

Role of Hotels and Resorts to Promote Ancient Ayurveda through Health Tourism: A Special Reference to Odisha

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Abstract

Health Tourism is one of the emerging segments of travel and has gained remarkable fame to India for attracting tourists to cater their health as well as relaxation needs. Even though a new phenomenon; it is almost surely to be a major source of income for the country. Ayurveda has been the USP of health tourism to offer a complete package of travel experiences with psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Presently alternative therapy and herbal treatment is widely popular globally and makes India a major tourist attraction. Hopefully, within few years India will be the most preferred destination for best of the health services with holistic healing therapies. Thus, endorsing Ayurveda through health tourism provides a new dimension to the hospitality and tourism in India itself. The main purpose of the paper is to focus on recent developmental trends in health tourism in India for promoting holistic therapy- Ayurveda in global context. The study highlights the implementation of ancient therapies in various hotels and resorts of Odisha as an ancillary service to provide the guest utmost satisfaction. The scope of the study only focuses on promoting Ayurvedic remedies as a significant element of health tourism in hotels and resorts of Odisha. Based on the data collected through secondary sources, this paper makes an assessment of the extent of social awareness, innovativeness and responsiveness of tourism sector for marketing Ayurveda. In the concluding section, limitations of the study have been discussed and recommendations provided for undertaking more detailed investigations in the area.

Introduction

Tourism in India is popular in global context not just for the architectural heritage and natural bounty but also for the spiritual diversity, cultural values and indigenous ancient healthcare system. In present scenario India is emerging as a great destination for health tourism for outstanding therapeutic remedy at low cost, easy accessibility and tremendous travel experience. There are many holistic resorts of India providing alternative therapy packages including slimming programmes, paralysis, weight loss, anti-ageing, yoga, meditation detoxification and rejuvenation. Since Vedic era Indians have been utilising the

essence and miraculous benefits of herbs and other natural ingredients for curing miscellaneous mental and physical ailments. It is worldwide proved that Vedic science and its by-products, Ayurveda has marvellously upgraded the quality of human life and wellbeing throughout the ages.

Predominantly Ayurvedic treatment not only focuses on treatment but also on prevention of diseases through naturopathy, diet and lifestyle practices. Hence as a significant part of health tourism sector many hotels and resorts are focusing on promotion of these age-old remedies of the country in global forum through their service packages. There are many Ayurvedic therapy centres & Spa's opened up at many hotels and resorts which facilitate total patient care and a complete holidaying experience. Furthermore, different form of therapies and pancha karma relaxes and soothes the physiological system of the body.

Background of the Research

Health tourism also known as Medical tourism is the process where people travel to another country for health reason along with sightseeing. In India this emerging concept has achieved remarkable popularity to cater the health and relaxation needs of travelers across the globe (Mochi et al., 2013). It also refers to travelling with a purpose of health care and involves the leisure activities that support the wellbeing of the tourist (Lee and Spisto, 2007) and promoting health care facilities (Goodrich and Goodrich, 1987). According to many researchers health tourism is the form of travelling from home to other destination to improve health condition or avail health care services simultaneously exploring the tourist landscape (Laws 1996; Connell, 2006; Bookman and Bookman, 2007). In a nut shell health tourism is a comprehensive blending of 5 'S' i.e. sun, sand, sea, sculpture and surgery (Cornell, 2006) to facilitate an exotic holidaying experience.

Millions of tourists from US, UK, Australia, Sri Lanka, China and Bangladesh visits India for the above reasons only. Along with the developmental trend of tourism sector the number of medical tourists globally is expected to reach up to 5 million by 2016. India has originated as one of the most desirable destination for health tourism. Quality treatment with comparatively low cost attracts patients from abroad for treatment of various diseases like cardiac surgery, knee & hip replacement, dental surgery, kidney replacement, neurological disorders and so on. Bennett et al. (2004) also focuses on 'wellness' segment of health tourism for promoting healthier lifestyles and wellbeing services through alternative therapies of holistic healing. Although health tourism sector in India mainly involves medical and surgical treatments in hospitals, simultaneously it also promotes complementary conventional therapies such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Yog, etc.

Nonetheless, health tourism has given a new definition to vacationing in India by promoting Ayurveda. Ayurveda was a craze in India since very early times to provide a complete health

solution. Ayurveda also is considered as the USP of health tourism to provide qualitative travel experiences with psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing makes India a lucrative destination for health tourism.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the paper is to focus on recent developmental trends in health tourism in India for propelling ancient Ayurveda in global context. The study presents a brief overview of Ayurvedic therapies facilitated through resorts and hotels in Odisha state.

Methodology

This research is a conceptual study based on application of secondary data analysis. The data has been collected from the published statistics, reports, journals, previous studies and websites. Then it makes an assessment of the extent of social awareness, innovativeness and responsiveness of tourism sector for marketing Ayurveda.

Holistic Healing Through Ayurveda: A Sporadic View

*Ayu: Kamayamanena Dharmartha Sukhasadhanam |
Ayurvedopadese u Vidheya: Paramādara: ||*

According to the above sloka from Asthanga Hridaya Suthr; longevity of human life is based upon achieving four purposes i.e. Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires) and Moksha (salvation). And Ayurveda, helps to achieve the purpose of Vidheya (obedience) which is the most significant quality in life. Apart from the contemporary medical system; India is also famous for the ancient healing therapies practiced throughout the country. According to Charaka Samhita, the knowledge of Ayurveda is eternal and is exposed in each of the cycles of creation of the universe to help relieve humanity's suffering. Ayurveda is a form of indigenous treatment deep rooted in India to provide a complete system of preventive medicine and healthcare, which has been proven its efficiency since ages (Dawn and Pal, 2011). There is also reference in Ramayana the instance of Sanjeevani booti lifted by Lord Hanuman to save Lord Laxman's life. Hence, it proves that herbs actually act as life saving divine nectar, ambrosia. Furthermore, Ayurvedic remedies involve maximum utilization of herbs, minerals and oil massage that have substantial effect with limited side effects on human body.

Origin of Ayurveda

*“The Lord Himself is the first divine physician.
He is the best among physicians.*

*When the body is afflicted with senility and diseases,
the holy water of Mother Ganga is the medicine and
Lord Narayana, from whose holy feet Ganga emanates,
is the great physician.”*

-Lord Dhanwantari.

Ayurveda the ancient science of holistic healing practiced over more than 5000 years ago in India also known as the fifth Veda. The science of Ayurveda is derived from Sanskrit origin 'ayush' means life and 'ved' means knowledge to offer a rich, comprehensive outlook to a healthy life (Ramesh and Kurian, 2011). Ayurveda is considered as the science of life to cure diseases and offers holistic healing of body, mind and soul. Generally Ayurvedic therapy is based on the principles of synchronization of three doshas in human body. The philosophy of Ayurveda says, Vatta (wind), Pitta (bile) and Kapha (phlegm) are the three compositions or doshas present in the human body; and even a slight imbalance of the above proposition results in to different physiological complications. As each human being has different body constitution they have to follow diet and lifestyle accordingly.

According to Charak Samhita, the father of Ayurveda is Dhanvantari, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu; who received the healing power from Lord Brahma. It is scripted in epics that Lord Brahma is the inventor of Ayurveda even before generation of the organisms.

Ayurveda is the progeny of Atharvaveda having 100,000 verses and hymns and invocations that has miraculous effect on fatal diseases (Narayanaswamy, 1981; Begde, 2008). Afterward a systematic developmental phase of the science happened known as Samhita period. And gradually a number of classical works were produced in support to the evolution of organized Ayurvedic medical care. Ayurveda also evolved from the classic treatises like Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtanga Samgraham and Ashtanga Hridayam. The therapy according to Charaka Samhita is based on both internal as well as external application of medicinal herbs. Whereas Susruta who considered as the 'father of plastic surgery' in his scripture discussed about different surgical procedures. Vagbhata is the author of Asthanga Hridaya Samhita explaining eight branches of Ayurvedic treatment in an extensive way. Rig Veda the ancient book of wisdom has also mentioned the practice of remedies like rejuvenation therapy, yoga and panchakarma. This ancient wisdom can be used to cure various chronic diseases affirmed by modern health care system as incurable. Ayurveda proved its effectiveness against Allopathic medicine in curing many critical health disorders.

Ayurvedic treatment reflects an overwhelming means of clinical & surgical information enriched by research and development on the management of a various diseases.

Ayurvedic Healing System

*Vayu: Pitta Kaphascheti trayo doha: Samasata: ||
Vikta'vikta deha ghnanti te varttayanti cha |*

As described above the imbalances of three defects or doshas like vatta, pitta and kapha in the body constitution of an individual lead to many health disorders. And Ayurvedic treatment rectifies these imbalances and helps an individual maintain and bring back a perfect balance of his physical system. Ayurvedic literature purely based on the utilization of medicinal plants and herbs. According to Charak Samhita there are no such plant exist in the world which has no medicinal value. Thus, in Ayurvedic treatment there are approximately 1,250 Indian medicinal plants that are used in formulating therapeutic reparations (Dev, 1999).

So, heritage of Vedic science forms the harmony between the body and its environment by creating the optimum healthy atmosphere by facilitating a perfect healthy life style. The treatments follow the basics mentioned in ancient mythological scriptures like Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita and Asthanga Hridayam. Ayurveda therapy usually deal with these three parameters; cause, symptom and treatment of diseases.

*Kayabalagrahordhvanga Salyadara Jaravrsan ||
Astavangani Tasyahu: Chikitsa Yeu Sasrita |*

The above sloka describes the different forms of treatment of Ayurveda. Kaya Chikitsa (General medicine), Bala Chikitsa (Paediatrics), Graha Chikitsa (Psychiatry), Urdhvanga Chikitsa (ENT and head), Shalya Chikitsa (Surgery), Damshrta Chikitsa (Toxicology), Jaraa Chikitsa (Geriatrics) and Vrushya Chikitsa (Aphrodisiac therapy) are the different branches of Ayurveda treatment. The treatment consists of medicinal herbs, special oil massage, dietary, lifestyle advice and other aspects of treatment, tailor made for that individual. As claimed in Charaka Samhita cow urine (gomutra), also plays a crucial role in Ayurveda because of its miraculous curative properties. It has also challenged the modern health science for eradicating top ranked fatal diseases like Cancer and AIDS from human body (Jain et al., 2010).

Through the above system range of diseases like allergies, Alzheimer's, anxiety, asthma, bronchitis, chronic fatigue, all types of intestinal and bowel disorders, stress, depression, insomnia, diabetes mellitus, fibroids, fibromyalgia, migraine, heart diseases, blood pressure, cholesterol, infertility, gynaecological disorders, multiple sclerosis, sinusitis, skin diseases and psoriasis, arthritis, osteoporosis, thyroid and liver problems cures permanently. Ayurvedic treatment is non-invasive and non-toxic, so it can be used safely as an alternative therapy or alongside conventional therapies. However, the treatment should

be according to proper instruction and precautions. Those undergoing treatment needs to take care of the restrictions in their food habits and diet to avail the full effectiveness of the medicines.

Renaissance of Ancient Ayurveda through Health Tourism:

It has been observed that the present ferocious competitive scenario and the techno-centric lifestyle gradually affecting the psychosocial wellbeing of the gennex globatarian. The increasing level of stress and anxiety, imbalance diet and wrong food habits, and dissolution of societal and traditional value system have resulted disequilibrium in the social-ecosystem (Fontanari and Kern, 2003). For this reason, people are always in search for a place away from the hustle-bustle of life to relax in a place of peace and serenity. In consequence, to fight with the above problems and to provide the wellbeing needs of the customer health tourism sector plays a pivotal role. Moreover, the synergistic combination of health, vacation and leisure helps the tourism and hospitality sector to cultivate global competitiveness and sustain growth.

Ayurvedic Therapy at Health Resorts

There are a huge number of hotels and resorts facilitating Ayurvedic remedies to pamper the guests with a divine experience. Though there are ranges of resorts providing these treatments exclusively; increasing demand compels the hotel sector to include Ayurvedic therapies in form of spa centers in the hotel premises. Many premium segment hotels in India are incorporating wellness segment with experts and therapists to serve the guests according to their requirement and body types. Furthermore the therapy helps to revive the vigor and vitality of the body and enhances the immunity power through the anti-oxidant & prophylactic properties. The services also include beauty and weight management programmes as wellness packages. Different therapies provided the guest as supplementary services to restore their physical, psychological and spiritual harmony and well being.

Range of Services:

There are few common Ayurvedic therapies provide at every resort throughout the country. The treatment includes the most effective panchakarma therapy that includes five types of healing procedures done through internally and externally for rejuvenation of body, mind and soul. Additionally other therapeutic methods are abhayanga massage, shirodhara, sharvangadhara, shirovasti, kativasti, nasyam and steam bath. Along with that therapists also suggest to go for application various types of masks on the face and body as per the condition and requirements.

Role of Hotels and Resorts in Odisha to endorse Ayurveda:

Although Odisha tourism plays a comparatively small role in health tourism scenario' still it has a huge potential for growth in this sector. Recently, Odisha Tourism awarded as 'Best Relaxation, Culture and Beaches Destination' by Pacific Area Travel Writers Association (PATWA) held at ITB, Berlin in 2014. Therefore, Odisha is considered as one of the best tourist destinations in India and famous for its warm hospitality. To discover the cultural diversity and ethnicity huge numbers of travelers visit Odisha throughout the year from all over the world. Hence, hospitality sector plays a pivotal role to offer them superlative accommodation facility. As a result there are many hotels and resorts available throughout the state to provide utmost service quality according to the budget of the travelers. These hotels and resorts equipped with classic as well as modern amenities along with supplementary services to provide the guest an enthralling experience.

Ayurveda at Hotels and Resorts

As reported by Statistical survey, 2013-14; at present there are 1585 number of hotels including low, medium and high segment category are operating at different places in Odisha. Hotel industry is emerging at a skyrocketing pace with increasing demand of different category of travelers for accommodation as well as relaxation. Thus, to provide the utmost satisfaction to the guests many hotels in spite of the classification and rating have included Ayurvedic massage and associated services among the list of amenities. Discussed below are few of the selected hotels and resorts promoting Ayurveda through their service delivery mechanism.

Mayfair chain of hotels and resort, the pioneer of introducing star hotel chain in Odisha has its authentic spa resort to offer variety of beauty as well as wellness therapies. To provide exclusive traditional treatment they have ambience, experts and professionals. Swosti Premium one more star rated hotel also provides all types of Ayurveda treatments and massage provided as per the demand of customers. Hotel The Crown, Bhubaneswar also provides relaxation services to the guests through their in-house SPA with the proven healing power of Ayurveda and massage treatments. Hotel Presidency, Bhubaneswar with its Spa centre provides beauty care along with Ayurvedic form of treatments and Panchakarma etc. through expert practitioners. Toshali Group of Resorts situated at different places of the state provides a complete staying experience along with the full fledged spa equipped with Ayurvedic therapies.

Holiday Resort, Puri has launched wellness spa—The Lemonade offers different varieties of pampering treatments including Ayurvedic massage. There are also many beach resorts in Puri plays the role of ambassador to endorse tourism in the global arena.

Hence, in this way major hotels and resorts encourage the promotion of Ayurvedic remedies. However, it is highly essential that the therapy should be offered under the supervision and consultation of registered professionals and experts only.

Scope and Challenges

According to Forbes India report, 2014; medical or health tourism is the crown-jewel to shape the future of economic growth and health care. And the report further says that is a booming sector which expects to grow to \$5 billion by 2016. Health tourism in India even though a new phenomenon is almost surely to be a major source of income for the country. Hopefully, within few years India will be the preferred destination for best of the health services.

Ayurveda and associated healing therapies have always enticed and impressed foreign tourist. Many tourists from different countries come in India for purification, nourishment and rejuvenation through the healing touch promised by yoga and Ayurveda. For this reason Ayurveda as a significant component of tourism and hospitality helps the country in achieving global competitiveness and growth sustainability. Moreover, medicines prepared strictly according to the instructions provided by the authentic scriptures; have tremendous curative powers. Though this therapy works at its own pace in comparison to Allopathic medicine, the perception of limited side effects is its advantage (Rath et al., 2012).

Ayurveda treatment system plays a key role field of public health scenario since long time. The main reason for its popularity is their availability, cheapness and efficacy. Various doctrines of Ayurveda are really thought provoking and amazing. Even smaller doses create wonders in curing terminal illness.

The diagnosis procedure in Ayurvedic system is typical and astounding. An Ayurvedic practitioner determines the causes and symptoms in a scientific and accurate procedure through examining the pulses (nadi-pariksha), eyes and face of the patient; and accordingly suggests the remedy. The remedial measures helps in balancing the harmony of the 'tridoshas' through rasayana treatment through proper management of Rasas in correct proportions and combinations inside the body. Another list of few of the powerful ayurvedic therapy consists of infusions–Asavas, decoctions–Aristhas, oils–Tailas, powders–Churnas, tablets–Gutika and ointment –lepa, medicated ghee–Ghritam, Metals –Bhashmas, etc. However, the expertise is restricted to limited specialists only. Due to lack of standardization and patent of the drugs Ayurveda is not able to keep pace with the contemporary medical system. Modern consumer mostly prefers allopathic medicines for its instant effect and still ignorant about the incredible worth of the ancient therapies.

To keep the traditional system of healing alive century after century there is the necessary

requirement of a positive encouragement and awareness. The appropriate approaches to propel Ayurveda in global context are standardization of quality, proper management, innovative methods for manufacturing and the degree of potency. However in recent scenario promotional activities have been made to revitalize the hidden science of healing in India through health and wellness tourism and also to tap the inexhaustible herbal wealth of the country in a high manner.

Conclusion

Ayurveda defines and refines the way of qualitative living with the blend of spirituality and holistic therapies. In the emerging scenario of stressful competitive era; Ayurveda provides a plethora of opportunities to enhance the quality of life. Though it is originated from India; it has always enticed people from abroad for its magnificent spiritual healing therapy. It will be an augmented experience for tourists if they can experience these services offered by hotels and resorts in Odisha similar to other parts of the country. For instance, God's own country, Kerala has developed health tourism as the key product for the promotion of tourism of the state. In Kerala many hotels and resorts embraced spas culture infused with Ayurveda as an integral part of tourism promotion. Hence, this extraordinary medical science which is one of the most ancient and finest practice of preventive medicine, that has been practiced in India over many centuries by the expert Vaidyas, should now receive the immediate attention in the best interest of contemporary India. Moreover, it's an imperative requirement to focus primarily on promoting and branding Ayurveda through channelization of different hotels and resorts.

The Odisha Government, Ayurvedic Physician's Association, and Department of Tourism and Hotels association further need to work in a collaborative creative manner to encourage the promotion of Ayurvedic wellness package in global context. PPP management modeling also acts as a catalyst to develop Ayurvedic oriented resorts at famous tourist destinations. Ministry of Tourism should also take appropriate and immediate steps to promote Odisha as an important destination for spiritual healing. According to Odisha Activities Report 2013-14; there are a total of 31 accommodation units operating under Department of Tourism and Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC). Hence, Government authority can establish specific outlet in those accommodation units to promote Ayurveda tourism. Strategizing Ayurveda in the product line rendered by hoteliers and resort enterprises could definitely build up a strong customer relationship and market value. Consequently, health tourism and hospitality can work through a synergistic approach to promote Ayurveda, altruistic service delivery, and enrich India through offering blissful healthiness to the society.

This research is an attempt to establish meaningful co-relation among the ancient therapeutic approach and modern business strategy. More explicitly the expected results of

the study could guide the research community towards the significance of Ayurveda and health tourism services in India.

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