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# Health Tourism in India: 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract :

From the various challenges that India has been facing in the 21st Century, Global Pandemic Covid 2019 was biggest challenge. Global Pandemic Covid 2019 has given a major setback to the tourism industry of all states in India. There is a need to find out some niche markets in tourism industry in order to come out of the shocks and slow down of Covid period. One of such niche market in tourism industry is health tourism. Goa is selected as the sample state for studying health tourism in India. The purpose of this paper was to understand the opportunities and challenges of health tourism in the state of Goa. Cost effectiveness is the major opportunity and major challenges are image creation and a lack of internationally accredited hospitals in Goa. There is an immense potential for health tourism in Goa.

**Keywords :** Health Tourism, Opportunities, Challenges, Potentials.

## Introduction :

Tourism Industry is one of the largest, eco-friendly industries in the world, contributing towards the economic growth of a nation. Tourism is recognized world over as an important instrument of economic development and employment generation. Tourism industry is the industry which has experienced the major slow down during Global pandemic Covid 2019. At global level efforts are taken to help industries to come out of the shocks of Global Pandemic Covid 2019. To help tourism industry too in that way, it is necessary to find out some unexplored

sector in the tourism industry. Such unexplored sector can be health tourism. India is a tourist destination which is unparalleled in its beauty, uniqueness, rich culture and history. Goa generally ranks among the top 12 tourist destination states in India, albeit towards the bottom, contributed to a large extent by its small size. (Falleiro, 2015,1).The GDP of Goa was 8.16% in the year 2020-21

The service sector is the second largest contributor to the GDP of Goa with 42.70% in the year 2020-21. The tourism industry continues to play an important role in the service sector of Goa. Goa is traditionally known as a tourist paradise for its natural vista, unique beaches and cultural diversity. Goa has always witnessed increase in the tourist arrival rate every year but because of Covid situation there has been a decrease in the Tourist Arrival rate in the year 2020. Tourism is usually not an active industry in Goa throughout the year. It faces a slack season during the months of June to September. The availability of infrastructure and other facilities remain partially unutilized during the slack season. It is possible to make use of these unutilized facilities for further revenue generation, by exploring untapped forms of tourism in Goa such as health tourism.

## Review of Related Literature :

### Health tourism: an overview :

As far as the history of Health tourism is concerned, it was the Greeks who first laid the foundation for comprehensive health care systems and medical tourism networks. (Jyothis, T, 2013)



As being a popular concept, there are few consensus on the concept of Health Tourism. One of the most important issues on the ambiguity of the concept is related with its definitions. Indeed there are some other concepts similar to Health Tourism such as Medical Tourism and Wellness Tourism. Some authors prefer to use the concepts of health tourism and medical tourism without taking any measures on their differences while some others prefer to make a distinction between those two concepts (Smith and Puczko, 2009: 101).

Cherukara, J. M., & Manalel, J. in 2008 conducted a study covering challenges and scope of health tourism in Kerala collecting primary data from selected hospitals. It was found in their study that Kerala is a very cost effective state in form of medical treatments, Government has involved for promoting health tourism in Kerala but not very successfully the hospitals have a neutral attitude towards getting their hospitals accredited

Dr. Esmā and Dr. Emrah in 2013 conducted a study on opportunities and threats of health tourism in Turkey. The data was collected from secondary sources. They concluded that by combining tourism capacity and health care service capacity the country is ready to gain a competitive advantage from niche market of

tourism industry. They also concluded that for Turkey health tourism can to be a promising industry in coming years.

#### Research Gap :

There are many studies carried covering health tourism opportunities and challenges in India and various states, but a research covering health tourism opportunities and challenges in Goa is not conducted by any author. That is the research gap, which the author tried to fill it up by conducting this study.

#### Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the concept of health and wellness tourism.
- 2) To identify potentials and challenges of health tourism in Goa.

#### Research Methodology :

Sources of Data : The data for the present study was collected from secondary sources and primary sources. The secondary data is collected from sources like websites, journals, magazines, reports of Government departments, newspaper etc. The primary data is collected by using interview method. Interviews of doctors and wellness centers practitioners were conducted to know about the challenges and opportunities in the area of health tourism in Goa.

#### Results and Analysis

The following table shows year wise domestic and foreign tourist arrival in Goa.

Table-01 Tourists Arrival in Goa

| Calendar Year | Domestic Tourist Arrival | Foreign Tourist Arrival | Total Tourists Arrival | % Change as compared to 2018 |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2018          | 70,81,559                | 9,33,841                | 80,15,400              | -                            |
| 2019          | 71,27,287                | 9,37,113                | 80,64,400              | 0.61                         |
| 2020          | 26,71,533                | 3,00,193                | 29,71,726              | -62.92                       |
| 2021          | 33,08,089                | 22,128                  | 33,30,217              | -58.45                       |
| 2022          | 34,09,000                | 33000                   | 34,42,000              | -57.06                       |

Source: Economic Survey Report of Goa and Report by Goa Directorate of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation



The tourist arrival rate is decreased by 58.45% in the year 2020 compared to the year 2018. The situation is changing very slowly as its clear from the above table that still Goa has not received the same response as it used to receive before covid. Thus, there is a huge scope for the promotion of tourism in Goa.

#### Potentials of Health Tourism in Goa :

In order to develop this niche market of health tourism in Goa it is important to identify and understand the opportunities and challenges in the field of health tourism in Goa. Some of the opportunities are identified as follows:

1) **Zero Waiting Time** : The time taken to get an appointment abroad is way higher as

compared to the time in India. As per sources the time taken in UK to get an appointment with a junior doctor is about 6 to 8 days unless it is an emergency, here in Goa it hardly takes you few hours. If one seeks an appointment with a specialized doctor abroad the waiting time for an appointment may go up to a couple of months.

2) **Cost Effectiveness** : The cost of medical treatment in India is on average one eighth to one fifth of that in the west, hence India has witnessed a remarkable growth in the number of tourists visiting India for health tourism. The medical care, equipments and facilities that India offers are equivalent to that of advanced countries with lesser cost which can be supported with the following table.

**Table 2-Cost comparison between India and various other countries in US \$**

| Procedure               | US          | UK           | India       | Singapore |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| Angioplasty             | 57000       | 21000-270000 | 11000       | 18500     |
| Angiography             | 2500-3000   | 3000         | 600         | 1000      |
| Hip replacement         | 43000       | 43000-46000  | 9000        | 12000     |
| Knee replacement        | 40000       | 36000-38000  | 6000-9000   | 12000     |
| Open Heart(CABG)        | 100000      | 43000        | 7500        | 9600      |
| IVF                     | 10000-15000 | 7000-1000    | 3000-6000   | 7000      |
| Face Lift               | 20000       | 21000        | 3100        | 6250      |
| Heart valve Replacement | 160000      | 150000       | 9000        | 12500     |
| Liver Transplant        | 300000      | 150000       | 40000       | 300000    |
| Kidney Transplant       | 150000      | 250000       | 11000-13000 | 60000     |
| Dental Implants         | 3500        | 2000         | 800         | 215       |

Source: [www.mcgstrat.com/Indian-Healthcare-Sector-Report-2014](http://www.mcgstrat.com/Indian-Healthcare-Sector-Report-2014)

Goa is also cost effective for medical treatments when it is compared at international level

**3) Highly Competent and Internationally qualified doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff:** Most of the doctors in Goa are language literate and have a good command over the English language which makes it easier for them to communicate with foreign tourists and hence are able to cater to their medical problems. Most of the doctors are also qualified in foreign universities or have practiced medicine in foreign countries, which gives upgrades their level of skill and technique to deal with patients from foreign countries

**4) Major medical services offered in Goa :**

Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, Endoscopic and Laparoscopic Surgery, Dental, etc. are some of the services offered in Goa.

**5) Sufficient Infrastructure :** The infrastructure of Goa is far more advanced as compared to some of the states of India. Goan healthcare industry caters to lakhs of foreign tourists visiting the state every year. Hospitals like Victor and Manipal Hospitals have an edge over other hospitals due to the advanced technology treatments.

Goa has a strong health infrastructure as indicated in the table below :

**6) High number of foreign tourists visiting:** Its clear from in Table 01, Goa caters to about 9 lakhs foreign tourists visiting the state in 2018. A satisfied tourist would definitely market the health services of Goa abroad thus resulting in more arrivals of foreign tourists in the coming years.

**7) Wellness Tourism:** In Goa there are 02 ayurvedic hospitals and more than 100 wellness centers providing ayurvedic and allied treatments. Goa has got a big opportunity in form of a large number of wellness centers to attract

tourist for health tourism by popularizing the treatments and its benefits at international level.

**Challenges for health tourism in Goa:**

Some of the challenges for health tourism are identified as follows :

**1) Image Positioning :** The biggest challenge the health tourism industry of Goa has to face is how to position itself as a health tourism destination. The reason is, Goa is known to be a tourism destination for 'sun, sand and sea'. Tourists have an image of Goa for fun and frolic, leisure, casinos, nightclubs and so on.

**2) Lack of Efficient Marketing Strategy :** In Goa, there is lack of a single, unified body that works towards a common goal for health tourism. There is a lack a marketing strategy at the state level of Goa. Signage in different languages required to cater to the needs of multi-regional and lingual tourists, there are more-often-than-not no signage even in English, Hindi (national language) or Konkani (local language).

**3) Lack of internationally accredited hospitals :** In Goa, there is only one hospital i.e. Manipal Hospital in Dona Paula, that has an accreditation by National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH). Victor Hospital is in the process of getting the accreditation by NABH.

**4) Poor Follow up Care :** Patients after a surgery go for a holiday or to their home country and have limited post-operative care management.

**5) Heterogeneous pricing of services :** A patient who would want to undergo treatment in Goa will have to first do a comparative study on the type and quality of health services provided by various hospitals and the pricing of the treatment across the hospitals in Goa. This requires a lot of time and effort on the part of the patient who is not in a position to undergo such stress.



6) **Presence of a large number of unlicensed practitioners or quacks :** There are several practitioners who claim to be doctors especially in ayurveda and unani medicine. This can have a negative impact on the minds of the international patients. It may create a doubt on the credibility of the registered medical practitioners.

7) **Limited Attention by Hotels for Health Care Tourism :** The three star and four star hotels in Goa don't give much attention for health care tourism.

8) **Lack of Professionalism :** The soft skills of medical personnel like concern, and friendliness, and professional skills like interpersonal skills, loyalty and appearance are still underdeveloped and it negatively influences the customers' service experience.

9) **Lack of Government Initiative :** The biggest challenge is the lack of government vision and clear-cut futuristic policies with regard to the medical tourism industry.

10) **Lack of efforts for Taking care of cultural differences :** Medical tourism is not just about having foreign patients. It means thorough understanding of their culture and needs. For instance, toilet seats in a hospital cannot be facing Mecca if Muslim patients from Arab countries are being targeted.

11) **Provision of basic tourism infrastructure :** For promoting health tourism in any state provision of basic tourism infrastructure is needed like signage, roads, drinking water, parking, resting facilities, changing rooms, waste management etc. There is much to be desired in Goa on the said fronts.

#### Conclusion :

Traveling for health is one of the most important tourist patterns of economic returns generated by the tourism industry. Health

Tourism is travelling to another city for the purpose of receiving medical or wellness services. It is divided into two categories:

1. **Medical Tourism :** travelling to receive medical treatment in specialized institutions jointly with tourism programs.

2. **Wellness Tourism :** people travelling to other cities to maintain their physical and psychological health through receiving certain services in specialized institutions.

It can be concluded that the health tourism is a wider concept which included medical tourism and wellness tourism.

Zero waiting time, cost effectiveness and availability of sufficient medical infrastructure the major potentials available in Goa for attracting huge number of tourists for health tourism. These potentials can be capitalized by successfully facing the challenges of health tourism in Goa such as, design and development of a proper marketing strategy for promoting health tourism and efforts for attracting internationally accredited hospitals in Goa. Goa is known internationally as a tourist destination for the Sun, Sand, Sea and leisure tourism activities. Thus, portraying Goa as a destination for health tourism is a major challenge for the Government of Goa.

Considering the potentials of health tourism in Goa, it can be rightly said that Goa has the capacity to become a preferred health tourism destination like Kerala as it has more than 161 hospitals and 100 wellness centers with high quality health care services, which are cost effective.

#### Future scope :

A detailed and in depth study of the present scenario of Health Tourism in Goa can be conducted.



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