CHAPTER V
A SWOT ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL TOURISM

Introduction

Before presenting a SWOT Analysis of Medical Tourism, it becomes essential to provide a general understanding of SWOT Analysis.

History of SWOT Analysis

While working on a research project at the Standard University, Albert S. Humphery in the 1960s developed an analytical tool to evaluate the strategic plans and find out why corporate planning failed. Initially, he coined this technique as SOFT analysis where,

S-stands for what things are Satisfactory at present,
O-denotes what Opportunities can be explored in the future,
F-means the Faults in the present and
T-signifies the Threats that could surface in the future.

While the majority agrees that SOFT is the predecessor of SWOT, some people believe that the concept of SWOT analysis emerged separately and has nothing to do with SOFT.

SWOT-Internal and External factor

SWOT analysis groups key pieces of information into two main categories:

Internal factors- the strengths and weaknesses, internal to the organization and
External factors – the opportunities and threats presented by the environment, external to the organization.
The **S**-in SWOT represents the strength-which gives the business an advantageous edge over the other similar business.

**W**-stands for weaknesses and these weaknesses can be understand as the comparative disadvantages that a business faces as against other similar businesses.

**O**-represents opportunities- the external possibilities that can be explored or utilised to boost the business growth and

**T**-signifies threats- the external or environmental factors which can cause problems for the business.

The foregoing explanation about SWOT analysis will be helpful to study Medical Tourism and can very well be applicable to Medical Tourism too.

**Strengths of Medical Tourism:**

Some of the important strengths of Medical Tourism are internationally reputed hospitals, revenue earned by Medical Tourism will strengthen the public healthcare system, quality service at affordable cost, highly qualified doctors and above all, strong presence in advanced healthcare like cardiovascular, Organ transplants and high success rate in operations. Many of the biggest private hospitals in the world are affiliated with top world medical institutes like Harvard Medical and John Hopkins. A number of these hospitals are also accredited by JCI, USA or ISO. These medical centers have the infrastructure, experience and the setup for quality conscious medical tourism patients from the West.
### Table 5.1

Medical Tourism prices (in selected countries)
(In US $)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heart bypass (CABG)</td>
<td>113000</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>9000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart valve replacement</td>
<td>150000</td>
<td>9500</td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>9000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angioplasty</td>
<td>47000</td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>11000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip replacement</td>
<td>47000</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee replacement</td>
<td>48000</td>
<td>8500</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastric bypass</td>
<td>35000</td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>13000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip resurfacing</td>
<td>47000</td>
<td>8250</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>12500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinal fusion</td>
<td>43000</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mastectomy</td>
<td>17000</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>12400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhinoplasty</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>4375</td>
<td>2083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tummy Tuck</td>
<td>6400</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>6250</td>
<td>3903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast reduction</td>
<td>5200</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>3750</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>3343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast implants</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>5308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tooth whitening</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental implants</td>
<td>1188</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1429</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Medical Tourism providers and Brokers, March 2011.

A glance at the above table would clearly explain the relative cheapness of different medical procedures in India. Except for some medical treatments such as Heart Bypass, Hip Replacement and Knee Replacement for all other procedures, it is high in Malaysia also.

Medical tourists from South Asia and Middle East have been coming for medical treatment to India for many years now. Also, Medical Tourism from UK to India has become quite common. The government has an investment of
US$6.5 billion in the pipeline for Medical Tourism. This is for setting up affordable hospitals in India and budget hotels for patients’ relatives.¹

Popular indigenous healthcare traditions include Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Naturopathy and Yoga. **Ayurveda** provides a complete system of preventive medicine and healthcare, which has been proven as its effectiveness over a long period in India. The science of Ayurveda is based on the knowledge of the human constitution. The **Siddha** system defines disease as the condition in which the normal equilibrium of the five elements in human beings is lost resulting in different forms of discomfort. **Unani** system of medicine believes that the body is made up of four basic elements viz., earth, air, water and fire, which have different temperaments i.e. cold, hot, wet and dry. Naturopathy has several references in the Vedas and other ancient texts, which indicate that these methods were widely practised in ancient India. **Naturopathy** believes that the human body possesses inherent self-constructing and self-healing power. **Yoga** is a science as well an art of healthy living physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. **Yoga** is believed to be founded by saints and sages of India several thousand years ago. Yoga has its origin in the Vedas, and its philosophy is an art and science of living in tune with the universe.

**Weaknesses of Medical Tourism:**
The important weaknesses of Medical Tourism are non availability of strong government support, initiative to promote medical tourism, less level of coordination between the various players in the industry such as airline operators, hotels, hospitals and customer, a general perception as an unhygienic country, no proper accreditation and regulation system for hospitals and lack of uniform pricing policies across hospitals and so on. A comment on Medical Tourism is that in most cases the providers of Medical Tourism offer sub-standard facilities and limited skills or qualifications. But this is a debatable one. In some small countries this may be true but not in India for several
reasons. For instance: Medical Tourism is its unethical practice. Today, the “Transplantation Tourism” as it is said is on the rise especially for kidneys, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. The United Nations agency said it was concerned about a rise in cases where people in countries such as India, Pakistan, Egypt and the Philippines were persuaded to sell their body parts to outsiders, mostly through a broker. The practice has increased over the past decade. Transplantation is increasingly regarded as the best solution to end-stage organ failure. Medical advances in transplantation surgery have resulted in surging demand from those needing new kidneys, livers, hearts, corneas and bone marrow. Long waiting lists for organs from cadavers has caused frustrated patients to look overseas for new sources. “The wealthy, in search of their own survival, will sometimes seek organs from the poor.”WHO has recommended stricted organ donation and transplantation rules to those who sell their organs and tissues do not receive adequate follow-up medical case, increasing their health risks.

On the part of insurance and allied services, the medical tourism industry in India is also facing some key bottlenecks. They are inadequate insurance cover, underdeveloped insurance market in India, insurance frauds and overseas companies refusing reimbursement. ²

Opportunities of Medical Tourism

As for as the Opportunities are considered, increased demand for healthcare services from countries with aging population like the USA, current fast-paced lifestyle increases the demand for wellness tourism and alternative cures, shortage of supply of National Health Systems in countries like U.K, Canada and increasing demand from countries where relatively poor quality of health care is provided.
A potentially increasing demand for healthcare from countries with aging population, life style changes contributing to the development of wellness and alternative cures, acute shortage of medical professionals in U.K and Canada, a growing demand also from countries with underdeveloped healthcare system, demand for Old age/Retirement homes for elderly people especially from Japan, a developing Infrastructure like port of entry & easy access to visa and medicines, Lab Pathology etc are at a fractions cost in comparison to other places.

**Threats in Medical Tourism**

The threats to Medical Tourism in India are: a strong competition from countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and under-investment in health infrastructure etc.³

A fierce and cut throat competition from countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, lack of International accreditation like Joint Commission International (JCI) which works as a major inhibitor, lack of Medical Insurance cover for overseas treatment in many countries, healthcare Industry still at a nascent stage in case of primary health care in India, exorcism is prevalent hence may attract Foreigners and exploitation in case of unrecognised clinics, Doctors and money changers may aggravate the problem.⁴

It is apt to present a few countries which are considered to be our threatening ones Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan and others. This should be helpful to conquer the threat and face them successfully in course of time.
Thailand:
Medical Tourism has been a growing segment of Thailand’s tourism and health care sectors. In 2006, Medical Tourism earned the country 36.4 Billion baht. Treatments for medical tourists in Thailand range from cosmetic, organ transplants, Cardiac, and Orthopedic treatments to dental and Cardiac Surgeries. Treatments like Spa, physical and mental therapies have also been practiced. Hospitals in Thailand are a popular destination in Asia. Since Tamil Nadu has been providing excellent Cardiac and Dental related disorders and Kerala has been specialised in Spa and Physical treatments, the threat from Thailand can easily be tackled. MTQUA nominates Bumrungrad International, Bangkok and Bangkok Hospital Medical Center as a World’s best hospital for medical tourists. The most well-known hospital for medical tourists, Bumrungrad has been taking foreign patients for 20 years. It has invested heavily in integration of medical records, pharmacy, labs and other hospital departments into a state-of-the-art electronic environment. Its focus on technology and its American style of management carry over to the Bumrungrad website, which is a model for other international hospitals. The hospital operates a network of exclusive representatives. The flagship of the largest private hospital chain in Thailand, Bangkok Hospital Medical Center meets several of the MTQUA criteria that make it one of the World’s Best Hospitals for Medical Tourists. Individual hospitals of the medical center in Bangkok include the distinguished Bangkok Heart Hospital, Bangkok International Hospital, and Wattanosoth Cancer Hospital. The hospital lists qualified medical travel companies on its website and operates a network of representatives.
Malaysia:

Malaysia is well on its way to develop itself as a Medical Tourism hub. There is a highly active Association for Private Hospitals of Malaysia working to develop medical tourism. While Malaysia has a national accreditation healthcare scheme (MSQH), many Malaysia’s hospitals are currently firm on the way to achieve international health care accreditation. Penang Adventist Hospital and many others such as Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur are going to be JCI accredited. The Ministry of Health has launched a medical tourism page with medical tourism portals. As for as cost effectiveness is concerned Malaysia also has the advantage of cost effectiveness. However, it should note that no way nearer to India.

MTQUA nominates Prince Court Medical Center, Kuala Lumpur as a World’s best hospital for medical tourists. Prince Court Medical Center provides excellent surgery options for medical travellers. Special services include a sophisticated burn unit, an In Vitro Fertility department with multiple fetal monitoring. A senior manager coordinates all international patient and medical tourist services and procedures, assuring medical tourists that coordination of care that meets the needs of the medical traveler is a priority. Read more about what makes Prince Court Medical Center great.
Singapore:

Singapore has a dozen hospitals and health centre with JCI accreditation. In 1997 Singapore’s health care system sixth best in the world by WTO and this was the highest rank in Asia.

Singapore Medicare is a multi agency government industry partnership committed to strengthening Singapore’s position as a medical hub and promoting Singapore as a destination for advanced patient care. Patients from developed countries such as the United States and the UK are also beginning to choose Singapore as their medical travel destination for relatively affordable health care services in a clean cosmopolitan city. Singapore is known for her cleanliness and pleasing hospitality. In their latest research study, “Booming Medical Tourism in Singapore Outlook 2017”, RNCOS analysts have identified and deciphered the market dynamics in important segments to clearly highlight the areas offering promising possibilities for hospitals to boost their growth. The report also covers an analysis of the healthcare industry, broken down into five major procedures viz., Cardiac, Orthopedic, Neurological & Spinal Surgery, Cosmetic Surgery, and Dental procedures. This has helped the analysts to clearly identify and highlight the procedures offering maximum opportunity for growth. MTQUA nominates Gleneagles hospital, Singapore as a World’s best hospital for medical tourists. The Parkway Hospital Group may well be the standard bearer for private hospital care in Singapore, and Gleneagles Hospital is its flagship. The Parkway group owns and operates hospitals throughout Asia.

It would be better to have an idea of Medical Tourism being practised in our neighboring countries such as Pakistan, China and Bangladesh for they may become our competitors.
Pakistan:
It is surprising to learn that Pakistan has been working towards medical tourism and has considered it as a key element in its recent tourism policy. A number of modern hospital facilities exist in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore. She cannot emerge as an important Medical Tourism provider for reasons such as political instability, her foreign policy, religious fanatism and so on.

China:
China is fast emerging as a desirable destination for individuals seeking medical care in a wide range of medical specialties, including cardiology, neurology, orthopedics and others. Many leading hospitals provide treatments integrating Traditional Chinese Medicine with Western medical techniques. China is home to leading stem cell research. As it is so, China has an advantage over other countries in the area of traditional medicines. Countries which are presenting themselves as provider of specialised medical services such as Cosmetic surgery and Dental surgery. These countries either they come under North America or South America.

Mexico:
Americans, particularly those living near the Mexican border, now routinely come to Mexico for dentistry and plastic surgery. Mexican dentists often charge one fifth to one fourth of US prices. In addition to dental and plastic surgery, Mexican hospitals are popular for bariatric surgery for weight loss.

Brazil:
Brazil has long been known as a destination for cosmetic surgery. Brazil is now only entering the global market. However, Albert Einstein Jewish Hospital in Sao Paulo way the first JCI accredited facility outside of the US and more than a dozen Brazilian medical facilities have since been similarly accredited.
Costa Rica:
Costa Rica’s popularity in the medical tourism industry has been growing steadily over the years. Currently there are 3 Joint Commission International accredited (JCI) Hospitals all of which are currently located in Sanjose, Costa Rica. The Delliothe Centre for health Solutions in their 2009 report “Medical Tourism Consumers in Search of Value” reported cost savings average of between 30-70% of US prices.

New Zealand:
New Zealand is a relatively new destination to medical travel. It has all hallmarks of a very successful destination especially for North American based patients. While New Zealand is aligned medically and culturally to North America, the cost of the surgical care is significantly cheaper. On average it is considered that New Zealand Surgical costs are around 15 to 20% the cost of the same surgical procedure in the USA. It becomes essential to explore new avenues of Medical Tourism, such as meeting the requirements of other countries such as hospitality, language to handle the patients and so on.

South Korea:
A world leader in both spinal surgeries and cancer screenings, South Korea is one of the most technologically advanced medical countries in the world. In fact, many South Korean hospitals consider electronic health records and fully digitized equipment standard. MTQUA nominates Wooridul Spine Hospital, Seoul as a World’s best hospital for medical tourists. Wooridul Spine Hospital is a world leader in medical treatment of the spine. Wooridul’s influence and prestige has spread worldwide through its doctors and its joint ventures with hospitals in Asia and Europe. It is the only specialized hospital on this Top 10 list.
Panama:
The medical tourism of Panama is unique in that it closely resembles the health care system found in the United States. With its bilingual, board certified doctors, comparative medical equipment and technology, and the US dollar as its official currency, Panama has everything America has to offer, but at a fraction of the cost. Because of its recent growth in popularity, the cost of medical operations is on the rise. But, considering treatments range from organ transplantation to spinal treatments to cosmetic procedures, South Korea gives patients plenty of specialty options. It would be highly helpful to have any representative coverage of Medical Tourism, by giving a brief inventing of Medical Tourism bring practiced in these European Countries.

Turkey:
Turkey has since many years attracted medical tourists from Europe and the Balkans, the US Eurasia and the Middle East. Turkey has the highest number of JCI accredited healthcare institution in the world except the US. The German Hospital in Istanus operates the Country’s first ISO Certified IVF center, while memorial Hospital was the first private hospital to receive American JCI accreditation.\(^7\) MTQUA nominates Anadolu Medical Center, Istanbul as a World’s best hospital for medical tourists. Istanbul is home to several excellent hospitals. Anadolu offers a very high standard of treatment and care, and seems to understand the needs of the medical traveler. It has an international focus, with multilingual doctors and nurses, and a keen awareness of the services and support systems a medical traveler should have.
The Czech Republic:
The Czech Republic is a major European tourist destination and increasingly attracts health and medical tourists. As well as the more traditional spa and wellness tourism, an increasing number of Europeans are going to the Czech Republic for fertility treatment, cosmetic surgery, dental care, laser eye surgery, anti-obesity surgery and simple surgery such as hip replacement. Czech Republic is trading on its medical tourism expertise and reputation for excellence in service and treatment at very reasonable prices. The Czech Republic is attracting customers from Germany, Norway, Ireland and the UK.8

Hungary:
Hungary is a popular medical destination for dental services. Budapest tops the list in Hungary. A Budapest dentist charges on average 20%-40% less than a dentist in a number of Western European countries. Many dentists in Budapest speak English or have English-speaking staff, since so much of their business comes from foreigners. This makes dental tourism in Hungary, attractive given the country’s natural beauty and its capital’s historical and cultural attractions. Patients come to Hungary for dental care from around the world, but the biggest source of dental tourism in Hungary is the UK, which accounts for 25% Hungary’s foreign dental patients. An additional 14% come from Austria, 13% from Ireland, 11% from Germany and 5% from North America.9

The other hospitals which are nominated by MTQUA are AsklepiosKlinikBarmbek, Hamburk in Germany and Clemenceau Medical Center, Beirut, in Lebanon.10
Having seen Medical Tourism practices in some of the major countries, this research work come to a conclusion that India in no way is inferior to Medical Tourism practices. Relatively speaking our strengths far better than many other countries in Asia. India’s perception as an “unsafe” country for foreigners has to be erased by taking strenuous steps administratively and socially. Day by day opportunities are widening and India has to explore new ways of fulfilling the requirements of the foreign medical tourists. Although threats would always be there, India should be bold enough to face the emerging threats and show the entire world a leading destination in the arena of Medical Tourism.
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