CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS
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Based on the analysis, the researcher interpreted the data collected and arrived at certain major findings of this study. These findings are summarized below.

6.1 Findings related to demography of Medical Tourists

- The demographic profile of a typical medical tourist from Sultanate of Oman consists of male, particularly in the age group 25-40 and employed with Government of Sultanate of Oman with monthly income in the range of 400-800 Rial Omani (1 Rial Omani ≈ 120 Rupees) with the family size of 8 persons.

6.2 Findings related to Medical Travel behaviour

- Most of the respondents visited Mumbai, followed by Chennai and Hyderabad for Medical treatment.
- Majority of the Medical tourists preferred Allopathy (System of Medicine) for their medical treatment.
- Majority of the Medical tourists visited India receive treatment for bones related health problems, followed by Heart diseases.
- A typical medical tourist stays for a period of 15 days or less for medical treatment.
- In majority of the cases, 1-2 attendants accompanies the medical tourist, during their visit to India.
- Only 58% of medical tourist has visited tourist places during their stay in India (This shows that their main objective is to get medically treated, not visiting places).
Considering the medical tourist who said “Yes” to visit tourist places, majority of the cases, patient also participated in visiting tourist places.

In majority of the cases, where respondents said “Yes” to visit tourist places, they visited 1-5 tourist places.

Medical tourists from Sultanate of Oman perceive that getting visa to India for medical treatment is easy.

If not India, Thailand is the next, nearest choice for the medical tourists from Sultanate of Oman, followed by UK.

Medical tourists from Sultanate of Oman perceive that getting information regarding medical tourism in India is not that difficult.

Medical tourists from Sultanate of Oman find information from a mixture of sources lead by Internet, Hospital agents and Embassy of India in Sultanate of Oman.

6.3 Findings related to reasons for visiting a foreign country for medical treatment as perceived by medical tourists (Push Factor)

The top most reason for visiting a foreign country for medical treatment is “lengthy waiting time” for treatment in the home country.

Second most important reason being non – availability of specialised treatment in the home country.

Third most important reason is the “very high cost” of treatment at the home country.

Significantly, very few said that it is because of their “love to travel to different countries”.
6.4 Findings related to reasons for visiting India for medical treatment as perceived by medical tourists (Pull Factor)

- Top reason for selecting India for Medical treatment is the “quality” of treatment. The medical tourist perceives the “quality” of medical treatment in India to be very high.
- Second important reason is availability of wide range of “Specialities” in medical treatment in India.
- Third important reason is affordability. The medical tourist believes that the cost of medical treatment in India is less expensive or not very expensive.
- Interestingly, India is not chosen by many of the medical tourist for its “exotic tourist locations”.

6.5 Findings related to Service Quality dimensions as perceived by Omani Medical Tourists

- Out of the Nine factors of tangibility dimension “equipments in this hospital are the latest and advanced” and “Staff wears clean uniforms and appropriate name badges” are rated high and “information about the hospital are available in the form of brochures and directories” is rated low.
- Out of the six factors of Reliability dimension “The necessary diagnosis is done right at the first time” is rated high and “Medical treatment offered is error free” is rated low.
- Out of the three factors of Responsiveness dimension there is no significant difference among the factors. All are rated equally.
Out of the six factors of Assurance dimension “patients are treated with respect and dignity consistently” is rated high and “Hospital treats all patients equally” is rated low.

Out of the two factors of Empathy dimension, “Hospital is very flexible in satisfying the needs of the patients” is rated high and “Staff are all very good listeners” is rated low.

Out of the six factors of core service dimension, “counselling was given before and after the treatment” is rated high and “Hospital helps in visa processing and travel related services” is rated low.

Out of the five factors of “Systematization of service delivery” dimension “patient admission procedures are simple and easy” is rated high, but “computerized billing system is used in the hospital” is rated low.

Out of the two factors of social responsibility dimension “Employees of this hospital are service minded” is rated high. “Cost is lesser, when compared to other hospitals which give similar treatment” is rated low.

6.6 Findings related to Demographics and Service Quality dimensions

Male and female perceive the Responsiveness, Empathy and Social responsibility dimensions of service quality differently. Male rate the above dimensions relatively higher than the female.

Age group below 25, perceive the Reliability dimension differently when compared with the other age groups. The Age group below 25 rate the reliability dimensions slightly higher than the other age groups.
Different types of employment groups does not have any difference in perception with regards to the different dimensions of service quality. They treat all the dimensions equally important.

Difference in Educational qualification does not bring any difference in their perception regarding different dimension of service quality. For them all the dimensions are equally important.

Difference in monthly income does not bring out any significant difference in their perception of service quality dimensions. They rate the dimensions equally important.

6.7 Findings related to Omani Medical Tourists treatment related issues

- Period of treatment (in days) has a significant difference in their perception of core service dimension of service quality. More time they stay in the hospital, they rate the core – service higher.
- Respondents who have received treatment in different cities does not have any difference in their perception towards different quality dimensions.

6.8 Findings related to Tourism related issues

- People from all age groups show equal interest in visiting tourist places.
- Also it is inferred that the Gender is not an influencing factor for visiting various tourist places (i.e.) irrespective of Gender, they have shown interest in visiting places.
- It is found that income level of the Medical tourists is not an influencing factor for visiting various tourist places of interest (i.e.) even people with lower income level show interest in visiting places.
- People with different levels of educational qualification show equal interest in visiting tourist places.
6.9 Findings related to relationship between Service Quality dimensions and customer (Medical Tourist) satisfaction

- It is found that the service quality influence customer satisfaction to an extent of 65.2% which is significant.
- It is found that Assurance, Core service and Social responsibility are the dimensions of service quality that influences customer satisfaction significantly.
- Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy and systematization of service delivery were not that significant in influencing Customer Satisfaction.

This shows that the customers attribute more importance to the factors core service, assurance and social responsibility for their satisfaction. Thus it is inferred that, in order to increase the customer satisfaction more focus should be given to these factors.

This also highlights that core service and social responsibility; two of the three new factors, included in the service quality measurement scale (when compared with SERVQUAL) are rated as the important dimensions influencing customer satisfaction.

6.10 Findings on the behavioural consequences of customer satisfaction

- Majority of the respondents (65%) say that the service experience is satisfactory.
- 74% of the respondents say that they will come to the hospital in future. This show’s that there is a high patronage towards the hospital.
- Nearly 77% of the customers said that they will recommend this hospital to others. Knowing the importance of word of mouth promotion, it is a positive sign for Indian hospitals.
- Nearly 66% of the customer’s says that this hospital will be their first choice if they had to choose again.
- Nearly 77% of the customers said that they will spread positive word of mouth, which is a great sign for Indian hospitals.
- 64% of the customers have shown their loyalty to the hospital.

### 6.11 Findings on the Indian hospitals growth

A Net promoter score of 20.4% indicate that the Indian hospitals promoting Medical Tourism Industry is on a profitable growth trajectory.
CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
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Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following actions to improve the Service Quality of Indian hospitals and hence the profitable growth of the Medical Tourism industry.

7.1 Recommendations related to demography of Medical Tourists

- The hospitals participating in the Medical Tourism industry to target 25 – 40 age population, employed in the Government sector, with a possible monthly income in the range of 400 – 800 Rial Oman.
- The hospitals can even try to tie up with the Government of Sultanate Oman to have access to the target group.

7.2 Recommendations related to Medical Travel behaviour

- From the observation of the researcher and the statistical inference, it is recommended that the hospitals should open their information centres / representative office at Sultanate of Oman.
- Providing different sources / channels of timely information to the potential Medical Tourists can improve the situation.

7.3 Recommendations related to reasons for visiting India for medical treatment as perceived by medical tourists (Pull Factor)

- Indian hospitals should concentrate more on improving their service quality, because the top reason for the Medical Tourists from Sultanate of Oman for selecting India as a Medical Tourism destination is “Quality”.

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Each Indian hospital, targeting the Medical tourists should have a strong web presence (i.e) website. It should also tap the social media like Facebook, Twitter to keep in touch with the potential target group.

Indian hospitals can also identify the Arabic portals, where the target segment visits, so that they can be reached easily.

When they develop their websites they should ensure that the information is also available in “Arabic”.

The information should be culturally sensitive (like avoid photographs or videos, which can hurt their sentiments).

Indian hospitals can make use of Indian Embassy Sultanate of Oman to the maximum extent (within limits of the rules and regulations).

Indian hospitals & Indian embassy can organise information sessions jointly.

Our research found that most of the medical tourist takes treatment for less than 30 days. Therefore the Government can consider short duration medical visas and make it available easily.

One of the major obstacles in this area is the language (Arabic). If possible, the hospitals targeting Medical tourists from Sultanate of Oman should orient their staff with functional Arabic or appoint interpreters.

Indian hospitals should take extra effort to help the Medical Tourists in their visa processing and travel related services. We strongly recommend, the hospitals should have a wing with trained staff (tourism & travel) for helping the Medical tourists in this regard or they can outsource this function from the specialized travel & tourism agencies.
- India can be positioned as a hub for bone related treatment; at the same time it should be cautious that it should not dent the image of the country as a destination of Multi speciality medical treatment.
- Government of India should provide different sources / channels for timely information to the potential Medical Tourists which will help in attracting more tourists.
- When they develop their websites they should ensure that the information is also available in different languages other than English like Arabic, French.
- Government of India can make use of Indian Embassy at various countries for promoting India as a quality and affordable healthcare destination.
- Indian hospitals should ensure that they provide value for money.

7.4 Recommendations related to Service Quality dimensions as perceived by Omani Medical Tourists

- The Indian hospitals should ensure that the entire billing process is computerised. If it is already there, then they should check the efficiency and try to improve it further.
- One of the shortcomings identified by the researcher is the non availability of information about the hospitals in the form of brochures and directories. This has to be addressed by suitably designing brochures & directories and keeping it in the hospital at strategic points and also place it in the website. They can also keep the same in the Embassy of India at the sultanate of Oman.
- Our research found that the staffs in the Indian hospitals are not very good listeners. Listening must be one of the key attributes of any service staff. Keeping this in mind, the hospitals should take immediate measures like training their staff in soft skills particularly communication skills which includes listening.
7.5 Recommendations related to Omani Medical Tourists treatment related issues

- Hospitals are advised to keep their waiting time low, since it is the top reason for the medical tourist to look at a foreign country for medical treatment.
- Indian hospitals should develop more specialities and super specialities which can attract more medical tourists.
- Indian hospitals should focus on providing “error” free treatment, since it is identified as one of the shortcomings in the research.
- Indian hospitals should take more efforts in cutting the cost of treatment, so that their price is affordable. This is very much required, because one of the main reasons for the medical tourists to look at a foreign country for medical treatment is, cost.
- Indian hospitals should treat all patients equally (i.e.) whether they are rich or poor, west or east, male or female, white or black. Orientation should be given to the hospital staff in this respect.

7.6 Recommendations related to Tourism related issues

- Hospitals can also arrange for tours visiting local tourist destination, which can bring value to the overall experience, considering the fact that only 50% of participants visited tourist places during their stay in India.
- In general, there is a perception that Medical Tourists prefer to travel a lot, visiting tourist places during and after their treatment. But this study broke that myth. Medical Tourists main aim is to get good medical treatment (core service). The focus for the Indian hospitals should be the core service (i.e) the Medical treatment. Even the industry associations should take clue from this and promote India as a medical tourism destination for its core service. They should not focus on unnecessary
promotional campaign giving importance to tourist attractions. The suggestion is to promote India’s strength in its expertise in Medical treatment.

7.7 Recommendations related to the relationship between Service Quality dimensions and customer (Medical Tourist) satisfaction

- Indian hospitals should put extra effort to improve Service Quality and hence customer satisfaction by focusing on three important dimensions: Core service, Assurance, and Social Responsibility.
- Indian hospitals should measure service quality periodically to check their current position and augment their strategies accordingly. For this purpose MED TOUR model will be very useful.
- People who are planning to start a hospital to attract Medical Tourists can use this MED TOUR Service Quality Model as a starting point in designing their service offering. The result of this study is an useful tool in understanding the medical tourist needs and wants.

7.8 Recommendations on the behavioural consequences of customer - satisfaction

- Even though behavioural consequences of the perceived service quality like, positive word of mouth, intention to recommend to others, intention to come back are on the positive side. Still the hospitals should continue to improve their level of SQ to further enhance the behavioural consequences.

7.9 Recommendations on the Indian hospitals growth

- Positive significant Net promoter score indicates that the industry is in the profitable growth trajectory. Still there is room for improving the Net Promoter Score. Hospitals should take measure in improving this score.
CONCLUSION

Medical Tourism in the country is identified as one of the prospective Industry for economic growth. Most of the leading corporate hospitals / private hospitals participate in this Industry. The growth in this industry is fuelled by the changing demographics, expectation of the customers, increased awareness, customer preferences, and huge Medical costs.

There is a stiff competition across the world to attract Medical Tourists. The major differentiating factor could be the “Service quality”. Hence it gains importance in conducting such study to find out the customers perception of Indian Hospitals service quality.

The study aimed at developing an approach and subsequently a tool for assessing service quality to measure the customer perceived service quality in the medical tourism sector. Also strategies were deliberated in putting India as a favourite Medical Tourism destination.

Sultanate of Oman being one of the target market for the Indian medical tourism industry, this study investigated the Omanis medical tourists perception of service quality in Indian hospitals. It is found that Omani medical tourists are satisfied with the Indian hospital service quality. They have identified that assurance; core service and social responsibility are the significant service quality dimensions which can influence customer satisfaction.

Omani medical tourist also have shown very high repurchase intentions and interest in recommending Indian hospitals to others by spreading positive word of mouth. They also have pointed out certain areas for improvement like hospitals should have a strong web presence.

Based on this findings a MED TOUR Service Quality model was developed for enhancing service quality and hence customer satisfaction. The researcher is highly satisfied with this
work and suggest that MED TOUR model can be used to improve the Indian hospitals service quality and hence profitability.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Study can be replicated in other potential markets of Medical Tourism like, UAE, US, UK using the service quality scale developed in this study.
- Studies can investigate the potential economic impact of Medical Tourism.
- Studies can investigate the impact of Medical Tourism on the domestic Healthcare Industry.
- Studies can also be undertaken on Intrabound Medical Tourism.

Thus by and large there is plenty of research problems available related to Medical Tourism. Hence it is the right time for the research community to identify and conduct studies which will benefit the country at large. Further, as consumer dynamics are changing frequently, studies can be repeated to get an update of market happenings and thereby evolving suitable strategies.