

A Study on the Prospects of Branding Kannur District, Kerala as a Premier Destination for Medical Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Medical tourism industry experiences significant growth globally. This exploratory study examines the potential for branding Kannur, Kerala, as a prominent destination for medical tourism. This paper also examines the branding strategies for developing medical tourism in Kannur district, Kerala. With the rise of medical tourism globally, regional destinations are increasingly focusing on creating distinctive brands to attract international patients. Kannur with its evolving healthcare infrastructure and unique regional characteristics, presents a promising but underutilized opportunity in this sector. This study uses a mixed approach, incorporating surveys and interviews with healthcare providers, tourism professionals, and industry experts and focus groups. The findings suggest that effective branding could position Kannur as a competitive medical tourism destination by emphasizing its unique healthcare offerings and integrating local cultural and natural assets into its brand identity. The study proposes strategic recommendations for enhancing the district's brand, including targeted marketing campaigns, infrastructure development, and collaborations with international healthcare networks. Moreover, this research offers valuable insights into the current landscape and prospects of medical tourism in Kannur District.

Key words: Medical Tourism, Branding strategies, Kannur and Health care services

1. INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism is one of the recently developed and growing tourism activities of the World, especially in India. To put forward the rapidly growing practice of patients to travel to another country for obtaining health care, travel agencies and the mass media promoted the term called Medical Tourism or Wellness Tourism or Health Tourism. In other words, "The movement of people for the aim of receiving affordable personal health care in conjunction with the tourist

sector for patients in need of surgical care and other specialized treatments is commonly referred to as medical tourism". Medical Tourism includes complex specialized surgeries such as joint replacement (knee/hip), cardiac surgery, dental surgery, and cosmetic surgeries as well as elective procedures. "Medical Tourism" is defined by expert as travel undertaken by patients across the world to improve their health. Major drivers of this temporary migration are internet, cheaper flight rate, and improved connectivity between almost all nations.

In today's globalized world there is need for continuous learning and implementation of new ideas like medical tourism by health industry. Medical tourism is a relatively older concept, but countries understood the importance of this concept now result of which Medical Tourism is growing rapidly. It can be seen by the fact that Medical Tourism is a promising new industry in Asia, offering prospects for hospitals facing saturation in patient growth. Healthcare Providers may now consider the medical quality of their services, how non-medical services are key to encouraging patient access and the various marketing options available to them. As far as Medical Tourism is concerned, India offers top class medical facilities at par with any of the western countries. Indian hospitals are having excellent infrastructure, exclusive medical facilities, well qualified doctors and very important competitive cost of treatment.

Blain, Levy, & Ritchie (2005) The idea of branding has only recently been applied to travel destinations. International competitiveness and rivalry will increase as medical tourism becomes more attractive to countries. From last few years due to increase in number of foreign patients, hospitals in India are seriously undertaking various practices to attract them, for example few hospitals are using the franchise model whereas few of them collaborating with clinics and nursing homes from various countries to build brand image. Objectives behind these practices are to share technology, expertise and very important revenue. Many hospitals in India have started separate cell for international patients to cater their needs. Major Services provided by these cells includes provision of preliminary information to the travel-related arrangements. Most of hospitals in India are in expansion stage. After realizing its potential Indian Government had given recognition of industry to Medical Tourism business.

India offers world-class facilities for open-heart surgery, pediatric cardiac surgery, hip and knee replacement, cosmetic surgery, dentistry, bone marrow transplants, and cancer therapy, and nearly all of its clinics are outfitted with cutting-edge technological and medical diagnostic equipment. Today, Indian healthcare is on par with global norms. Some of India's best hospitals

and specialists have a solid international reputation. The most essential element driving medical tourism to India is its low cost and pleasant care. The India Medical Tourism Market is predicted to be worth USD 8.71 billion in 2025 and USD 16.21 billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 13.23% over the forecast period (2025-2030).

Kerala's medical tourism industry expanded without much deliberate group effort. Some industries saw it as an opportunity, especially the Ayurvedic sector, which worked together to turn Kerala into a source for Ayurvedic treatments. (Joseph Cherukara, 2008) Modern medicine and dentistry followed. Kerala's medical tourism industry has grown in prominence due to a number of factors. With hospitals like Aster MIMS Kannur and Kannur Medical College providing services to patients from outside, Kannur is becoming a popular destination for medical tourism, especially for Ayurveda and other traditional healing methods. Aster MIMS Hospital and KIMS Sreechand Hospital are excellent options for travelers looking for medical care in Kannur, Kerala. They provide multi-specialty care, international patient services, and state-of-the-art facilities.

1.1. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Monica, (2007) described that when international patients travel across boundaries for their healthcare and medical needs, it is Medical Tourism.

Medical Tourism can be broadly defined as provision of cost effective“ private medical care, in collaboration with the tourism industry, for patients needing surgical and other forms of specialized treatment”. India Medical Care, (2007).

A destination brand can be any name, symbol, logo, or other visual representation that not only identifies and distinguishes the location but also communicates the promise of an unforgettable trip that is exclusively connected to the location. Therefore, the idea of visitor experience must be included in the branding process for travel locations. (Berry, 1989).

1.2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite its potential as a viable destination for medical tourism, Kannur, Kerala currently lacks a cohesive and recognizable brand identity that distinguishes it from other regions. This absence of branding limits the ability to attract both domestic and international patients seeking medical services. Factors such as inadequate marketing strategies, insufficient awareness of healthcare facilities, and a lack of integration among stakeholders further

exacerbate the challenge. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore effective branding strategies that can enhance Kannur's visibility in the medical tourism sector, improve patient experiences, and ultimately contribute to the local economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

K.S. Vijayanambi (2014), "Progress and Challenges of Medical Tourism in India" noted that the world class infrastructure is one of the main reasons for concentrating on promotion of this kind of tourism in India. Moreover, the growing economy has led to privatization and corporatization in the field of healthcare, thereby leading to the setting up of the world class hospitals that provide high advanced treatment facilities through high end technology and world class doctors. Lakhvinder Singh (2014), "An Evaluation of Medical Tourism in India" through descriptive research undertaken by author reveals the competitive advantage of India in the medical tourism arena arises due to several factors like low cost, strong reputation and the diversity of the many and unique destinations available in the country.

Shweta Mishra (2014), "Prospects in Medical Tourism – India" she focuses on proper planning to market the country for medical tourism and suggests to make out the micro and macro issues facing the industry and further recommends that Central and State Tourism Boards to coordinate and collaborate on a set of international standards, which will lead to communicating promises that are possible only with the integrated efforts of all involved with the industry. S.S.Rose Mary (2014), "Medical Tourism in India- Its Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats" through her SWOT analysis she underscores that the growth of medical tourism in India contributes for the development of infrastructure in medical facilities, medical sciences, national income, employment opportunities and urbanization. She also argues to minimize or reduce the adverse effects of medical tourism through proper policy framework.

Zhou et al. (2012) in their research work "How do brand communities generate brand relationships? Intermediate mechanisms" indicated that brand identity as a measure of how tourists perceive and recognize brands is a way to assess tourists' perceptions and brand self-concept. Kim et al. (2001) in their article "The effect of brand personality and brand identification on brand loyalty: Applying the theory of social identification" opined that when tourists are satisfied with the brand, their identification with the brand enhances their positive

impression, and they will then form a social group with it on some level.

- 2.1. RESEARCH GAP:** Much of the existing literature focuses on Kerala as a whole, overlooking the unique characteristics of specific regions like Kannur. A gap exists in research that thoroughly explores and articulates Kannur's specific medical specialties (particularly Ayurveda), cultural heritage, and natural attractions as branding elements. There's a gap in research that specifically explores branding strategies tailored to Kannur's unique strengths. Research should evaluate the quality of medical services, hospitality, and support services available to medical tourists in Kannur. There's a need for research that quantifies the potential economic benefits of medical tourism for Kannur.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the prospects and opportunities available for medical tourism in Kannur.
- To examine the current branding and marketing strategies for medical tourism in Kannur.
- To evaluate the current perception of medical tourism in Kannur among potential patients and stakeholders.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

3.2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN: Exploratory and Descriptive research design is employed in this research. This mixed research method employed a survey method from October 2024 to February 2025 comprising a semi-structured questionnaire to elicit the respondent's opinion and also unstructured interview. The study is conducted in the various allopathic hospitals of Kannur. This study uses both primary and secondary sources for collecting facts and figures relating to the topic.

3.2.2. SOURCES OF DATA

Following are the sources and methods of data collection for the present study;

Primary Data:

Primary data is collected based on the survey, structured questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire and telephonic interview conducted to the Public Relation Officer for collecting

information from them.

Questionnaires:

Two well-structured set of questionnaires are prepared and distributed to the Health care providers to know about the Medical tourism in Kannur. Around 100 questionnaires are distributed to the patients who visited Kannur in connection with medical needs.

Interview:

The interview was conducted with Operations, HR and PROs of the allopathic hospitals Kannur.

Secondary Data:

Secondary data was obtained through various reference materials like;

- a) Websites
- b) The library books
- c) The organization prospectus
- d) Journals and Travel magazines
- e) Research articles

3.2.3. SAMPLE DESIGN

Descriptive research design was adopted in this study. The study is based on the sample of 100 patients who had visited Kannur for various medical reasons. In addition, an interview was conducted with the hospital management authorities like PRO and managers of 7 famous hospitals of Kannur.

Sample Size:

The sample size of the study was 100 respondents which included the patients who came as medical tourists to Kannur.

Sampling Method: Simple Random Sampling

Statistical tools: The tools used for the study are percentage analysis ,descriptive statistics and Chi square test.

4. Medical Tourism in Kannur

Medical tourism has become an increasingly popular global phenomenon, where individuals travel across borders to seek medical care. Kannur district, located in Kerala, India, is emerging as a promising destination for medical tourism, attracting patients due to its affordable healthcare services, skilled medical professionals, and a range of treatment options.

Due to Kannur's abundance of multispecialty hospitals that offer a wide range of medical services, medical tourism is a thriving industry there. Kannur, like the rest of Kerala, has a strong tradition of Ayurveda. This ancient system of medicine attracts many seeking holistic and natural treatments. This includes rejuvenation therapies, Panchakarma treatments, and specialized Ayurvedic care. Some people travel all the way to Kannur in order to receive the good medical care facilities at a reasonable cost because the cost of medical care and health facilities there is significantly lower than in some other districts of Kerala. Numerous tourists who come to this city also benefit from the medical amenities available.

Kannur district possesses a large number of hospitals, and it is only because of this reason that medical and health care facilities in Kannur are very good and up to the mark. Kannur district has several multi-specialty hospitals including Aster MIMS Hospital, KIMS Sreechand Hospital, Fathima Hospital, Koyili Hospital, Amala multi-speciality hospital and so on. providing intensive care facilities, maternity rooms, operation theaters, small private rooms and even general rooms in dormitory fashion.

Additionally, the hospitals provide a rudimentary laboratory, diagnostic services, and a pharmacy open twenty-four hours a day. Gynecology and Obstetrics, Pediatrics, General Surgery, Diabetology, Nephrology, and General Medicine are the specialties that the majority of hospitals offer. Facilities like Aster MIMS Kannur provide advanced medical care, attracting both domestic and international patients. (aster hospital, n.d.) Kannur offers a wide array of medical procedures sought by tourists, including:

- ❖ Cardiac Procedures: Bypass surgeries, angioplasty, and other interventions performed by experienced cardiologists.
- ❖ Orthopedic Surgeries: Joint replacements, arthroscopy, and treatment for sports injuries.
- ❖ Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery: Procedures such as rhinoplasty, liposuction, and breast augmentation at competitive prices.
- ❖ Fertility Treatments: IVF, IUI, and other assisted reproductive technologies are offered by skilled specialists.

One of the main draws of medical tourism in Kannur is its affordability. Treatment costs in Kannur are often significantly lower—60-80% less—than in Western countries. Many hospitals in Kannur maintain high standards of medical care, with qualified doctors and modern

facilities. The Kerala government is actively promoting medical tourism, which benefits regions like Kannur.

4.1. SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE KANNUR MEDICAL TOURISM

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Quality service at affordable cost ❖ Availability of qualified healthcare providers and specialists. ❖ Strong presence in advanced healthcare e.g. cardiovascular, organ transplants - high success rate in operations ❖ Improvement in hospitals and medical facilities catering to various specialties. ❖ Diversity of tourism attractions and experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of government support / initiative to promote medical tourism ❖ Low coordination between the various players in the industry - airline operators, hotels and hospitals ❖ Effect of long distance travelling on health after surgeries ❖ Less visibility in global medical tourism markets compared to major cities. ❖ Potential communication issues for non-native speakers.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Initiatives to promote healthcare tourism can provide funding and incentives. ❖ Pursuing international accreditations for healthcare facilities to enhance credibility and attract more international patients. ❖ Expanding telehealth options for pre-and post-treatment consultations to attract international patients. ❖ Partnering with travel companies to create tailored medical tourism packages that include accommodation, transport and leisure activities. ❖ Leveraging online platforms to reach international patients effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strong competition from neighboring cities with established medical tourism. ❖ Lack of international accreditation, a major inhibitor ❖ Overseas medical care not covered by insurance providers ❖ Under investment in health-care infrastructure ❖ Shifts in patient preferences towards wellness and holistic treatments could divert attention from traditional medical tourism.

4.2. Branding strategies for Kannur as a medical tourist destination

To establish Kannur as a leading medical tourism destination, a comprehensive branding strategy is crucial. This strategy should emphasize the region's unique combination of cutting-edge healthcare facilities and its breathtaking natural surroundings, promoting a holistic approach that integrates wellness tourism with medical services. Targeted digital marketing campaigns utilizing SEO, social media, and online advertising can effectively reach potential international patients, highlighting patient testimonials and success stories to build credibility. Collaborating with local hospitals and healthcare providers to develop attractive treatment packages that include consultations, surgeries, and follow-up care will streamline the experience for medical tourists.

Additionally, securing accreditations from recognized healthcare organizations can enhance trust and legitimacy in the eyes of prospective patients. Integrating cultural experiences—such as local cuisine and tourism attractions—into medical packages will encourage visitors to explore Kannur while they receive treatment, making the journey more enriching. Engaging healthcare influencers and patient ambassadors to share their experiences can further amplify awareness and appeal. Establishing dedicated patient support services to assist with travel logistics, language translation, and post-treatment care will enhance the overall experience for medical tourists. Forming partnerships with travel agencies that specialize in medical tourism will facilitate seamless travel arrangements, making it easier for international patients to choose Kannur. Lastly, fostering community involvement in tourism initiatives ensures that the benefits of medical tourism are distributed locally, creating a sustainable model that supports both healthcare and cultural integrity. Through these multifaceted strategies, Kannur can effectively position itself as a premier destination for medical tourism, attracting patients seeking quality healthcare in a beautiful setting.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As per the analysis sample size of 100 visitors were taken who had visited Kannur for medical reasons. Also as a part of research various hospital management authorities like PRO, managers etc were interviewed to get an in-depth understanding on the various facilities that is offered by the health care sectors to the patients and also to estimate the flow of patients to the hospitals of Kannur. This interview is also held to understand the requirements of hospitals to promote

medical tourism in Kannur. Inductive Content Analysis is carried out to analyse the various interview scripts. Each interview was immediately transcribed. The meeting texts were then studied to acquire a general understanding. After that, each summary unit was abstracted and assigned a code. Qualitative content analysis is most often used to analyze interview transcripts in order to tell or model people's information related behaviors and thoughts

Age and Hospital Characteristics

Understanding age-wise differences in patient perceptions is essential for effectively branding Kannur as a premier destination for medical tourism. Age significantly influences patients' expectations and satisfaction levels regarding hospital services. Table 1 analyzes the association between age groups and hospital characteristics such as staff friendliness, cleanliness, affordability, skilled doctors, admission formalities, and facility quality. The findings provide valuable insights to customize medical tourism services for various age segments.

Table 1: Cross Tabulation and Chi-square of Age and Hospital Characteristics

Statements	Responses	Age in years					Total	Chi-Square Value	df	p-value
		< 25	26 - 35	35 - 45	46 - 60	> 60				
Friendly Staff	Strongly disagree	0	0	9	4	0	13	63.527	16	0.000
	Disagree	5	4	8	0	4	21			
	Neutral	2	9	4	0	10	25			
	Agree	0	8	0	0	0	8			
	Strongly agree	4	5	8	8	8	33			
Total		11	26	29	12	22	100			
Clean Patient wards	Strongly disagree	0	0	16	0	4	20	75.368	16	0.000
	Disagree	1	5	4	4	6	20			
	Neutral	7	4	0	4	0	15			
	Agree	3	17	5	4	8	37			
	Strongly agree	0	0	4	0	4	8			
Total		11	26	29	12	22	100			
Affordable Medical treatment	Strongly disagree	1	8	4	0	4	17	28.445	16	0.000
	Disagree	0	5	8	0	6	19			
	Neutral	4	8	9	4	4	29			
	Agree	3	1	4	4	8	20			
	Strongly agree	3	4	4	4	0	15			
Total		11	26	29	12	22	100			
Skilled doctors	Strongly disagree	4	4	8	4	4	24	37.434	16	0.002
	Disagree	2	5	0	0	6	13			
	Neutral	4	9	4	0	0	17			
	Agree	0	0	5	4	4	13			
	Strongly agree	1	8	12	4	8	33			
Total		11	26	29	12	22	100			
Easy Admit formalities	Strongly disagree	1	4	4	0	0	9	80.239	16	0.000
	Disagree	0	0	21	8	0	29			
	Neutral	5	12	0	4	12	33			
	Agree	2	9	0	0	6	17			
	Strongly agree	3	1	4	0	4	12			
Total		11	26	29	12	22	100			
Well-equipped facilities	Strongly disagree	3	5	5	4	8	25	43.517	16	0.000
	Disagree	1	8	0	4	0	13			
	Neutral	1	1	4	0	8	14			
	Agree	6	8	16	4	2	36			
	Strongly agree	0	4	4	0	4	12			
Total		11	26	29	12	22	100			

Source: Field study

Friendly Staff

The majority of respondents who strongly agreed that the staff were friendly were distributed across all age groups, with notable agreement among the oldest group (>60 years, 8.0%). However, younger respondents (<25 years) were less likely to disagree or remain neutral. The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 63.527$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a highly significant association between age and perceptions of staff friendliness. These results suggest that staff interactions are perceived differently across age groups, highlighting the importance of age-sensitive training for hospital staff.

Clean Patient Wards

Respondents aged 35–45 years were the most critical of patient ward cleanliness, with 16.0% strongly disagreeing. Conversely, younger respondents (26–35 years) predominantly agreed (17.0%). The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 75.368$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$) shows a significant association between age and perceptions of cleanliness. This suggests that addressing cleanliness concerns should focus more on middle-aged patients to enhance overall satisfaction.

Affordable Medical Treatment

Neutral responses dominated across all age groups, with the highest percentage (36.0%) among respondents aged 35–45 years. However, younger respondents (26–35 years) showed a relatively higher rate of strong disagreement (8.0%) compared to older groups. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 28.445$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$) reveals a significant relationship between age and affordability perceptions. This underscores the need to communicate transparent pricing, especially for younger patients who may be more cost-sensitive.

Skilled Doctors

A notable portion of respondents aged 35–45 years strongly agreed (12.0%) that doctors were skilled, while disagreement was most prevalent among younger respondents (<25 years, 36.0%). The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 37.434$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.002$) demonstrates a significant association between age and perceptions of doctor expertise. This indicates that younger patients may require additional reassurance regarding medical expertise, which could be addressed through testimonials or credentials.

Easy Admission Formalities

Neutral responses were highest across all age groups, with 46.0% in the 26–35 years category. Interestingly, disagreement peaked among respondents aged 35–45 years (21.0%). The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 80.239$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a significant association between age and perceptions of admission formalities. These results suggest that simplifying and communicating admission procedures could improve satisfaction across all age groups, particularly among middle-aged patients.

Well-Equipped Facilities

Agreement on the adequacy of facilities was highest among respondents aged 35–45 years (16.0%). However, strong disagreement was also most prominent among the oldest age group (>60 years, 8.0%). The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 43.517$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a significant relationship between age and perceptions of facilities. Tailored investments in infrastructure improvements may address the needs of older patients, who may have higher expectations of facility quality.

The chi-square tests reveal significant age-based differences in perceptions across all hospital characteristics analyzed, including staff friendliness ($p = 0.000$), cleanliness ($p = 0.000$), affordability ($p = 0.000$), doctor expertise ($p = 0.002$), admission formalities ($p = 0.000$), and facilities ($p = 0.000$). These findings underscore the importance of customizing medical tourism services to address the specific needs and preferences of different age groups.

Table 2: Responses on Strengths of the Hospitals

The responses of the hospital management authorities are analysed through content analysis method.

Hospitals	Personalized Care (PC)	Goodwill (GW)	Renowned Doctors (RD)	Hospitality (H)	Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS)	Better Public Relations (PR)	Health and Hygiene Factors (HHF)
Aster MIMS	5	7	5	5	6	4	5
BMH	6	6	6	4	7	3	6
KIM Sreechand	4	3	4	4	4	2	5

Amala Multi-speciality	5	2	4	3	3	2	4
Thalassery Co-operative Hospital	3	2	5	5	6	3	4
Koyili	4	3	3	5	5	4	5
AKG Memorial	3	2	5	4	4	2	3
Total	30	25	32	30	35	20	32

Source: Author's computation based on primary source

Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS) is the most frequently mentioned strength across all hospitals, with a total count of 35. This suggests that the hospitals perceive their staff's competence as a significant asset. Renowned Doctors (RD) and Health and Hygiene Factors (HHF) are also highlighted as major strengths, each with a total count of 32. This indicates that the hospitals value their doctors' reputation and maintaining high standards of cleanliness and safety.

Personalized Care (PC) and Hospitality (H) are also significant strengths, each with a total count of 30. Goodwill (GW) is moderately emphasized, with a total count of 25. Better Public Relations (PR) is the least emphasized strength, with a total count of only 20. This suggests that the hospitals may not prioritize or perceive their public relations as a key strength.

Hospital-Specific Observations:

- Aster MIMS: This hospital scores relatively high across all categories, indicating a well-rounded perception of its strengths. It particularly emphasizes Goodwill (GW) and Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS).
- BMH: Similar to Aster MIMS, BMH also scores high across most categories, with a strong emphasis on Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS) and Renowned Doctors (RD).
- KIM Sreechand: This hospital shows a more balanced distribution of strengths, with moderate scores in most categories.
- Amala Multi-speciality: This hospital has lower scores in Goodwill (GW), Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS), and Better Public Relations (PR) compared to other hospitals.
- Thalassery Co-operative Hospital: This hospital highlights Renowned Doctors (RD) and Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS) as its major strengths.

- Koyili: This hospital emphasizes Hospitality (H) and Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS) as its strongest assets.
- AKG Memorial: This hospital has lower scores in most categories, particularly in Goodwill (GW), Better Public Relations (PR), and Health and Hygiene Factors (HHF).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- Staffing: The emphasis on Talented and Skilled Staff (TSS) across most hospitals suggests that hospitals recognize the importance of their staff's competence in delivering quality care.
- Reputation and Hygiene: The high scores for Renowned Doctors (RD) and Health and Hygiene Factors (HHF) indicate that hospitals are aware of the importance of their reputation and maintaining high standards of cleanliness and safety.
- Public Relations: The relatively low scores for Better Public Relations (PR) suggest that hospitals may need to focus more on improving their communication and community engagement.
- Hospital-Specific Strengths: Each hospital has its own unique profile of strengths, which may reflect its specific focus, resources, and patient population.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH: It would be beneficial to conduct further research to explore the specific aspects of each strength and how they contribute to patient satisfaction and outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION

Medical Tourism includes people who travel to different place to receive treatment for a disease, an ailment, a condition, or to undergo a cosmetic procedure and who are seeking lower cost, higher quality, different or better access to care than what they could receive at home.

Medical Tourism in Kannur has shown tremendous growth and achieved excellence in providing quality services and performance to the beneficiaries. Globalization has boosted the flow of many foreign tourist from other countries due to the excellent standards and services by Kannur Healthcare centres. It was found Aster MIMS and BMH hospital have seen the maximum number of patients from foreign countries, including those from the European countries like Italy, Ukraine Slovakia etc. Currently there are patients from Gulf regions and African countries as well.

The study indicated that hospitals at Kannur have highly qualified doctors who provide state of art treatments to the patients. Hospitals must increase the number of beds in different types of accommodation. Hospitals charges vary in fee structure for foreign and domestic patients. Skilled doctors, affordable medical treatment and friendly staffs increases the strength of medical institutions of Kannur. Inadequate infrastructure and ineffective marketing and promotion of the region's medical tourism offerings are limitations.

Kannur needs good planning and organization such as supportive government in providing medical visa program and foster collaboration between government, private hospitals, and tourism stakeholders. Overall, DTPC in association with private hospitals should create packages that combine medical treatments with wellness and tourism experiences.

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