

Medical Tourism Awareness and its Potential to Excel in Developing Cities: A Case Study of Mangalore City

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Abstract:

Medical Tourism, a sector still in the infancy stage in India, forms a part of the global Medical Tourism corridor and is acknowledged in the itinerary of any medical tourist. This paper intends to explore the scope of Medical Tourism in the developing cities of India. It aims to investigate the reasons for low medical tourism penetration despite possessing all the competitive advantages vital for a medical tourism destination. A survey conducted at 21 hospitals in Mangalore uncovered the extent of awareness among healthcare workers and initiatives taken by the healthcare industry to outperform this sector. Simple random sampling was employed to arrive at the sample size and the Chi-square test was applied to analyze the data. The findings reveal promotion as a crucial element for awareness creation and show a clear linkage between awareness and the potential of Medical Tourism. The paper presents healthcare practitioners and tour operators with an insight into Medical Tourism in developing cities like Mangalore and the effective strategies imperative to excel in this sector. This study evaluates if developing cities of India have the potential to be promoted as Medical Tourism hubs reaping benefits to the economy of India.

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1. Introduction

Medical Tourism is an age-old concept and its roots can be traced to 4000 B.C. (Benzler,2013). This burgeoning industry is reaping magnanimous benefits in developed as well as developing countries. Medical Tourism renowned as medical value travel has proven to be a lucrative foreign exchange revenue generator for countries flourishing as seasoned medical tourist destinations (Lunt, et al.,2011). The Government of India has been investing in developing cities in India to increase its revenue from the tourism sector. Allied sectors such as hotels, retail, entertainment, pharmaceuticals, surgical equipment, travel, and tourism industries are witnessing a rise in monetary gains from Medical Tourism by tapping new avenues to attract international tourists.

Medical Tourism ushered in as a concept in India has been the subject of interest among hospitals and is still nascent in exploring ways to publicize medical travel among foreign nationals. With its introduction, hospitals, sightseeing places and stadiums for sports and games are being upgraded to lure an international legion of patients. This sector contributes to an increase in GDP and is an excellent source of employment generation (Romanova et al., 2015). This sector is promising not only for developing countries but for developing cities as well. Mangalore has the potential to generate a revenue of 3000 crores and 3000 jobs in other allied areas if Medical Tourism is implemented successfully in full bloom (DSouza, 2018).

People residing in developed countries face several hurdles while accessing healthcare. India with its rich resources can tap into the drawbacks of developed nations and formulate effective strategies to pull tourists to this land (Sathish, 2010). Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the awareness level prevalent among hospitals in developing cities as well as to assess its potential as a Medical Tourism hub. The

improvements brought about by Medical Tourism can enhance the standard of living and health conditions of the locals on the coastal line. This case study attempts to outline the challenges and suggest measures to be undertaken to boost Medical Tourism.

1.1. Profile of Mangalore:

Mangalore, a coastal city located to the South of Karnataka, is home to many healthcare institutions contributing significantly to the economic development of the society. A major proportion of the hospitals are concentrated in this region. It is the second-large main port city renowned as the "Gateway of Karnataka" (Travelrope, 2018) with a population of 8,89,226 (District Statistical Officer, 2022). Mangalore has 111 hospitals, 2 district hospitals, 4 Taluk hospitals, and 7 community health centres. This district is the cradle for education and banking, an epicentre for industrial trade and healthcare sectors with plentiful scenic sightseeing. (Mallya,2016).

Mangalore is the second largest contributor to GDP, accounting for 5.8 per cent. (The Hindu Bureau, 2022). A couple of hospitals in Mangalore are just piloting Medical Tourism, while a few hospitals are reaping benefits and devising innovative strategies to attract medical tourists to this land. Yet, some hospitals have still not implemented Medical Tourism due to certain limitations. Currently, Mangalore has 5 NABH accredited hospitals with a gradual rise in the number of hospitals going in for accreditation.

The paper has cited Mangalore city in Karnataka, India as a case of a developing city for Medical Tourism possessing a good number of reputed hospitals and renowned doctors.

2. Literature review

Medical Tourism is a contested phenomenon sought by most countries (Johnston et al.,2010). Several studies have been conducted on the Medical Tourism perspectives of various countries such as Malaysia (Aziz, et al. 2015), Thailand, India, Singapore (Whittaker,2008), Jordon, South Africa, Middle East (Lunt et al. 2015). These nations

in the world are competing against each other to be topmost on the Medical Tourism Index Chart and excel as pioneers in this sector. Studies have also been conducted on Medical Tourism in India (Crooks et al. 2011; Anvekar 2012; Carrera & Bridges,2006). Very few studies have emerged on Medical Tourism in developing cities such as Mangalore. Eris & Kemer (2021) studied the awareness of health workers in public hospitals of the South-Eastern Anatolian Region. The researchers found the awareness to be low due to a lack of knowledge about the competence of healthcare institutions, medical tourism problems, effects and potential of that city. Dökme et al., (2018) emphasized the need for medical tourism to evolve as a separate unit with healthcare workers having sufficient knowledge about medical tourism but with little proficiency in foreign languages. Limited studies carried out on the potential of specific regions reveal that health workers are unsure about their city's potential to attract medical tourists. (Erdoğan 2018; Acar and Turan 2016)

Health workers must be aware of factors influencing medical tourists. These motives have been classified as push and pull factors that draw a clear distinction and delineate the aspects that lure them to a particular destination. (Bookman & Bookman 2007 ; Fetscherin & Stephano 2016). Past literary studies pinpoint tourists' socio-demographics (Henson et al., 2015; Hopkins et al.), high medical treatment costs (Heydari et al.,2019; Menvielle et al.2011; Veerasoontorn & Beise-Zee, 2010); long waiting lists, quality of medical treatment,availability of a specific service (Wang, et al., 2020; Bookman & Bookman 2007),lack of insurance or non-coverage (Yıldız & Khan, 2019; Singh, 2019);privacy and confidentiality of treatments (John & Larke 2016) as prime push factors. Likewise, the environment of the destination country, the quality of medical treatment and facilities, accreditation,the reputation of the hospitals and their doctors (Fetscherin &Stephano 2016); the opportunity to vacation (Lee & Kim, 2015); the ability to speak or interpret the language of a medical tourist (Aydin& Karamehmet, 2017; Zolfagharian et al., 2018); favourable political climate (Crooks et al. 2011); minimum waiting time (John & Larke 2016) have been identified as pull motivations behind medical travel of a patient. Awareness among health workers about their

institutional strengths and competitive advantages of a destination is of utmost importance to tap the underlying potential of a developing city. The integration of unique selling propositions of a destination with these motivational factors will add value to medical tourism products and services enhancing the destination competitiveness of developing cities.

It is integral that the key players in medical tourism should be aware of the risks associated with medical tourism to minimize them. A lack of awareness among these players can be detrimental to organizations relying on medical tourism. Mediocre infrastructural facilities, poor connectivity, and accessibility issues, excessive power cut-offs are a few reasons that make medical tourists opt for other countries as their destination choice vis-à-vis to India (Rai et al. 2014; Shanmugam 2013; Mane & Hundekar 2017). The risks to health involved in medical travel during pre and post-treatment, especially in case of complicated surgeries, can cost a fortune and turn out to be egregious for an international patient (Crooks et al. 2010). Moreover, the clarity of reports, understanding of the case and reiteration of tests by doctors in one's home country are equivocal. Either of the alternatives sought doubles the cost, thereby manifesting the entire exercise of medical travel in vain. In case of any negative outcomes witnessed by a medical tourist due to medical errors, or negligence by healthcare professionals in developing countries like India, there is little recourse a foreigner can seek owing to weak framework implementation and enforcement of malpractice laws. (Crooks, et al. 2010; Hopkins et al. 2010).

A growing body of literature is emerging in the area of COVID-19 with its impact on the medical tourism industry. Telemedicine has been accepted worldwide as a strategy to engage medical tourists all over the world (Gao et al., 2020). A digital healthcare platform along with providing a continuum of care reduces the costs dramatically and bridges the gap between patients and the health service provider. It is an effective tool to attract domestic patients in rural areas to have access to smartphones. The literary reviews affirm that India has a lot of competitive advantages to showcase and has the potential to

compete as the most sought-after destination for tourists in all aspects compared to other leading-tier cities.

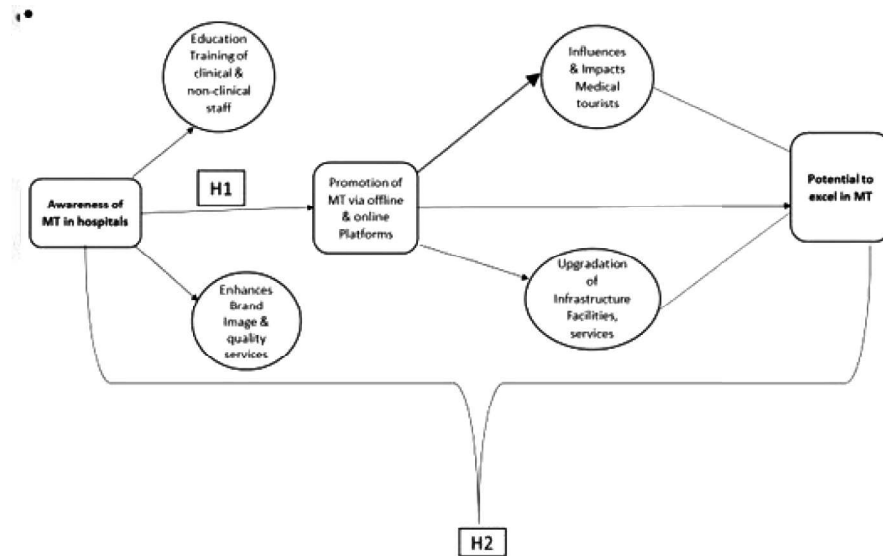


Figure 1: Interrelation between Awareness, promotion, and potential of Medical Tourism

Source: Developed by the author

The conceptual framework is developed based on past literature (Heung et al., 2010; Fetscherin & Stephano, 2016; Heesup & Hyun, 2015; Bookman & Bookman, 2007) on Medical Tourism. It depicts the interrelation between awareness, promotion, and potential of Medical Tourism. The promotion of healthcare institutions is essential for Medical Tourism to thrive in emerging economies. This is possible only when healthcare institutions become aware of Medical Tourism and its importance for the growth of hospitals as well as the economy as a whole. Realizing its prominence, hospitals need to invest in training their staff, upgrading infrastructure, and delivering quality services to meet international standards. This in turn will enhance the brand image of hospitals by motivating tourists and creating a

positive attitude towards the destination. All these factors are proven to determine the potential to excel in Medical Tourism.

2.2. Hypothesis development

Medical tourism has its challenges in being marketed and promoted considering that health is a fundamental right and cannot be sold nor commercialized. Although healthcare is regarded as a service, there have been worldwide criticisms when promoted due to fear of universal access to healthcare and focus on translation into money equivalents paving way for commercialization. The medical tourism literature speaks volumes about the necessity to promote medical tourism explaining its significant role and emphasizing the need for an effective marketing approach for the awareness creation of medical tourism (Purcarea, 2019; Rydback, 2021; Hwang et al., 2018; Zhong et al., 2021). Therefore, the study has postulated the validation of the significant role of promotion in medical tourism awareness creation.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Promotion plays a significant role in awareness of Medical Tourism.

Studies outlining the linkage between awareness of medical tourism in a country and its potential to grow in this sector are limited. Few studies highlight hospital workers in developing destinations are unaware of medical tourism and health workers are unsure of the medical tourism potential (Dökme et al., 2018; Eris & Kemer, 2021). This lends support to the hypothesis (H2) to validate the relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Two categorical variables "awareness and potential" of Medical Tourism are dependent.

2.3. Research Methodology:

This exploratory study employed a survey method from November 2021 to January 2022 comprising a semi-structured questionnaire to elicit the respondents' opinions. Employees from middle and senior-level positions such as Executives and Managers-Marketing, Public relations, HR, Operations, Managing Director, CEO, Administrators,

doctors & Staff nurses participated as respondents in the survey. The total population is 117 hospitals in Mangalore and was classified based on the total number of beds in the hospitals using a stratified random sampling method. Hospitals in Mangalore with more than 75 beds were considered for this study.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic Profile of hospitals

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of hospitals and years of experience in healthcare. Total Beds play a very important role in deciding the potential of hospitals for Medical Tourism. This table shows that 33.3 per cent of the hospitals are General, Specialty (4.8 per cent), Multi-Specialty (42.9 per cent) and 4 Super-Specialty hospitals constituting 19 per cent.

Table1: Demographic profile of Hospitals:

Attributes	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Type of Hospital	General	7	33.3
	Specialty	1	4.8
	Multi-Specialty	9	42.9
	Super-Specialty	4	19.0
	Total	21	100.0
Total number of beds in the hospital	Less than 75	7	33.3
	75-320	10	47.6
	320-565	2	9.5
	810-1055	1	4.8
	1055-1300	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0	
Experience in healthcare	Below 5 years	1	4.8
	5-10 years	3	14.3
	10-15 years	2	9.5
	Above 15 years	15	71.4
Total	21	100.0	

Source: Author's computations based on primary data

The survey conducted reveals that 7 hospitals comprising 33.3 per cent of the total sample, have less than 75 beds and are unsuitable for Medical Tourism. Whereas 66.7 per cent of the hospitals have sufficient beds to accommodate domestic and international tourists, as well as locals. 71.4 per cent of the hospitals in Mangalore, have an immense experience of over 15 years and qualify to attract international tourists with their expertise.

3.2. Awareness of Medical Tourism in Hospitals of Mangalore:

Awareness of healthcare services is a decisive parameter that influences medical tourists in the selection of Mangalore hospitals as a Medical Tourism destination. In Table 2, out of 21 hospitals, 81 per cent of them claim that they are aware of Medical Tourism and its benefits. 52.4 per cent of hospitals expressed that they promote Medical Tourism through various strategies, while the remaining are yet to implement Medical Tourism. These hospitals strive toward publicizing their specialities, facilities, and a wide array of healthcare options and support services both in the State, country and abroad. 61.9 per cent of hospitals in Mangalore claim that they have NRI medical tourists, particularly from GCC and MENA regions visiting this city for health-related reasons. Likewise, 42.9 per cent of hospitals receive international patients from countries such as Somalia, Bangladesh, Africa, Sri Lanka, Australia, the U.S., GCC, and MENA regions.

Mangalore has wide scope in terms of Domestic Medical Tourism due to reputed doctors and healthcare institutions with advanced technologies and well-equipped facilities. The hospitals of this city receive a good number of patients from Madikeri (24.6 per cent), Kerala (23 per cent), Hubli (14.8 per cent), and Bangalore (11.5 per cent). They have medical tourists from other cities such as Chickmangalore, Bhatkal, Karwar, Goa, Bijapur, Gadag and other places of Northern Karnataka constituting 19.7 per cent of the total patient inflow.

Table 2: Awareness of Medical Tourism in Hospitals of Mangalore:

Attributes	Categorie	Frequenc	Percent
Aware of Medical Tourism	Yes	17	81.0
	No	4	19.0
	Total	21	100.0
Hospitals promote Medical Tourism	Yes	11	52.4
	No	10	47.6
	Total	21	100.0
NRI inflow	Yes	13	61.9
	No	8	38.1
	Total	21	100.0
International patients' inflow	Yes	9	42.9
	No	12	57.1
	Total	21	100.0

Source: Author’s computations based on primary data

Table 2 illustrates the awareness level prevalent among the hospitals as satisfactory and pertinent to usher in and provide quality services to domestic and international patients. The inflow statistics of foreign patients are an indication of the introduction of Medical Tourism mushrooming in this city. Based on these findings, it is imperative to assess the role of promotion, therefore the hypothesis is formulated as

H1: Promotion plays a significant role in awareness of Medical Tourism.

Chi-Square Tests		
	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test	.035	.035
Symmetric Measures	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.509

Table 3: Chi-square test results for H1

Source: Author’s computations based on primary data

Table 3 shows the Chi-Square test results for hypothesis 1. Fischer's exact test holds good and the result of this test is statistically significant (p -value being 0.035) thereby accepting alternative hypothesis H1. This affirms an association between the promotion and awareness of Medical Tourism. The Phi value of the test statistic (0.509) also shows a moderate association between the two variables. This implies that the promotion of Medical Tourism by top management of healthcare institutions is essential for making hospital staff aware of medical tourism and its benefits. An accurate level of awareness and understanding of the need for Medical Tourism among healthcare workers is vital for the smooth facilitation of quality services and intensifies its publicity worldwide through word of mouth, offline and digital marketing modes.

3.3. Potential of Medical Tourism in Hospitals of Mangalore

Mangalore has well-established hospitals with well-developed infrastructure and ultra-modern cutting-edge technology. Most of the hospitals in this region are specialized and are categorized as Specialty, Multi-Specialty, Super-Specialty, and General hospitals. They are well-known and sought-after mostly by domestic and NRI for treatments in Ayurveda, Homeopathy, and Allopathy.

Outbound medical tourists travel from one country to another either due to non-availability or a ban on treatments in their home country. Data was collected from hospitals on the availability of treatments. 17.7 per cent of the hospitals have specialists in Orthopedics whereas 14.6 per cent of the hospitals offer specialized care in Cardiology. 13.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent of the hospitals cater to treatments associated with Neurology and Ophthalmology respectively. 17.7 per cent of the respondents revealed that other treatments such as Paediatrics & Neonatal Care, General Medicine, General Surgery, Oncology, Spine, Gastroenterology, Nephrology, Transplants, Obstetrics, Urology, Dermatology were also offered by hospitals. These treatments are preferred by domestic and international patients and are one of the prime motives for cross-border travel. Hospitals fare low in Cosmetic surgery (8.3 per cent), Fertility treatment (7.3 per cent), and Gender reassignment surgery (2.1 per cent) which is the need of the hour if

hospitals are relying on Medical Tourism to bring in the expected revenue. These treatments are evolving as upcoming tourism and would spur the influx of patients from other states and countries.

3.3.1. Types of Facilities offered

The state-of-the-art infrastructure, modern equipment, and world-class facilities open up new avenues for Medical Tourism. From table 4, it is apparent that 25 per cent of hospitals have premium rooms to match international standards. 18.8 per cent of hospitals are Wi-Fi enabled and offer personalized patient care as well as assistance. 15 per cent have interpreters to break down communication barriers fostering a home-like environment. Likewise, 2.5 per cent of hospitals provide services such as airport transfers, and visa assistance thereby ensuring medical travel is a hassle-free affair for an international tourist.

Table 4: Facilities offered for international patients

Facilities for international patients	Responses in number	Responses in percentage
Premium Rooms	8	25.0%
Airport Transfers	4	12.5%
Interpreters	5	15.6%
Personal Patient Care	6	18.8%
Wifi	6	18.8%
Other	3	9.4%
Total	96	100.0%

Source: Author's computations based on primary data

Hospitals have to lay prime focus on meeting the patient's, and their family's needs by uplifting the quality of service to global standards to promote Medical Tourism. The hospitals have introduced different room categories to accommodate medical tourists from all over the country and abroad. Premium and Deluxe rooms have been set up

for international patients and NRIs to ensure that the ambience, service, and hospitality match their home country. These hospitals have also demonstrated their affordability through well-planned attractive room tariffs.

Table 5: Room categories offered in hospitals of Mangalore

	Room Rates	Frequency	Percent
General	0-500	17	81.0
	500-1000	2	9.5
	1500-2000	1	4.8
	None	1	4.8
Semi-private	0-500	8	38.1
	500-1000	8	38.1
	1500-2000	1	4.8
	2500-3000	1	4.8
	None	3	14.3
Private	100-1100	10	47.6
	1100-2100	7	33.3
	2100-3100	1	4.8
	3100-4100	1	4.8
	5100-6100	1	4.8
	None	1	4.8
Deluxe	1000-2000	5	23.8
	2000-3000	4	19.0
	3000-4000	2	9.5
	5000-6000	1	4.8
	7000-8000	1	4.8
	None	8	38.1
Super -Deluxe	1000-2000	1	4.8
	2000-3000	2	9.5
	3000-4000	1	4.8
	4000-5000	2	9.5
	5000-6000	2	9.5
	None	13	61.9

Source: Author's computations based on primary data

Table 5 is a representation of the different room categories available in the hospitals. It can be observed that the majority of the hospitals have general, semi-private wards and private wards for domestic as well as local patients. 15.9 and 11 per cent of the hospitals have

Deluxe and Super Deluxe wards that cater to the needs of domestic and international patients. The majority (81 per cent) of the general hospital charges range from INR 0 to 500. This implies that Mangalore has public and few other private hospitals where general wards are free of cost. Few hospitals have zero charges during health camps for a specific period. 76.2 per cent of the semi-private wards in this district are within INR 1000 which is quite affordable in comparison to other cities. 81 per cent of the private wards has per-day charges in the range of INR 1000 to Rs 2100. Deluxe wards vary from INR 1000 to INR 8000 whereas Super-Deluxe is in the range of INR 1000 to 6000. It is observed that 8 hospitals have no deluxe wards whereas 13 hospitals have no super-Deluxe wards. This can be one of the limitations in attracting foreign tourists. It can be deduced that all the hospitals charge a reasonable cost for their wards compared to developed cities and this can be an advantage to hospitals in developing cities.

3.3.2. Determinants of medical tourism

Cent per cent of the hospitals (Table 6) testimonials affirm the futuristic view of the hospitals in Mangalore having a strong potential for growth of Medical Tourism. 90.5 per cent of the respondents believe that Medical Tourism has a strong potential to excel in Mangalore whereas 9.5 per cent feel that the potential is low especially in government hospitals, nursing homes and rural areas. All the hospital respondents surveyed are confident that Medical Tourism is worth investing sector bringing in the expected revenue and increased profits for this city. 61.9 per cent of the respondents recommend their hospitals to go in for Medical Tourism. They believe that their hospitals have the necessary resources, facilities, and accreditation that international patients desire and strongly feel that this sector can increase profits if executed in the right manner. Hospitals situated in underdeveloped areas (rural) feel that the scope for Medical Tourism is low, as the possibility of medical tourists visiting their hospital is low due to a lack of resources, infrastructure and facilities. Few respondents opined that most of the renowned

hospitals located in Mangalore urban are curtailing their scope for Medical Tourism.

Determinants of Medical Tourism	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Potential to Excel	Yes	19	90.5
	No	2	9.5
Foresee Growth	Yes	21	100.0
Brings in Expected revenue	Yes	21	100.0
Worth Investing	Yes	21	100.0
Recommendation for MT	Yes	13	61.9
	No	8	38.1

Table 6: Determinants of medical tourism

Source: Author's computations based on primary data

The Chi-square test was applied to find out whether the hospitals' awareness of Medical Tourism has a significant relationship with the potential to excel in this sector. Therefore, the study puts forth the following hypothesis:

H2: Association between "awareness and potential of Medical Tourism.

Chi-Square test results		
	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test	.029	.029
Symmetric Measures	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.002

Table 7: Chi-square test results for H2

Source: Author's computations based on primary data

Fischer's test is applied since it has a small sample size of $n < 50$. The test result with significance levels 0.029 and 0.002 (p-value) is less than

the significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. This manifests the significant relationship between the two variables. Hence, there is no evidence to accept the null hypothesis which states that there is no association between variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected accepting the alternate hypothesis. The Phi statistic $V=0.669$ indicates moderate strength of the relationship between the two variables.

Therefore, it is evident that there is a need to analyze the level of awareness and potential of hospitals in Mangalore and hence unfolds the need for the study.

4. Discussion

The results derived from the analysis of the findings and facts collected from the respondents lead to certain implications. The findings of the study indicate that most hospitals in Mangalore have long years of experience in healthcare with well-equipped advanced technologies. Though the hospitals offer varied treatments across all specialities, they need to focus on cosmetic surgery, fertility treatments, gender reassignment and bariatric surgery to stimulate international demand. 66.7 percent of the hospitals in Mangalore possess good bed capacity and have demonstrated self-sufficiency by accommodating domestic as well as international patients.

The study uncovers that hospitals in Mangalore are aware of Medical Tourism and its benefits. They have the necessary resources and well-trained staff to engage in Medical Tourism. Although awareness is prevalent in this region, very few hospitals have initiated marketing efforts in the direction of attracting medical tourists. The Chi-square test reveals that the promotion of Medical Tourism is a key criterion for the inflow of medical tourists. This test signifies the importance of promoting Medical Tourism by all the hospitals of Mangalore using the right platform to be renowned worldwide.

The research assesses the different factors impacting the potential to excel in Medical Tourism in Mangalore. The responses provided by hospitals lead to the inference that the potential of Medical Tourism in this city varies in accordance to the 'type of hospital' with Multi-

specialty and Super-specialty hospitals having more scope for Medical Tourism. The personal interviews reveal that the inflow of international medical tourists is dependent on the promotion of Medical Tourism. It is evident that out of 21 hospitals surveyed only 9 are multi-speciality and 4 are Super-Specialty and experience a higher proportion of inflow of international patients among hospitals in the region.

The absence of multi and super-speciality services in some hospitals has been one of the prime reasons inhibiting hospitals' potential for Medical Tourism. The personal interview with the hospital staff brings to light that the 'experience of the doctors' and 'the healthcare' is highly valued by a medical tourist thus increasing the hospital's potential to excel. The survey explicates that Mangalore is witnessing increasing numbers in domestic medical tourism but needs to devise innovative strategies to upsurge international patient numbers.

The Chi-square test showed that the relationship between awareness and promotion of Medical Tourism is highly significant and reasonably strong. This implies that it will not suffice if the hospitals of this country train and spread awareness of Medical Tourism internally within their premises. Large-scale promotion of hospitals worldwide using appropriate channels and innovative marketing techniques are vital to excel in this sector. Therefore, efforts have been made to identify the number of hospitals aware of Medical Tourism in Mangalore and the different factors enhancing its potential to excel have been analyzed through a survey of respondents.

Mangalore identified as a smart city is a classic example of the developed conceptual framework. International patients always prefer accredited hospitals when choosing a destination, a manifestation of adherence to global healthcare standards. The majority of the hospitals in Mangalore are working towards NABH accreditation constantly training their hospital staff on patient safety and quality service delivery in the changing healthcare scenario. The Ministry of Tourism is promoting Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, and Panchakarma under AYUSH through various offline platforms such as World Travel Mart, London, and ITP Berlin. Incredible India, COVID -19

campaigns redirected the entire societal approach globally using online platforms such as websites and mobile applications. These initiatives will pave the way for Mangalore to emerge as a Medical Tourism hub.

5. Conclusions

Mangalore ranks 12th in the global arena for healthcare (Menon G. S. 2017). This city has become a coveted region for Medical Tourism with all the collaborative initiatives and strategies from the local government as well as the healthcare providers. It is well poised and getting prepared to adapt to the increasing tourism numbers in healthcare, wellness as well as tourism attractions. Affordable costs, hospitality, the expertise of doctors, and the well-complementing eco-system are the key drivers differentiating this coast from other cities participating in Medical Tourism.

The Indian Government's well-prepared and proactive initiatives during the pandemic have strengthened the belief in Indian healthcare globally. If Mangalore city has to prosper, then it would not suffice if a few hospitals go for Medical Tourism. Every stakeholder involved in Medical Tourism irrespective of status and ranking, should devise innovative solutions and market itself using extensive Medical Tourism strategies in terms of accreditation and world-class customer service excellence. Only then can this city join hands in fulfilling India's vision of being "the provider of the world" promoting quality treatment, complemented by the bliss of nature.

6. Limitations and Managerial Implications

The study was limited by certain constraints paving way for future research. The sample size chosen was small as respondents were the hospitals themselves, although it had a good mix of different types of hospitals. Simple random sampling adopted excluded prominent hospitals where Medical Tourism is well implemented. The sample included nursing homes and hospitals with very few beds in reality that had no scope for Medical Tourism. In-depth extensive research can be carried out to know the perceptions of medical tourists

about the Dakshina Kannada District. Personal interviews with the respondents helped to understand the scope and challenges faced by this smart city.

This study is preliminary research to gain an in-depth understanding of the type of hospitals available and to assess their strength, readiness, and zeal for Medical Tourism in developing cities of India. There is a need for further research to be carried out to deduce if the amount invested in this sector has an impact on the potential of Medical Tourism. Future research can be carried out on the potential of medical tourism and awareness in other developing cities of India. Such cases can prove to be an effective resource for medical tourism players to tap such developing cities and can attract investments in this sector. Studies on the growth of medical tourism with digital technologies can be carried out. These studies accentuate the revenue prospects medical tourism can reap if executed in the right manner. Such studies can be used as models by the Government and other key players of the States and countries to transform every city into a medical tourism destination for achieving sustainable growth and realizing its competitive advantages.

Declaration:

The article is original and has not been published nor submitted elsewhere for publication.

Author Contributions:

All authors have equally contributed to this research work. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript. All authors have read and given their approval for the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest:

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, and authorship.

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