medical services at affordable cost. India is one of the most sought after countries in the medical tourism. Due to the diverse expertise of the medical practitioners, facilities available, able medical workers and the communication skills of the people make India the destination for medical tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled governments to take extreme measures, including halting national and international transport by air, ground and water and imposing strict lockdowns, in hotspot countries and/or cities. This has resulted in a significant impact on all sectors of economies, with some sectors being affected more than the others. The health sector is under severe pressure to deliver life-saving services to patients, and the adoption and adaptation of technology has helped address some of these challenges. As noted, medical tourism has been severely impacted by the pandemic so what measures would help in the short term and in support of longer-term development. Fig 1 shows the trend.



Source : UNWTO

WAYS TO IMPROVE MEDICAL TOURISM POST PANDEMIC

Medical tourism is one of the ever growing fields, which can't come down; we are still one of the cheapest countries in the world to give affordable treatment for the western world and growing African, CIS and Arab countries. There are many innovative solutions to improve the medical tourism and tourism in general such as

1. Promoting local tourism.
2. Strengthening the country by vaccinating all, and medical practitioners first.
3. Establishing digital platforms for medical tourists to track, search and isolate.
4. Building a system to avoid crowding in all the time.
5. Promotions and ease of restrictions and quick documentation for international travellers.
6. Ease of forex rules, promotion of loans and insurance for medical tourists.
7. Strengthening the consumer confidence by transparency.

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