

PROMOTING MEDICAL TOURISM IN ODISHA: A STUDY ON ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN TWIN CITIES OF CUTTACK AND BHUBANESWAR

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Abstract--- Although the medical tourism is a recent phenomenon, this sector grows exponentially and emerges as a major force for the growth of services exports worldwide. The term medical tourism has been coined by travel agencies and the mass media to describe the rapidly growing practice of travelling across international borders to obtain hi-tech medical care. It is the fastest growing sector in the 21st century and also because many countries are interested in taking advantage for its economic potential, countries are capitalizing their popularity as tourist destinations by combining high quality medical services at competitive prices with tourist packages. Medical tourism in India is a bird eye view subject in both central and state list. Soaring medical costs, high insurance premiums, increasing number of uninsured and under insured people in developed nations, long waiting period in the home country, availability of high quality health care services at affordable rate, and internet/communication channels in developing countries, cheaper air fares, and tourism aspects are the driving forces of the outbound medical tourism. Odisha, formerly known as Orissa, is a major state in eastern India. When so many other states of India have already made their presence of medical tourism in global competition, Odisha is still lagging behind. The present health care facilities in Odisha are conducive for successful development of medical tourism in the state. However, it requires further improvement and attention by the service providers and policy makers. The study, thus undertaken to explore key issues and challenges in development of medical tourism in twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar of Odisha & suggest corrective measures to facilitate medical tourism for projecting Odisha as a medical tourism destination.

Keywords--- Medical Tourism, Healthcare, Hospitals, Health Infrastructure and Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the prominent industries of the world. It is growing at a steady pace and now it became one of the major social and economic phenomena of the modern time. Tourism now is a key driver of socio-economic progress due to its creation of jobs, enterprises, infrastructure development and export revenue earned. Public health is a multidisciplinary subject. So is tourism. In the area of public health central theme is about community health which includes prevention of ailment, sickness, disease among the people, prophylactic action against epidemic, pandemic and global scourge of deadly virus, promotion of hygiene and sanitation, looking after maternal, child, adolescent health and in recent times health of the aging population. In tourism there have been areas of interest starting from visiting religious places; it has covered cultural tourism to include visiting ancient temples, archaeological excavations, witnessing different kinds of dances, listening to music, and watching plays and other forms of pantomime. The area has expanded to cover beach tourism, environmental and forest tourism and adventure tourism. Although medical tourism is often considered as new category of tourism it has been there even since ancient times. The connectivity between public health and medical tourism has created a new branch of study in discipline in science of public health and also in the study of tourism management. In this context, one should make a distinction between travel and tourism. All travels whether by bullock cart, on horse's back, on camel's back or on foot or by automobiles, rail, ship or aircraft is not tourism, although tourism itself has travel as its major component. The first body to define tourism was the League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations. Tourism includes stay, leisure, and additional activities. From the ancient times there has been medical tourism in Greece, Egypt and also in India when people travelled long distance for healing, baths in hot springs and yogic exercises. Health tourism in Europe sprang up with introduction of railways when people from one part of the continent could travel to have hot bath treatment at spas. After Second World War tourism made phenomenal progress with advent of air transport more particularly with jet aircraft and large bodied aircraft(Wide Body) like Boeing 747 and now the mega sized aircraft like A-380. Trans-oceanic flights with large number of passengers thus became popular. Medical tourism began in a big way in the last forty years when the patients from the developed countries like Canada and US started going to countries like India, Thailand, Costa Rica, Jordan and Singapore

for treatment, firstly because the cost of treatment was very high in their own countries and waiting time for surgeries was too long. Shortage of doctors is a big challenge even now. This branch of tourism also created huge employment opportunities through downstream activities like tele-medicines, laboratory and diagnostic services, medical devices and services (airport pick up, travel arrangements coordinating all appointments, interpreters and cuisine). The rise of middle class, increase in aging population and advancement in medical science and supported by expansion of both international and domestic air transport will play a big role in growth of tourism in the world in next decade and half. Middle class will constitute one third of the global population. Centre of gravity of economy is shifting to Asia. No wonder air transport development of this region is spectacular. Middle class here is growing so also aging population. Aging population in USA, Canada and Europe with high cost of living and even higher cost of medical care will like to visit less developed economies and emerging markets for recreation and treatment. From this one can easily visualize how the growth of medical tourism will take place in the Asian region. India can leverage this trend to its advantage. The government and private sector should create condition for development of infrastructure like hotels, hospitals, roads, airports and clean pollution free environment, regulatory mechanism and financing institutions.

MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA- AN OVERVIEW

India's effort to promote medical tourism took off in the late 2002 when McKinsey-CII (2002) study outlined immense potential of this sector. In the same year, the Ministry of Tourism started "Incredible India" - the government's big budget market campaign to attract tourists. In the following year, the Finance Minister Jaswant Singh called for the country to become a "Global Health Destination" and urged for improving airport infrastructure to smooth the arrival and the departure of medical tourists. Efforts were made to modernize and expand airports in the country, and to improve road connectivity and other infrastructure facilities. The Government of India promoted 45 private hospitals as Centre of Excellence in its tourism brochure. It introduced a new M or Medical Visa for medical tourists and their companions too. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has set up a National Accreditation Board for hospitals. The government declared medical tourism as service export so that this sector avails tax concessions. At the state level, some state governments participate in healthcare tourism expos abroad. Kerala had made concerted

efforts to promote healthcare tourism, leveraging Ayurveda. Karnataka has set up Bangalore International Health City Corporation. Maharashtra had granted the industry status to the tourism activity such that this sector gets all benefits/incentives given to all other industries. The industry has also made various initiatives. Healthcare centers have established world class infrastructure to attract international patients. They set up comprehensive diagnostic centres, imaging centres, and world class blood banks. Hospitals are constantly upgrading technology. Some hospitals have established special wards for international patients. Some are tying up with travel/tour operators to offer healthcare tourism as a single service package. Few hospitals are in the process of continuous innovation of products, services and facilities to give better value to the customers. While doing so, some hospitals are focusing on cost effective-customer oriented technology. Many healthcare centers are increasingly participating in international trade fairs/exhibitions to promote medical tourism. The medical tourism in India has also gained a boost with an increase in investments and FDI from international players. Indian healthcare institutions are increasingly going for international accreditation of hospitals and clinical laboratories. Currently, there are 38 JCI approved hospitals in India. Availability of high quality healthcare professionals and nurses, round the clock services by medical staff, choice of luxury rooms in hospitals, good medical options, high success rates, reputation for treatment in advanced healthcare segment such as cardio vascular surgery, organ transplants, and eye surgery, popularity of Indian traditional wellness systems, diversity of tourist destinations, strength in information technology are the attractive aspects of Indian medical tourism. Today more and more foreigners choose India as their destination for the treatment because of its rich cultural heritage and innumerable tourist attractions. The medical tourism is a growing source of foreign exchange as well as prestige and goodwill outside the country. This sector is an example of how India is profiting from globalization and outsourcing. Medical Tourism in India is a combination of several factors which makes India a unique healthcare destination. Over 60,000 cardiac surgeries are done every year with outcomes at par with international standards. Multi-organ transplants are successfully performed at $\frac{1}{10}^{\text{th}}$ of the costs in comparison to the West. Patients from over 55 countries are treated at Indian hospitals. The Indian healthcare industry is undergoing a phenomenal expansion and India is now looked upon as the leading country in the promotion of medical tourism, with an annual growth rate estimate at 30%. Probably realizing the potential, major corporates such as the Tatas, Fortis, Max, Wockhardt,

Primal, Reliance, Global, Parkway and the Escorts group have made significant investments in setting up modern hospitals in major cities. Many have also designed special packages for patients, including airport pickups, visa assistance and board and lodging. The major service providers in Indian medical tourism are: the Apollo Hospitals, Escorts Hospital, Fortis Hospitals, Breach Candy, Hinduja, Mumbai's Asian Heart

Institute, Arvind Eye Hospitals, Manipal Hospitals, Mallya Hospital, Shankara Nethralaya etc. AIIMs, a public - sector hospital is also in the fray. In terms of locations – Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai cater to the maximum number of health tourists and are fast emerging as medical tourism hubs are seen primarily within the private/corporate sector, not in the public sector. Medical tourism in India includes advanced and life savings health care services like open transplants, cardio vascular surgery, eye treatment , knee/hip treatment, different cosmetic surgeries and alternate systems of medicine. Also leisure aspects of medical travelling/wellness tourism may be included on such medical travel trips. India provides a variety of medical services to overseas patients.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A law (1996) has defined medical tourism as a travel from home to other destination to improve one's health condition as one type of leisure. This includes getting indigenous and alternative medical services, and any other form of tourism undertaken with the purpose of addressing a health concern. Bookman & Bookman (2007) have defined medical tourism as travel with the aim of improving one's health, and also an economic activity that entails trade in services and represents two sectors: medicine and tourism. Robert (2011), is also known for his study on the cost of facilities and treatment centers, hospital accreditation, doctors' reputations, opportunities after surgery (recovery period), culture, facilities affiliated with hospitals in developed countries, and lack some of the services. Medical Tourism may be categorized as: outbound where patients travel abroad for medical care; inbound where foreign patients travel to the host country for care and intra-bound where patients travel domestically for medical care (Deloitte, 2008). Bookman (2007) considers medical tourism to be a component of export-led economic growth, with the foreign currency earnings from international patients translating into output, jobs and income for

developing countries, with the added bonus of improving their public health systems. John Connell (2006) says that Medical tourism has grown rapidly during the past decade and several Asian countries have become dominant. Conventional tourism has become a by-product of this growth, despite its tour packaging and overall benefits to travel industry have been considerable. Rise of medical tourism has emphasized privatization of health care due to accelerated globalization of both health care and tourism. Rao (2005) describes that a substantial number of foreigners are coming to India to avail themselves of quality medical treatment at a cost much lower than that of other countries of the world, particularly in the field of cardiology, cardiac surgery, joint replacement, ophthalmology, pathology and Indian systems of medicine etc. Mohanty and Madhav (2006) are of the opinion that the Indian health care industry began to recently emerge as a prime destination for medical tourists by upgrading its technology, gaining greater familiarity with western medical practices and improving its image in terms of quality and cost. Datar, Mukherji and Sood (2007) shown that the availability of health infrastructure had only a modest effect on immunisation coverage. Larger and better equipped facilities had bigger effects on immunisation coverage. Health infrastructure in terms of hospitals, hospital beds, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and so on has a significant, direct and positive contribution to health outcomes of any country. In this connection, the present piece of work attempts to analyse the health infrastructure in the state of Odisha (India) and especially in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Expansion of medical tourism has taken place to other parts of India. Where ever good hospitals and hotels exist, there is scope of medical tourism. Even Odisha has scope. What is needed is entrepreneurship supported by holding of hand by government and its agencies during start -up phase.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

India has been experiencing a medical tourism boom since the early 2000's and is at the forefront of this growing phenomenon. Its health care sector is growing briskly and is one of the largest sectors in terms of employment and revenue generation. Travel and Tourism is one of the important industries in the Indian economy in terms of foreign currency earning and employment generation. In the tourism arena, medical tourism is a new found opportunity, which is yet to be developed to its' full potential. Because of its phenomenal potential, it deserves the attention of the policy

framers, researchers as well as the public. Hence, this study opens up those vistas that are essential for an elaborate scholarly research on medical tourism potential in Odisha. It attempts to identify the health care facilities available in India and Odisha in general and twin cities Cuttack and Bhubaneswar of Odisha in particular under medical tourism. The research work requires the identification of grey areas in the study sites for developing a strategic approach for development and promotion of medical tourism.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study area is confined to the twin cities- Cuttack and Bhubaneswar of Odisha. The cities have been selected on the basis of their contribution to health care sector in Odisha and potential for the development and promotion of medical tourism in the state.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ☐ To understand the concept of medical tourism
- ☐ To explore the potential of medical tourism in twin cities Cuttack and Bhubaneswar
- ☐ To identify issues and challenges in developing and promoting medical tourism in the study area and recommend suitable strategies towards it.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Academic literature and research on medical tourism, is limited due to the relative newness of the industry. What is available comes mostly from newspapers, popular magazines, and online articles. This research aims to add new and significant insights to the slowly accruing academic literature on medical tourism in Odisha with special reference to its twin cities Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. In addition to contributing to academic literature, the findings of this research may contribute to other fields. Policy makers, for example, might apply the research to improving overall healthcare system in Odisha. Medical tourism related industries, travel agencies and tour operators, hotels, food and beverage companies, medical facilities and services, yoga centres and spas could also benefit from this study. The outcomes of this study could also be useful to prospective medical tourists. Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, being the medical hubs of Odisha, need real attention from the Government side to relate its health care facilities with tourism. Odisha is

now a popular tourism destination among the domestic and international tourists. Combining the medical facilities with tourism will certainly improve the competitiveness in the study area and can generate lot of economic benefits for the state.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Based on the background of problem raised in the selected research approach is qualitative research. Qualitative data obtained from interviews with the service providers in medical sector and the Government officials in the study area. Descriptive research design has been used to describe the present situation of health care facilities that could be utilized and improved to facilitate the medical tourism development in the state.

Methods of Data collection

Primary data is obtained in the form of observation, interview and interactions with various stakeholders such as the Department of Tourism, Odisha Tourism Development Corporation, Government and Private Sectors hospitals, local community and other relevant agencies. Secondary data has been gathered from the various books, journals and newspaper articles relating to the study.

Healthcare Scenario in the Study area

Infrastructure is fundamental for any kind of development. Health infrastructure is very essential for quality health output. The health infrastructure in Odisha includes both physical infrastructure and human infrastructure in the health system. The physical infrastructure includes all the Allopathic, Homeopathic, Ayurveda and Government medical institutions like hospitals, nursing homes, dispensaries and medical colleges and hospitals. The human infrastructure includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists and medical staffs. The allopathic hospitals were established in late nineteenth century. Prior to this people generally depended on traditional health care treatment and were reluctant to accept the modern health care treatment due to social and cultural backwardness. However Ayurveda played a vital role in systematic treatment. At present the modern medical institutions, colleges, hospitals and dispensaries are more widespread in all the

districts of Odisha and the faith in modern system of treatment has increased. Odisha has a robust healthcare scenario with facilities for treatment of almost all emergencies. The state has impressive 0.8 beds per 1,000 populations, which is better than the national average. However, considering the WHO recommendation of three beds per 1,000 populations, the shortfall in the number of beds till 2025 is 1, 17,160. Even at one bed per thousand population, the gap is 17,437 hospital beds till 2025", added the report. So, Odisha needs to add more number of beds with additional investments in its health care sector.

Following is the list of Health Care Institutions available in Odisha:

Sl. No	Category of health Institutions	Nos.
1	Medical College	07
2	Cancer Hospital	01
3	District Headquarter Hospital	32
4	Sub-Divisional Hospital	32
5	Community Health Centre	377
6	Primary Health Centre	1226
7	Other Hospitals	79
8	Infectious Disease Hospitals	05
9	List of Training Institutions	02

Healthcare facilities in Cuttack

Cuttack is the former capital and the second largest city in the Indian state of Odisha. It is also the headquarters of the Cuttack district. Cuttack is known as the "Silver City" of India. It is the perfect match of old traditions blending with the modern world. Cuttack has a public health system of world-class quality. It has both private and public hospitals for its residents. There are private clinics established in few parts of the city for convenience of patients. Few of these clinics are of hospitals, while few running are of independent medical practitioners. Patients get prompt medical intervention at the earliest, when they need it the most. Patients are ensured to get the best of medical care at the hands of highly experienced medical personnel. The two major hospitals in

Cuttack are Ashwin Hospital and S C B Medical College. Both these hospitals are equipped with the necessary amenities. These hospitals provide a number of different medical services to the people who stay here. Ashwin Hospital is one of the reputed Cuttack medical institutions. It was put up by Cuttack Hospital Private Limited. The major services provided at this hospital are associated with Trauma, Neuroscience and Plastic Surgery. The S C B Medical College is one of the most commonly visited hospitals of Cuttack. It is the oldest hospital and medical college of the place. This institute provides different types of health services. It also offers a number of medical courses to the students of the city. This medical centre is under government administration. Some important departments of this hospital are Medicine, General Surgery, Hematology, Neurology, Mental Health, Gastroenterology, Nephrology, Tuberculosis, Endocrinology, Paediatric and Cardiology. Some of the important private hospitals of Cuttack includes Shanti Memorial Hospital Pvt. Ltd., Star Hospital, Panda Curie Cancer Hospital, Sun Hospital Pvt. Ltd., Good Luck Hospital, Shakti Hospital, Nigam Hospital, Om Suvam Hospital, and Sabarmati General Hospital. Other than hospitals, there are also other important medical centers in Cuttack, which provide quality health services to the patients. The Central Red Cross Blood Bank is a major blood bank of this region, which provides supply of fresh and uninfected blood in case of emergency. Hospitals in Cuttack have world-class cancer-care treatment facilities. The hospitals specialize in providing cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, hormone replacement therapy, cryotherapy and surgical care for excision of tumours from the body. Palliative care is also provided to cancer patients; it does not work on the cancer directly. But it works to relieve other health concerns caused by way of cancer to the patient. These hospitals also provide supportive care that works to increase effectiveness of existing cancer treatments. Diagnostic treatments like bone marrow aspiration and biopsy are carried out by expert oncologists too. Majority of hospitals in Cuttack are recognized by National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) and International Organization for Standardization (ISO). They have dedicated pharmacies and emergency facilities that run on a round-the-clock basis. Since patients receive prompt and high quality medical care, precious lives are saved and fatalities are reduced. Hospitals in Cuttack provide patients medical services in the general, semi-private and private wards of their medical facilities. There are in-patient and out-patient wards as well. Patients can decide based on their condition and the doctor's advice whether they need to stay in out-patient ward or visit the in-patient ward to get treated. The

hospitals have highly hygienic Intensive Care Units (ICU's) and operation theatres for surgical treatments of patients. Laser therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy are the secondary post-surgical techniques provided by hospitals in Cuttack. Patients are also provided with dietary care and guidance which also aids in their speedy recovery. Diabetic patients in need of dialysis are provided with it according to the health condition of the person. There are treatment facilities developed for treating male and female infertility, sexual dysfunction, varicose veins and other disorders that do not require surgical intervention.

Healthcare facilities in Bhubaneswar

Recent industrial, infrastructural and educational development in Bhubaneswar has made the city, considered to be one of the cleanest and planned and smart cities of modern India and one of the fastest developing cities of India, the epicentre of healthcare revolution in Orissa. "This change has been powered by the huge investment flow, rising employment opportunities, and increasing foothold of service-based sectors, which has in turn led to rise in purchasing power and increased standards of living." Healthcare institutions across Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, provide robust facilities to meet the needs of every individual looking for medical aid. Over the years, there has been a huge growth in the medical sector of Bhubaneswar. The hospitals set up here have introduced latest and updated infrastructural development in vivid areas of medical fields that suits today's technological and advanced basis of medicine. From a city that lagged behind in diagnostic procedures, today hospitals in the city have radiology procedures like 64 slice CT, 1.5 Tesla MRI, 3-D ultrasound and digital mammogram. The cath labs are flat panel, while OT's have laminar air flow and HEPA filters. All 50 speciality and super speciality treatments are available now in the leading hospitals. The city's first corporate hospital, Kalinga Hospital, now offers Kidney transplantation, LV Prasad Eye Institute has taken the lead in dealing with complicated Ophthalmic cases, while high risk Cardiac cases are dealt with by Kalinga Hospital, Aditya Care and Apollo Hospital. With Hemalata Cancer Hospital now providing all three branches of Oncology treatment, especially linear accelerator with IMRT and CT stimulation, the high cancer burden of the state has been taken care of.

In the current scenario, while existing hospitals are introducing cutting edge technology, scaling up and even planning larger hospitals, corporates are rushing in to grab a pie of the market.

Diagnostic giants like Dr. Lalpath labs, Ranbaxy and Piramal Diagnostics have set-ups there. Even Stem cell banking, a relatively new concept, is picking up here. Cryobanks International India, which deals in umbilical cord blood stem cell banking, has opened a collection centre in Bhubaneswar. As many as three private medical colleges (Hi-Tech Medical College, Sum Medical College and Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences) have come up in Bhubaneswar in the last few years. Even a slew of nursing colleges have also been set up to fulfil the skyrocketing demand. The healthcare boom has paved the path for many NRI doctors (both Oriya and non Oriya) to show willingness to work in Bhubaneswar, a trend that is a recent phenomenon.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data collected from various sources has been analysed and reveals the following issues and challenges in development and promotion of medical tourism in the study area:

- ☐ The personal relationship between the patients and doctors will be missing due to commercialization of service, which may not be liked by all the doctors.
- ☐ Lack of adequate speciality beds.
- ☐ Some of the medical treatment requires aftercare and post treatment observation which may be missing for the medical tourists.
- ☐ Lack of community participation and awareness about the medical tourism in the study area.
- ☐ Inequalities in the medical services provided by Government and private hospitals will increase.
- ☐ Lack of trust among the foreign patients about Indian hospitals
- ☐ Bureaucratic roadblocks
- ☐ Lack of proper investor friendly policy and medical tourism policy of Odisha Government.
- ☐ Most of patients visiting India are least interested in leisure activities.
- ☐ Most of the customers expected for medical treatment are from non-English speaking countries.
- ☐ Poor power supply and water supply in the study area.
- ☐ Poor hygiene awareness in medical attendants, unhygienic food handling, and lack of proper hospitality services.

While all other states in India have already projected themselves in the field of medical tourism, Odisha needs to carve out a distant niche for itself, by leveraging its existing strengths and thereby

offering a unique value proposition. Taking into account, the implementation of following strategies in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar will help to create a new way for this new tourism market in the state:

- There are hardly any hospitals in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar promoting medial tourism. An awareness is required to be created among the local community about tourism. The hospital owners must be educated through various workshops and seminars about the concept and benefits of medical tourism.
- The number of beds availability must be increased to meet the demand of the local community and medical tourists.
- There should be arrangement for post medical care. The hospitals should have tie-up with leading hospitals and resorts in the state where the foreign patients after treatment for post treatment and rejuvenation therapies. Also accommodation near to the hospitals is required where the accompanying guests of patient can stay during the treatment.
- The hospital should maintain the leadership in terms of infrastructure and facilities to attract the overseas patients.
- Most of the foreign and NRI patients use local magazines, newspapers and internet to seek information about healthcare facilities, the hospital should promote its services through international magazines and newspapers.

The hospitals should have proper tie-up with the concerned media to promote the health care facilities available in the study area. Available brochures about the health care facilities and specialities must be made available with the agencies specialising in international medical travel, known as Medical Tourism Facilitators. The hospitals must mention clearly about the available treatment facilities on their websites. Social media can be used for promotion of medical tourism in twin cities as it is one of the cheapest promotional tools in modern marketing. Healthcare centers also should participate in international trade fairs/ exhibitions globally to promote medical tourism

- As most of the foreign patients prefer to come to India for treatment due to minimal cost of the treatment, the hospitals in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar must decide a suitable cost structure to meet this demand of the patients.
- Suitable medical tourism packages must be developed and promoted relating to different types of treatment.

- Most of people are foreign countries are of opinion that India is still a developing and poor country and again Odisha is supposed to be the poorest and hence a good image is required to be created of the study area about its quality of doctors and the hospital infrastructure to gain the trust among the foreign patients.
- The cleanliness and the quality of food services in the hospitals must be improved.
- The service providers must have the provision for adequate water and power supply all the time.
- The Government of Odisha need to seek help and necessary guidance from National Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board for the development and promotion of medical tourism.
- The hospitals promoting medical tourism in the study area must get enlisted under the Health Tourism Portals of Government of India.
- The Government of Odisha must come up with an investor friendly policy and a separate medical tourism policy to encourage medical tourism in the state.

6. CONCLUSION

Medical tourism in India has emerged as the fastest growing segment of tourism industry despite the global economic downturn. India is offering very low cost treatments not only to Indians but also to the foreigners. Patient from USA and UK, are coming to India to look for alternative and cost-effective destinations to get their treatments done. The Indian medical tourism industry is presently at a blossoming stage, but has an enormous potential for future growth and development. It is a truism that tourism is supposed to be about relaxation, pleasure and an increase in well-being and even health. Even with the rise in cultural tourism and notions of tourism also being a learning experience, such learning too is expected to be relaxing and quite different from classroom memories. Tourists need not necessarily be hedonists, but they anticipate a beneficial outcome. Medical tourism as a niche has emerged from the rapid growth of what has become an industry, where people travel often long distances to overseas countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care while simultaneously being holidaymakers, in a more conventional sense. Odisha is a place where the tourists can relax on the beaches, visit the famous temples and explore the beauty and bounty of nature and wildlife. Combining its health care facilities with tourism services will certainly bring competitive advantage for the state and can have beneficial impact on residents,

businesses and government through unseasonal tourism and diverse consumer base leading to higher revenue. The state need to have optimum mix of improved health care services with tourism as Medical tourism requires services of transportation, lodging and hospitality and the impeccable nature where the tourist can rest and relax for their speedy recovery. The recommended strategy will definitely resolve the problems associated with the medical tourism development and strengthen the destination brand and increases economic activity in the study area.

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