

EXPLORING INTO THE STP MARKETING OF HEALTH TOURISM OF KERALA

Rajeev Kariyil

Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University,
Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr. Rincy V Mathew

Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University,
Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

Tourism boosts the economy, creates thousands of jobs, improves a country's infrastructure, and encourages cultural exchange between tourists and locals. Tourism supports a large number of jobs in a range of businesses. It also provides a one-of-a-kind medical tourism alternative, in addition to its environment and culture. Kerala's ancient medical systems, such as Ayurveda, Sidha, Naturopathy, Panchakarma, Kalari, and others, have drew visitors from all over the world. Furthermore, modern medicine plays a key role in Medical Tourism because of its low cost and compatibility with medical systems in the developed countries. Patients from the West and the Middle East are flocking to India, specifically Kerala, for cardiology, nephrology, orthopaedics, cancer, and other medical procedures. STP Marketing- Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning, It is easy to understand and applying in the business which will definitely make a change the economic status. Segmentation of the market will help to understand the pros and cons of this sector. In Kerala, there are a number of speciality hospitals that provide efficient treatment for complicated medical conditions. As Kerala is preferred as an option for patients seeking healthcare solutions in India, the study helps to identify the markets to be segmented, positioning of the products (facilities) by the health providers.

Key words: Tourism, Tourism Marketing, STP Marketing, Health Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

STP is a three-step methodology that examines company products or services and how they convey their benefits to different client segments. STP marketing works because it divides your consumer base into smaller groups, allowing you to create highly targeted marketing tactics to reach and engage each target demographic. The worldwide medical tourism industry was valued at USD 44.8 billion in 2019 and is anticipated to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.1 percent from 2020 to 2027. From 2019 to 2027, the worldwide medical tourism industry is anticipated to increase at a compound annual growth rate of 21.1 percent, reaching USD 207.8 billion. Health, wellbeing, and medical tourism are well-researched topics in tourist studies, and

Nordic academics have been at the forefront of the field. The article “Conceptual Direction on Tourism Statistics in the Covid-19 Context” gives conceptual guidance on the UNWTO's statistics database's major tourism data and indicators in relation to new scenarios that have developed in the Covid-19 crisis. It serves as a reminder of the main concepts and definitions of the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2020 and provides additional guidance on the treatment of special cases such as quarantine stays, COVID-related expenditure, patients and health workers, activity changes in the tourism industries.

Tourism is subdivided into: Leisure Tourism, Pilgrimage, Health Tourism, Winter Tourism, Mass Tourism, etc. Tourism is further subdivided into 31 sub divisions. and some are, Adventure tourism, Agritourism, Archaeological tourism, Bicycle touring, Bookstore tourism, Cultural tourism, Ecotourism, Garden tourism, Heritage tourism, Literary tourism, Medical tourism, Sustainable tourism, Wine tourism etc. Kerala is ideal for medical tourism because of its warm climate all year, great hospitals with world-class equipment, well-known physicians who are specialised in certain disciplines, highly qualified paramedical workers and technicians, and international connections.

In November 2019, a report from ‘The Economic Times’ has stated that of all medical tourist arrivals in India, Maharashtra receives 27%, Chennai receives around 15%, and Kerala receives nearly 5–7% of them. Kerala's medical tourism industry evolved organically, rather than via concerted effort. Some industries, notably the Ayurveda sector, saw it as an opportunity and worked together to make Kerala a source for Ayurveda therapy. Then there was dentistry, and then there was modern medicine. Kerala also has a number of distinct benefits, including a high level of sanitation, a well-developed tourist industry with high-quality resorts and hotels, affordable medical treatment packages, and excellent settings for a peaceful vacation.

The popularity of medical tourism in Kerala has grown to a number of reasons. Traditional medical systems like Ayurveda and Siddha are quite common in the state, and they are attracting and continuing to rise number of visitors. Healthcare expenditures in developed countries seem to be very high. International travel is easy and economic. The Technology and care standards are improving day by day. Hospitals and Medical care Facilities are of high standards. The hospitality systems prevailing in Kerala are excellent and the Tour operators are handling it with at most care because of the governments intrudes.

Health tourism will help to increase the economy of the state and it will bring more developments to the fields like;

- Quality health care
- Personalised services
- Language compatibility
- Accredited hospitals
- Low cost
- Employability
- Living standards
- Minimum waiting time

- Others.

This conceptual guideline note is the outcome of a consultation process including the UNWTO Committee on Statistics, the United Nations task team on Business Dynamics, Demography, and Entrepreneurship, as well as several international organisations and other nations.

Some of the market's drivers include the availability of extra advantages such as better healthcare, cutting-edge technology, new medications, cutting-edge equipment, greater hospitality, and customised care. Over the projected period, the market is likely to develop at a quick pace. Inadequate insurance benefits and a lack of healthcare insurance in the local market are factors driving market growth. Furthermore, rising demand for non-covered

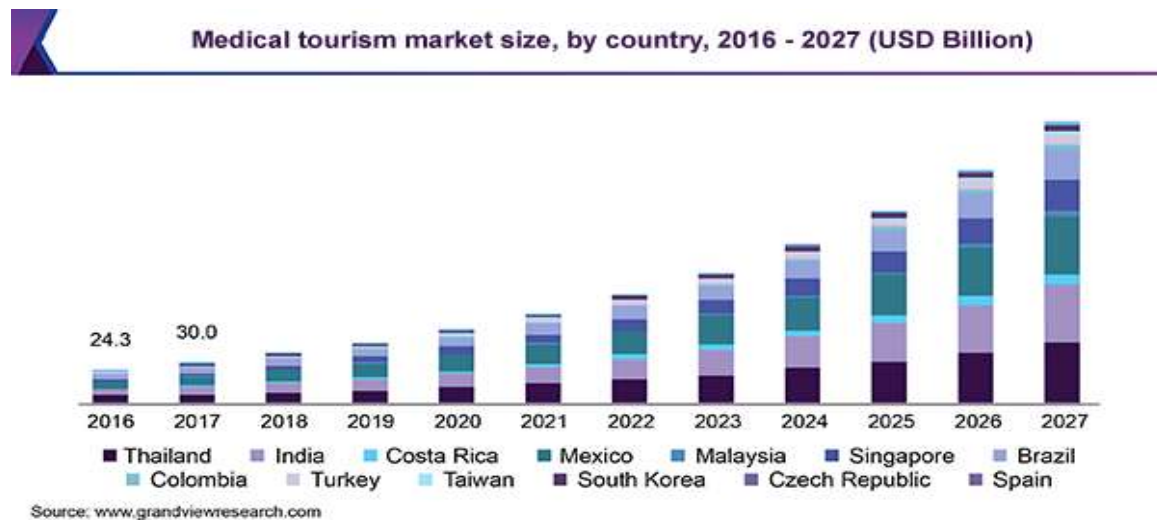
Source: www.grandviewresearch.com

treatments such as gender reassignment surgery, fertility therapy, dental repair, and aesthetic surgery is boosting the market.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Patients from various countries are becoming medical tourists to India for low cost and health restorative alternative treatments (Todd, 2005). The medical tourist undergo treatments of a combination of Ayurveda, yoga, Acupuncture, Herbal oil massage, Nature therapies, and some ancient Indian health care methods-such as Vedic care, and alternate health care service. Kerala, a state in South India, has established itself as a prominent destination of world leisure tourism for its natural beauty and cultural assets.

Kerala is a perfect hide away with captivating and serene surroundings, friendly and attentive service. The state is also portrayed as “God’s own country” (National Geographic, 2004).



Kotler, 2012, A target market is defined as a group of purchasers who share common needs/characteristics and whom the firm intends to service. The marketing literature refers to segmentation as STP marketing (**Kotler, 1998**).

Beerli and Martin (2004) Natural resources, general infrastructure, tourist infrastructure, tourist leisure and recreation, culture, history and art, political and economic factors, natural environment, social environment, and the atmosphere of the place are among the nine dimensions with attributes determining the perceived tourist destination image.

Jonathan N Goodrich (1994) in his article has explained about the health tourism in the Caribbean region and his study was focused on the health care travel care sector and on ecotourism, he has suggested that the health tourism can be a new and effective positioning strategy in identifying and developing the tourism destinations.

Varghese and Zacharias (2020) found out that vital strategy for attracting the patients from abroad is on line communication and the clients also rely on the information received from online transactions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The important objectives of this study includes the following

1. To analyse the marketing opportunities for health tourism in Kerala.
2. To explore the STP marketing in the Health tourism Sector.
3. To give suggestions to improve the marketing strategies of health tourism in Kerala.

VARIABLES FOR THE STUDY

The variables used for the Study are summarized below

Segmentation	Targeting	Positioning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process 2. Size 3. Growth rate 4. Profitability 5. Industry Cost structure 6. Distribution 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Types of providers 2. Accessibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of strategy 2. Changes in existing marketing strategies

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a descriptive research that describes and analyses the current status of health tourism marketing techniques. This study employs both primary and secondary data. Primary data are gathered from providers and health tourism programmes in Kerala. There are several types of institutions associated with health tourism. The study makes advantage of all secondary data

sources that are accessible. To obtain data from primary sources, a standardised questionnaire was employed.

The simple random sampling approach is utilised to obtain the primary data for the investigation. Because Kerala is one of the most well-known tourist destinations after Chennai, The sampling frame is the entire population, which includes the total number of health providers of health tourism services in Kerala. There are 1028 health tourism service providers in Kerala. A total of 250 samples were collected from them. Private hospitals (Ayurvedic and allopathy), Yoga Centres, and tourist resorts that provide health treatments are among the providers of health tourism services in Kerala. For the analysis of the collected data, mean score analysis, correlation coefficient and percentage analysis has been used. Other statistical packages used is MS Excel. The main scaling technique used for the study is Likert five point scale, four point scale and closed questions.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS:

The main variables of 'STP' is analysed in detail in different sections and the results and explanations are mentioned below.

I. Market Segmentation

Sl No	Items	Scale					Total	Mean score
		Extremely Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied		
1	Market Segmentation Process	120	38	14	14	64	250	2.456
2	Market Size	54	22	40	56	78	250	3.328
3	Growth Rate	56	22	44	46	82	250	3.304
4	Market Profitability	40	12	52	46	100	250	3.616
5	Industry Cost Structure	62	14	58	50	66	250	3.17
6	Distribution Channels	62	14	58	50	66	250	3.17

Source: Primary Data

From the above table the following inferences can be made for each variable:

a. Market Segmentation Process

The method of market segmentation examines each segment of the Kerala health tourism market. It's crucial to research and analyses consumer satisfaction in various market categories after identifying possible market segments.

Taking into account about the market segmentation, it is a marketing approach in health tourism that entails splitting a large target market into subsets of consumers with similar requirements and interests, as well as similar applications for the relevant health tourism services.

The majority of health tourism providers are dissatisfied with the current health tourism market segmentation strategy, as seen in table. The market segmentation process has a mean of 2.456 which is moderate. As a result, the majority of providers are dissatisfied with the current market segmentation process, and solutions to improve market segmentation must be developed.

(b) Market Size

The market size of health tourism is determined by the volume and potential of the market. The market volume represents the sum of all realised sales volume in a certain market. The volume is determined by the quantity of customers and their desire for health-related products.

The overall volume of a market is measured by market size. In the current market environment, market size is expressed in terms of the number of health tourism providers and users. The above table mean value is reasonably consistent and stable (3.328). As a result, the majority of providers are content with the current market size. Before launching a new service in a new place, health tourism providers want to know how big the market is. The expansion of the existing market size is hampered by government policies and strategies, as well as other legal requirements.

(c) Growth Rate

The expansion in size or sales within a specific consumer group over a given time period is referred to as market growth rate. When a health tourism business's management evaluates a product's success, it must determine the total market growth rate based on the observed sales growth of the health tourism product.

The mean market growth rate is 3.304. Hence the mean value obtained is moderately steady and stable. The market growth rate is a vital indicator of a company's health. As a result, health tourism providers are content with the current industry growth rate. When a health tourism company's management evaluates a service's success, it must subtract the overall market growth rate from the observed service growth.

(d) Market Profitability

In health tourism, a market region has a range and a threshold that determine the profitability of the economic activity that it generates. Providers of health tourism want to know how profitable their offerings are on the market. Observations based on the data in the table market profitability has a mean value of 3.616, which is generally consistent and stable. As a result, the current market profitability position is satisfactory to health tourism providers. It is founded on two crucial elements. First and foremost, the target market must have a significant amount of discretionary income. Second, people must be aware of the market in order to seek for and purchase the service.

(e) Industry Cost

The expenses that a health tourism provider must account for when providing a service are referred to as industry cost structure in the industry. Costs vary depending on the health tourism provider. Some suppliers require a lot of labour, while others require a lot of money. Regardless of industry, the majority of costs are related to the purchase of manufacturer-supplied products.

As in list above, 23.2 percent of respondents have a neutral impression of the industry's cost structure, 7.2 percent are extremely satisfied with the cost structure, 12 percent are extremely dissatisfied with the cost structure, and the rest are somewhere in between. The average cost structure in the industry is 3.17, which is moderately steady and stable. As a result, it may be stated that the majority of health tourism providers have a neutral view on the industry's cost structure.

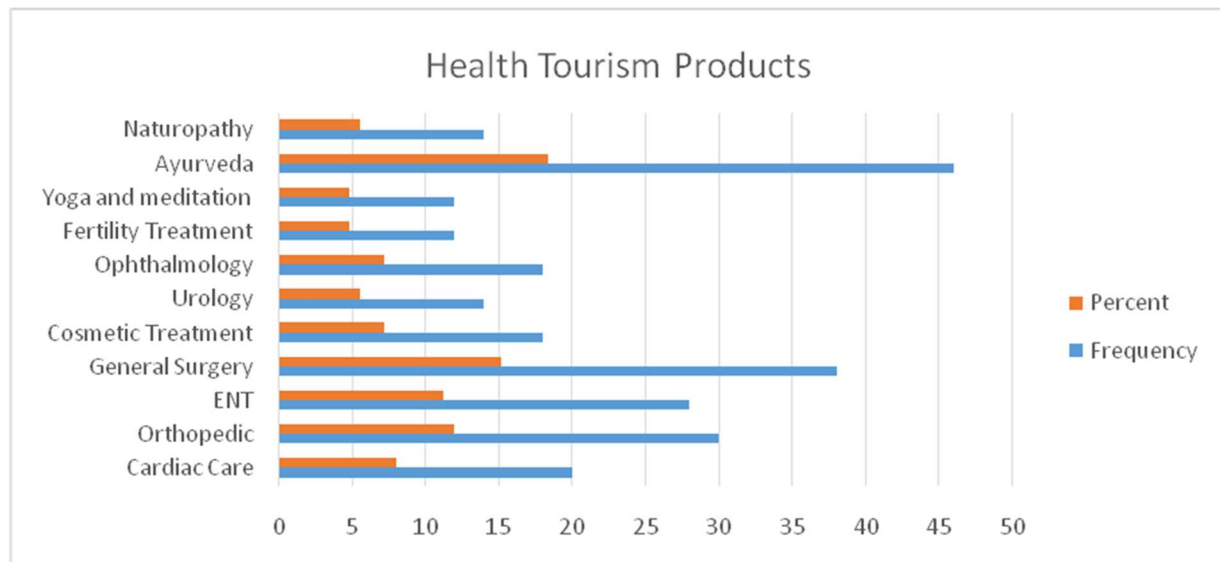
(f) Distribution Channels

A distribution channel, also known as a commerce channel, is the path or route that health tourism products take from suppliers to end users. As per the table, more than 30% of providers are content with the current distribution channels, 23.2 percent are undecided, and the remaining respondents are dissatisfied with the current distribution channel system. The distribution channel system's mean value is 3.17, which is moderately reliable and consistent. As a result, health tourism marketing distribution methods can be determined to be fairly effective.

II. Market Targeting for Health Tourism

a. Types of Providers

In health tourism, target marketing refers to a marketing technique that allows marketers to segment the market into tiny groups of people who share similar interests. This type of segmentation aids health tourism providers in developing specialised strategies and approaches for marketing a product to its target market.



Ayurveda, general surgery, ENT, and orthopaedic therapies are all in great demand in Kerala's health tourism business, according to the graph above. Ayurveda is in high demand in Kerala's health tourism business accounting to the 46 percent of the total market.

b. Accessibility

In Kerala, the accessibility of the market has an impact on the marketing of health tourism items. The term "accessible tourism" refers to "accessibility" and "supporting" health-related needs. It caters to those who have limits or difficulties due to their health state when they travel for medical treatment.

<i>Accessibility of Health Tourism Marketers</i>		
Accessibility	Number of respondents	Percentage
High	108	43.2
Medium	86	34.4
Low	34	13.6
Not important	22	8.8
Total	250	100
Mean Score	1.88	

Source: Primary Data

As per the table, 43.2 percent of respondents view health tourism facilities are very accessible, 34% are moderately satisfied, and the remaining group is not satisfied. The mean value is 1.88, which is moderately stable and consistent.

III. Market Positioning

The way marketers position their product or service prospect is called positioning. It's a new approach of marketing strategy for health tourism. It's a method of locating a window in the minds of potential customers in order to effectively place a product, service, company, or individual against its key competitors. This method is founded on the idea that communication can only occur at the correct moment and under the proper conditions. Positioning is the practise of implanting a psychological "anchor" in the brains of potential clients so that they choose one health tourism provider over another.

a. Type of strategy required

Type of strategy required	Not at all important	Least Important	Not important	Important	Very important
	1	2	3	4	5
Identify the target audience	28	28	74	78	42
Identify the selling points	66	84	68	18	14
Identify the opportunities and threats	16	20	70	72	72
Coefficient of Correlation between identify the target audience and identifying the selling points					-0.409
Coefficient of Correlation between identify the target audience and Identify the opportunities and threats					0.813834
Coefficient of Correlation between Identify the selling points and Identify the opportunities and threats					-0.72452

Source: Primary Data

The selling points (health tourism providers) and the target audience have a correlation coefficient of -0.409. This indicates that the marketing process is limited by the target audience and selling points. The users' choice of health tourism providers is largely based on the product quality. The target audience and the opportunities and risks have correlation coefficients of 0.813834. This suggests that the majority of health tourism marketing providers have an effective complaints handling mechanism. The correlation coefficient between selling points and opportunities and threats is -0.72452. In health tourism marketing, this means that the strongest selling aspects are prioritised. The items should be chosen by providers based on the needs of the end consumers.

b. Changes in existing marketing strategies

The place you hold in the minds of potential customers is called market positioning. It refers to how they perceive one health tourism offering in comparison to others.



Source: Primary Data

As per the graph, 64.8 percent of respondents are content with their current market positioning methods, 15% desire to change their market positioning approach, and the rest change their tactics depending on the situation. As a result, the vast majority of suppliers are content with their current market positioning strategy. In health tourism, market positioning enables customers to understand how their product or service compares to that of competitors, as well as what marketing methods should be used to achieve this perceptual aim.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is essential to the global economic prosperity of many countries. Tourism has a number of advantages for host countries. Health tourism increases an economy's income, provides thousands of employment, improves a country's infrastructure, and fosters a sense of cultural interchange between visitors and residents. Health insurance firms are becoming increasingly important in medical tourism. The study helped to understand about the pros and cons of segmentation of health tourism factors, the necessity for the segmentation, targeting and Positioning. As the study implies that segmentation of health tourism factors is an important area

for study. Market profitability is very high when compared to other segmentation factors, which is indeed a positive factor. Whereas targeting is considered, most providers are in the area of Ayurveda, accounting to the half of the sector and they are all highly accessible. In the case of market positioning, the providers are trying their best to differentiate themselves and most of them hence think that they don't need to change their strategy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, Acharyya, A. (2020). Prospect of Ayurveda System of Medicine in recent COVID-19 Pandemic in India. *International Journal of Ayurveda and Traditional Medicine*, 2(2), 26-29.
- Asunción Beerli, Josefa D Martín. (2004) Factors influencing destination image, *Annals Of Tourism Research*, Volume 31, Issue 3, Pages 657-681, ISSN 0160-7383, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.01.010>.
- Bateson John E. G. (1995): *Managing Services Marketing*. Fort Worth: The Dryden Press.
- Bindu V T, Chitramani P & Babu P. (2009). Perception of tourist towards Kerala as a preferred alternate Health Tourism Destination: A Study: *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage*, Vol.2, No.1.
- Bowers, H., & Cheer, J. (2017). Yoga tourism: Commodification and western embracement of eastern spiritual practice. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 24(1), 208-216. doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2017.07.013
- Bulsara, H. P., & Yadav, N. (2018). Study On The Current Scenario Of Consumers Buying Behavior Towards Ayurvedic Medicines In Gujarat. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 31-35
- Cherukara, J., & Manalel, J. (2019). Medical Tourism in Kerala—Challenges and Scope. In *Conference on Tourism in India – Challenges Ahead*, (pp. 369-379). Kochi: IIMK.
- Connell, J. (2006). Medical tourism: Sea, sun, sand and surgery. *Tourism Management*, 27(6), 1093-1100. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2005.11.005
- Jonathan N Goodrich (1994) Health Tourism:, *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 6:3-4, 227-238, DOI: [10.1300/J046v06n03_12](https://doi.org/10.1300/J046v06n03_12)
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J. and Makens, J (2003) *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*. Prentice Hall – Pearson Education, New Jersey
- L.R.Potti, (2001) *Research Methodology*, Yamuna Publication, Trivandrum
- Mabiyan, Rashmi (November 20, 2019). "Is India doing enough to carve a niche in medical tourism?" *The Economic Times*. Retrieved July 10, 2020.
- Moniruzzaman Sarker, Nafisa Kasem, Brian Kee Mun Wong, Sedigheh Moghavvemi. (2021) Conceptualizing Essential Components Affecting Health Tourism Satisfaction in Asia: Does Context Matter?. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism* 0:0, pages 1-29.
- Parasuraman A., Zeithaml Valarie .A. Berry Leonard.L. (1988): SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64, pp.12-40.

Philip Kotler, Marketing Management, Millennium Edition, PHL

Todd, G, [Mather, S.](#) & [Viner, D.](#) (2005) *Climate and policy changes: their implications for international tourism flows.* [Tourism, recreation and climate change](#) pp.63-85.

Varghese, A. A., & Zacharias, S. (2020). *Influence of Digital Marketing on Ayurvedic Tourism in Kerala.* *Our Heritage*, 68 (30), 424 -440