



# **THE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE MEDICAL TOURISM INDUSTRY ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY**

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## **Abstract**

*India is a popular destination for medical tourism due to its skilled medical professionals and affordable healthcare (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). The Indian government is promoting medical tourism through initiatives such as providing quality care, certification, training, and market expansion support (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). The medical tourism sector's growth can enhance earnings, create jobs, stimulate investment in travel-related businesses, and stimulate growth in other industries, including healthcare - IT (Shah, 2022) (Madhur, 2023). India is a popular destination for medical tourism due to its skilled medical professionals and affordable healthcare, according to a report by ClinicSpots (Sharma, 2021). India ranked seventh among the top 20 wellness tourism markets in 2022, with over 560 lac medical value tourism visits, generating 16.3 billion USD (Patro, 2023). The present study delves into the complex effects of the medical tourism sector on the Indian economy. Specifically, the research aims to determine the most popular medical tourism treatments in India, evaluate the significance and effect of medical tourism on the Indian economy, investigate the measures implemented by the Ministry of Tourism to promote medical travel to India, and ascertain the prospects for medical tourism in India. The study employed a descriptive research design method, and secondary data was utilized to gather data. This study provides a corpus of knowledge by offering a succinct analysis of the effects of medical tourism on the Indian economy. Policymakers, medical professionals, and researchers who want to gain insight into the changing medical tourism landscape in India will find it to be an invaluable resource.*

**Keywords:** medical tourism, economic growth, GDP, infrastructure, development, healthcare, Ministry of Tourism and India

## **INTRODUCTION**

Medical tourism, the practice of traveling abroad for medical care, is gaining popularity due to its affordability, accessibility, and reduced healthcare costs, despite the long wait times (Wikipedia, 2024). Medical tourism encompasses various services beyond surgery, including fertility, dentistry, alternative medicine, psychiatry, convalescent care, and funeral services (Wikipedia, 2024). India is a popular destination for medical tourism due to its skilled medical professionals and affordable healthcare (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). The Indian government is promoting medical tourism through initiatives such as providing quality care, certification, training, and market expansion support (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). India is a popular destination for medical tourism, with 78 countries sending approximately 2 million patients annually for treatment (Wikipedia, 2023). The Heal in India initiative, supported by the government, is expected to propel the industry to reach \$13 billion by 2026 (Wikipedia, 2023). India's medical tourism industry offers a diverse range of medical specialties, including orthopedic and cardiac surgery, cosmetic surgery, and fertility treatments (test book, 2023). India ranks 7th out of 20 markets for wellness tourism, with over 5.6 million medical tourism visits and 16.3 billion USD in revenue (Dutta, 2022). India's medical tourism industry offers a diverse range of medical specialties, including orthopedic and cardiac surgery, cosmetic surgery, and fertility treatments (Dutta, 2022) (Madhur, 2023). The Ministry of Tourism has created guidelines for wellness tourism, including high-quality publicity materials, training and capacity-building assistance, and participation in wellness events. The National Board for Accreditation of Hospitals & Healthcare Services (NABH) developed these guidelines in consultation with AYUSH and presented them at a workshop on February 15, 2011 (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). The Ministry of Tourism's Market Development Assistance (MDA) program has been extended to wellness tourism service providers, including certified wellness centers (Ministry of Tourism, 2024).

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

- To find out which medical tourism treatments are most popular in India



- To evaluate the impact and relevance of medical tourism to the Indian economy
- To inquire into the steps that the Ministry of Tourism has taken to encourage medical travel to India
- To find out about the future of Indian medical tourism

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research approach and made extensive use of reliable secondary data sources. The Ministry of Tourism's official publications, ClinicSpots and Future Market Insights' market studies, and scholarly works by Dhale (2020) and Nirmalraj (2022) were among the primary sources. The Medical Tourism Association and Mordor Intelligence's industry estimates provided more information, as did reports from international organizations. This all-encompassing strategy guaranteed a solid examination of the effects of the medical tourism industry on the Indian economy, including governmental measures, infrastructural development, and economic growth.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**(Dhale, 2020)** This article explores the potential of medical tourism in India, highlighting its low-cost medical treatment and strong hospitality benefits. India's healthcare economy has seen significant growth in the past decade, driven by the software and pharmaceutical industries. Medical tourism is projected to become the next major foreign exchange earner, promoting economic growth in sectors like tourism, transport, pharmaceutical goods, hotels, and restaurants. The study aims to assess the impact of the Indian medical tourism sector on the economy.

**(Nirmalraj, 2022)** The paper discusses the impact of COVID-19 on Indian medical tourism and service reform. India is a popular destination for international patients due to its skilled doctors, excellent nursing services, and affordable treatment. However, the pandemic has led to restrictions on airline transportation and presents opportunities for increased patient turnover in hospitals. Opportunities include upgrading primary health centers, partnering with public and private hospitals, and promoting affordable healthcare services to underdeveloped countries.

**(Biswas, 2021)** The author outlined the dynamics of medical tourism in a nation such as India in this chapter. What fuels the Indian medical tourism sector as a whole? India's perspective through its political and economic perspectives has been thoroughly examined to enhance India's brand as a medical tourism destination. Thus, the purpose of the chapter was to comprehend the effects of medical tourism on the socioeconomic structure of India.

**(Benur, 2014)** The author of this research paper attempted to elucidate the factors that led to the growth of medical tourism in India, the stakeholders involved and their roles in advancing medical tourism, and the potential for medical tourism in India in the future. The author of this paper concentrated on several topics, including index terms related to medical tourism, the Indian economy, medical tourism stakeholders, growth potential, future potential, and a potential growth road map.

## MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA STATISTICS

India is one of the most sought-after locations for medical tourism, per a report by ClinicSpots, because of its highly qualified medical professionals and affordable medical care (Dutta, 2022). With over 560 lac visits made for medical value tourism in 2022, India was ranked seventh among the top 20 wellness tourism markets, bringing in 16.3 billion USD (Dutta, 2022). The Indian government has also taken steps to encourage medical tourism in the nation by offering top-notch care, instruction, certification, and support for market expansion (Dutta, 2022). According to the estimates for 2023, the India Medical Tourism Market is projected to be valued at USD 6.79 billion, and throughout the forecast period (2023–2028), it is anticipated to grow at a CAGR of 13.23% (Mordor Intelligence). According to BW Healthcare, 2023 will be a record-breaking year for medical tourism in India, with the industry predicted to expand by 21% as a result of pent-up demand, rising treatment costs in Western nations due to inflation, and the war between Russia and Ukraine drawing more patients from both nations to India for care (Danish, 2022).

## MEDICAL TOURISM SCENARIO IN INDIA

India is currently regarded as one of the top 6 medically worthwhile travel destinations worldwide, having grown as a major hub for medical tourism (Agnihotri, 2022). Millions of people in Asia and Africa now travel to Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, and Kochi for all of their surgical needs, owing to India's rapidly expanding medical tourism industry, according to a report by Hindustan Times (Agnihotri, 2022). As of mid-2020, medical tourism in India was valued at approximately USD 9 billion, placing the country at the top of the Global Medical Tourism Index (Chandra, 2019). With the support of the government's Heal in India initiative, about 2 million patients from 78 countries travel to India annually for medical, wellness, and IVF treatments. This generates \$6 billion for the industry, which is projected to grow to \$13 billion by 2026 (Agnihotri, 2022) (Madhur, 2023).



### **THE MECHANISM OF MEDICAL TOURISM INDUSTRY IN INDIA**

India's medical tourism industry is known for providing high-quality care to international medical tourists at affordable prices (Saigal, 2022). India's healthcare system offers modern and traditional treatments, with top-notch facilities and physicians offering lower costs. The oldest medical systems, such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchakarma, and Rejuvenation Therapy, are being widely adopted outside India through AYUSH, a system known for its affordability (Saigal, 2022).

India experienced a negative growth of 79.4% in travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, but efforts to address the situation are expected to improve, with market insights predicting a strong 19% CAGR increase in demand in 2022 (Saigal, 2022).

To become the top medical travel destination, significant investments are needed to make the healthcare sector and equipment appealing to foreign patients. The guest house service providers' network and tourism industry need infrastructure and standardization to reduce the risk of new infections (Saigal, 2022).

The Indian government plans to spend \$28.7 billion on health and well-being, aiming to triple medical tourism revenue to \$13 billion within four years (Saigal, 2022). India's government has launched initiatives to boost medical tourism, including the "Heal in India" initiative, special medical visas for visitors, and a feedback mechanism for visitor testimonials, aiming to make India a global hub for wellness and medical tourism (Saigal, 2022).

### **QUALITY OF MEDICAL TREATMENT IN INDIA**

India's medical care standard is a contentious issue, with the country ranking 179th out of 189 in the Economic Survey 2021 for health priority. Substandard healthcare contributes to a significant percentage of deaths, with private sector treatment often inferior (Sharma S. , 2021). India's network of top-notch physicians and hospitals provides treatment at a fraction of the cost compared to other nations (Sharma S. , 2021) (TeamMozocare, 2020). India has established international recognition for its top doctors due to its advanced infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and medical technology, with over 28 JCI-accredited hospitals providing top-notch care using advanced methods and technology (TeamMozocare, 2020).

### **INDIAN HEALTHCARE COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES**

Although it has improved recently, India's healthcare system still lags behind many developed nations. India's public health spending as a percentage of GDP for 2017–18 was only 1.28% of GDP, significantly less than the average of other nations, according to a report by The Financial Express (Sharma S. , Financial Express, 2020). India spends about 4% of its GDP on healthcare, compared to 17% in the US (Goel, 2022).

India's healthcare system also has to deal with several issues, including a lack of infrastructure, a shortage of medical professionals, and poor-quality healthcare services (Sharma S. , Financial Express, 2020) (Goel, 2022). Nonetheless, India attracts tourists from all over the world due to its distinctive position in holistic healthcare and affordability (Pavithra, 2021).

### **PROVISION MADE FOR THE FOREIGNERS COMING TO INDIA FOR THEIR MEDICAL TREATMENT**

Without a medical visa, foreign visitors to India can receive treatment anywhere in the nation—except for organ transplants (Business Standard, 2019). The Indian government has further liberalized the rules governing medical visas and allowed foreign nationals to receive indoor treatment under the terms of their primary (original) visa, even if they have pre-existing medical conditions (except organ transplants), which the foreign national may have had before arriving in India (Press Information Bureau Government of India, 2019). This visa allows for a maximum stay of six months (Press Information Bureau Government of India, 2019). A draft National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism has been developed by the Ministry of Tourism. The Ministry of Tourism has requested feedback, comments, and suggestions on the draft National Strategy and Roadmap from the designated Central Ministries, all State Governments/UT Administrations, and industry stakeholders to make the document more comprehensive (Press Information Bureau Government of India, 2019) (Times, 2019). For Medical/Wellness Tourism Service Providers and Wellness Centers accredited by NABH to participate in Medical/Wellness Fairs, Medical Conferences, Wellness Fairs, and related Road Shows, the Ministry of Tourism offers financial assistance under the Market Development Assistance (MDA) Scheme (Press Information Bureau Government of India, 2019).

### **THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN TOURISTS ARRIVING IN INDIA FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES**

India was ranked 10th out of 46 destinations worldwide for medical tourism in 2020–21, according to a report by the Medical Tourism Association (The Statesman, 2023). 1.83 lakh foreign visitors arrived in India in 2020, and 3.04 lakh in 2021, for medical reasons (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare , 2023).



### **MARKET SHARE AND SEGMENTS OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

India is a well-liked medical tourism destination, with a projected \$7,417 million market in 2022 (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022). From 2022 to 2032, the Indian medical tourism market is anticipated to expand at a robust 19% CAGR (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022). Treatment categories that are divided up in the market include dental, cosmetic, orthopedic, neurological, cancer, and fertility treatments, among others. For the aforementioned segments, the report provides market size and forecasts in value (USD) (Mordor Intelligence).

Based on the analysis, the medical tourism industry in India represents roughly 6.5% of the global medical tourism market (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022). The expansion of India's medical tourism industry is fueled by an increase in inbound medical travel. Improvements in healthcare delivery have been made possible by ongoing developments in the field through the use of wearables, surgical techniques, medical devices, and linked technology. Thanks to telemedicine, telehealth, and other technological advancements, patients can schedule appointments, communicate with physicians, and receive excellent care from any location in the world (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022).

It is anticipated that the medical tourism market in India will expand rapidly throughout the forecast period. The primary factor propelling market expansion is the exorbitant expense of healthcare in foreign countries. In addition, the business is being propelled by a surge in demand for non-covered procedures like dental reconstruction, reproductive therapy, gender reassignment surgery, and cosmetic surgery (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022) (Patro, Business World, 2023). Compared to developed countries, developing nations like Malaysia and India can afford lower-quality therapies. Even though treatment costs are lower in developing countries, the lower cost of resources does not compromise the process's quality. This leads to an increase in the number of people seeking medical care in this nation (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022).

### **TELEMEDICINE ROLE IN MEDICAL TOURISM**

Telemedicine, a rapidly expanding field, utilizes information and communication technologies to enable patients to receive medical care from a distance (Dongxiao Gu, 2021). Telemedicine facilitates global medical tourism by enabling patients to receive consultations, diagnoses, and treatment plans from physicians in other countries without the need for travel (ETTravelWorld, 2023) ( Dr Prem Jagyasi and Team, 2023). Telemedicine can significantly reduce the cost of medical tourism by enabling patients to access specialized medical care from physicians in other countries without the need to travel abroad, thus reducing the need for patients to travel for medical care (Bhattacharyya). Telemedicine offers patients access to high-quality medical care from abroad without the need for travel, potentially reducing the risk of complications associated with medical tourism ( Dr Prem Jagyasi and Team, 2023).

### **FACTORS ATTRACTING MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

India is one of the most sought-after locations for medical tourism because of its highly qualified medical professionals and affordable medical care (Mishra, 2021) (Dutta, 2022). A report published by Digit Insurance claims that several factors, including location, infrastructure, service availability, and disease fatality, affect healthcare costs in India (Trak, 2023). Treatments are typically expensive if the medical facility has state-of-the-art infrastructure (Trak, 2023). The fierce growth and competition in the pharmaceutical sector, which has resulted in the introduction of patented products and the creation of new markets, is another factor contributing to India's low cost of healthcare (Muralitharan, 2021).

Numerous common medical procedures are available in India, including organ transplants, cardiac procedures, orthopedic procedures, neurological and spinal surgery, cosmetic dentistry procedures, and pediatric medical care. The Indian government has taken steps to encourage medical tourism in the nation by offering top-notch care, instruction, certification, and support for market expansion (Mishra, 2021) (Dutta, 2022). A draft National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism has been developed by the Ministry of Tourism. The Ministry of Tourism has requested feedback, comments, and suggestions on the draft National Strategy and Roadmap from the designated Central Ministries, all State Governments/UT Administrations, and industry stakeholders to make the document more comprehensive (Mishra, 2021). Additionally, the government has made it simpler to travel to India for medical treatment by establishing a dedicated fund and a new visa category called the Medical Visa, which offers financial support to authorized travel agencies (Mishra, 2021).

### **GROWTH OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

India's medical tourism industry has seen a significant boost due to its reputation for providing affordable, high-quality care. Despite a negative growth of 79.4% in 2020 due to travel restrictions, the situation is expected to improve due to pandemic management measures. Market insights predict a strong 19% CAGR increase in demand in 2022 (Saigal, 2022). India's healthcare system offers modern and traditional treatments, with top-notch facilities and physicians offering care at lower costs than other nations. The popularity of India's AYUSH medical systems, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchakarma, and Rejuvenation Therapy, is on the rise. PM Modi plans to introduce





the AYUSH Mark, an emblem to support India's medical tourism industry and legitimize AYUSH products (Saigal, 2022). The US FDA and WHO are both instrumental in supporting India's medical facilities and services (Saigal, 2022). The medical tourism market in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of over 20% between 2023 and 2027, reaching over US \$35 billion from its current US \$6 billion (Financial Express, 2021). In four years, the government wants to triple its revenue to \$13 billion, making India the world's top destination for medical tourism (Saigal, 2022). The government is holding all the cards close to the vest to optimize the industry's potential.

### **MEDICAL TOURISM BOOSTS INDIA'S HOSPITAL INDUSTRY**

A strong resurgence in medical tourism was one of the primary factors behind a steady increase in hospital patient foot traffic during FY23, per a report by rating agency ICRA (Sharma N. C., 2023). In FY23, the average length of stay was 3.6 days, and this is anticipated to stay low due to increased patient throughput facilitated by technological advancements (Sharma N. C., 2023). Millions of people in Asia and Africa now travel to Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, and Kochi for all of their surgical needs thanks to India's medical tourism industry (Sharma N. C., 2023) (Microsoft Bing). As of mid-2020, medical tourism in India was valued at approximately USD 9 billion, placing the country at the top of the Global Medical Tourism Index (Patro, Business World, 2023). With the support of the government's Heal in India initiative, about 2 million patients from 78 countries travel to India annually for medical, wellness, and IVF treatments. This generates \$6 billion for the industry, which is projected to grow to \$13 billion by 2026 (Sharma N. C., 2023) (Microsoft Bing) (Patro, Business World, 2023).

### **IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAL TOURISM FOR THE INDIAN ECONOMY**

India ranks 10th in the 2020-21 Medical Tourism Index and 12th in the top 20 markets for wellness tourism globally, highlighting the significant impact of medical tourism on the Indian economy (Patro, Business World, 2023). The report suggests that traditional medicine, wellness, Ayurvedic therapy, yoga, and wellness combined with exercise could contribute USD 9 billion to the Indian economy by 2026 (Patro, Business World, 2023). Medical tourism in India boosts earnings, job opportunities, tourism-related investments, and economic expansion in other sectors (Bhowmick, 2018). One of India's main sources of foreign exchange earnings is medical tourism (Taneja, 2022). It can result in diplomatic favors and is assisting India in benefiting from globalization (Taneja, 2022). Because medical tourism is not a standalone industry, its expansion may spur the expansion of allied industries (Taneja, 2022).

### **IMPACT OF MEDICAL TOURISM ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY**

A Businessworld report states that by combining traditional medicine, wellness, Ayurvedic therapy, yoga, and wellness with physical activity, India's medical tourism sector is predicted to increase the nation's GDP by USD 9 billion by 2026 (Patro, Business World, 2023). According to the report, India is ranked 12th in the world's top 20 wellness tourism markets and 10th out of 46 destinations worldwide by the Medical Tourism Association's 2020-21 Medical Tourism Index (MTI)(Patro, Business World, 2023).

At a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.7%, the medical tourism market is predicted to expand globally from \$35.77 billion in 2022 to \$39.95 billion in 2023 (Reportlinker, 2023). The medical tourism sector is anticipated to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25.2% from 2023 to 2030 (Grand View Research).

The Indian medical tourism market is expected to reach US\$ 42,237.47 million by 2032, with a projected valuation of US\$ 7,417 million in 2022, according to a report by Future Market Insights (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022). The report also notes that a variety of medical specialties, including cardiac surgery, orthopedic procedures, cosmetic surgery, and fertility treatments, are available in India's medical tourism industry (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022) (Wikipedia, 2023).

### **MEDICAL TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Due to the high expense of healthcare, lengthy wait times for some procedures, and the ease and affordability of traveling abroad, medical tourism is an industry that is expanding quickly (Mishra, 2021). India is one of the most sought-after locations for medical tourism because of its highly qualified medical professionals and affordable medical care (Mishra, 2021) (Saigal, 2022). India is one of the most sought-after locations for medical tourism, per a report by ClinicSpots, because of its highly qualified medical professionals and affordable medical care (Mishra, 2021). With over 560 lac visits made for medical value tourism in 2022, India was ranked seventh among the top 20 wellness tourism markets, bringing in 16.3 billion USD (Patro, Business World, 2023). The Indian government has also taken steps to encourage medical tourism in the nation by offering top-notch care, instruction, certification, and support for market expansion (Mishra, 2021) (Saigal, 2022). The goal is to triple India's medical tourism revenue to \$13 billion in four years, making it the world's top destination (Mishra, 2021).

### **MEDICAL TOURISM POLICY IN INDIA**



The Indian government has taken steps to encourage medical tourism in the nation by offering top-notch care, instruction, certification, and support for market expansion (Ministry of Tourism, 2024) (Madhur, 2023). Guidelines for wellness tourism have been developed by the Ministry of Tourism. They cover topics like providing high-quality publicity materials, assisting in the training and capacity building of service providers, taking part in domestic and international wellness-related events, etc. (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). Additionally, the government has made it simpler to travel to India for medical treatment by establishing a dedicated fund and a new visa category called the Medical Visa, which offers financial support to authorized travel agencies (Madhur, 2023) (Wikipedia, 2023). This visa allows for a maximum stay of six months (Wikipedia, 2023). The Indian government has proposed spending US\$ 28.7 billion on health and well-being, a 137% increase over the budgetary amount for the prior year (Madhur, 2023). In a ClinicSpots report, the country of India was ranked seventh out of the top 20 wellness tourism markets, with over 560 lac trips resulting in 16.3 billion USD in revenue from medical value tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2024).

### **STEPS TAKEN BY MINISTRY OF TOURISM TO PROMOTE MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

The Indian Ministry of Tourism has established a National Medical & Wellness Tourism Board, chaired by the Minister of Tourism, to promote medical tourism, wellness tourism, yoga, Ayurveda tourism, and any other Indian system of medicine covered by Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). The Board promotes medical and wellness tourism, and the Ministry of Tourism has developed a draft National Strategy and Roadmap. The Board is seeking input from Central Ministries, State Governments/UT Administrations, and industry stakeholders to make the document more comprehensive (Ministry of Tourism, 2021) (Ministry of Tourism, 2023). The Ministry of Tourism has introduced a Medical Visa, a new visa category, to simplify medical treatment travel to India, providing funding to authorized travel agencies (Ministry of Tourism, 2021) (Ministry of Tourism, 2023). This visa allows for a maximum stay of six months (Ministry of Tourism, 2023). The Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to accredited Medical/Wellness Tourism Service Providers and Wellness Centers for participation in Medical/Wellness Fairs, Medical Conferences, Wellness Fairs, and related Road Shows (Ministry of Tourism, 2021).

### **NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ROADMAP FOR MEDICAL AND WELLNESS TOURISM**

The Ministry of Tourism has developed the National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism as a means of increasing medical and wellness tourism in India (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). The plan seeks to improve the medical and wellness tourism industry's ecosystem and establish India as a wellness destination (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). Guidelines for the construction of infrastructure, marketing, and promotion of medical and wellness tourism are included in the strategy, which offers a thorough framework for the growth of this industry in India (Ministry of Tourism, 2022).

The plan seeks to position India as a wellness and medical tourism destination by offering reasonably priced, top-notch healthcare services (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). Additionally, the plan seeks to advance Indian traditional medical practices like naturopathy, yoga, and Ayurveda (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). The plan attempts to raise the amount of money that India receives from medical and wellness tourism while luring overseas patients to the country (Ministry of Tourism, 2022).

The strategy also seeks to encourage telemedicine and e-visa services for international patients to advance the use of technology in medical and wellness tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). The plan seeks to give international patients traveling to India for medical care and wellness a seamless experience (Ministry of Tourism, 2022).

### **FUTURE OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

India's medical tourism industry has a bright future. The Indian medical tourism market is expected to be worth USD 7,417 million in 2022 and is expected to grow to USD 42,237.47 million by 2032, according to a report by Future Market Insights. From 2022 to 2032, the demand is anticipated to increase at a robust 19% CAGR (Madhur, 2023). The report also predicts that Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medical system that uses natural remedies to treat specific ailments and lifestyle choices, will play a major role in the coming years (Ahmed, 2022).

Travelers from all over the world are drawn to India because of its affordability and distinctive position in holistic healthcare (Microsoft Bing, n.d.) (Medical Tourism India, n.d.). India has seen a sharp rise in medical tourism in recent years, with foreign visitors rising from 183,000 in 2020 to 304,000 in 2021 (Madhur, 2023). The industry is predicted to expand from its current USD 6 billion to more than USD 35 billion between 2023 and 2027 at a compound annual growth rate of more than 20% (Madhur, 2023).

The expansion of the medical tourism sector can boost earnings, create jobs, encourage investment in travel-related businesses, and stimulate growth in other industries. It can also spur the expansion of related sectors like healthcare-IT (Microsoft Bing, n.d.) (Medical Tourism India, n.d.). However, several issues with medical tourism in India need to be resolved, including infrastructure, brain drain, cultural proximity, competition, follow-up



issues, and quality (Microsoft Bing, n.d.) (Medical Tourism India, n.d.) (GWS, n.d.). These difficulties can be solved with the appropriate investments and policies (Microsoft Bing, n.d.).

## **FINDING**

The medical tourism industry in India significantly contributes to the country's GDP and generates foreign exchange earnings, positively impacting the balance of payments. It also creates employment opportunities in healthcare, hospitality, transportation, and ancillary services, contributing to skill development and capacity building in the healthcare workforce. The industry has enhanced healthcare infrastructure through advanced medical technologies and increased investments. However, the study highlights infrastructure challenges, emphasizing the need for improvements in facilities, transportation, and accommodation. It also explores patient demographics, treatment preferences, and factors influencing their choice of India for medical care. The study emphasizes the importance of sustainable practices in the Indian medical tourism industry for long-term economic benefits and provides insights for future development and competitiveness strategies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The medical tourism industry in India requires a comprehensive policy framework, investment in healthcare infrastructure, skill enhancement, quality assurance, marketing and promotion, research and development, public-private partnerships, regulatory measures, tourism integration, and community engagement. A comprehensive policy framework should be developed, involving collaboration between the government, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders. Infrastructure development should be prioritized, including upgrading facilities, enhancing technology adoption, and ensuring high patient care standards. Skill enhancement should be encouraged, with training programs, collaborations with international medical institutions, and certifications. Quality assurance should be enforced to ensure patient safety and satisfaction. Marketing strategies should be developed and implemented, with collaborations with tourism boards and industry associations. Research and development initiatives should be supported, by partnerships with research institutions and technological breakthroughs. Public-private partnerships can be facilitated to address challenges and opportunities in the medical tourism sector. Regulatory measures should be streamlined, and tourism integration should be integrated with the tourism sector to enhance the industry's attractiveness. Community engagement programs and initiatives can contribute to the socio-economic development of medical tourism regions.

## **CONCLUSION**

India's medical tourism industry appears to have a bright future. Over the coming years, Ayurveda is anticipated to play a major role in the industry's expected healthy growth. The expansion of the medical tourism sector can boost earnings, create jobs, encourage investment in travel-related businesses, and stimulate growth in other industries. It can also spur the expansion of related sectors like healthcare-IT (Shah, Future Market Insights, 2022) (Madhur, 2023). Travelers from all over the world are drawn to India because of its affordability and distinctive position in holistic healthcare (Microsoft Bing, n.d.) (Medical Tourism India, n.d.).

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