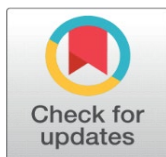


AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM MARKETING: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM CENTERS IN KERALA

Arunkumar V A ¹✉, Dr. G. Jerin Rose ²

¹ Ph.D. Research Scholar, (Register No: 1922301011016), Annai Velankanni College, Tholayavattom, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India.

² Assistant Professor (Research Guide) Department of Commerce, Annai Velankanni College, Tholayavattom, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India



Corresponding Author

Arunkumar V A,
kumararunva@gmail.com

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3342](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3342)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the eminent ancient systems of medication that has endured and flourished for centuries to date. It has given a well-deserved boost due to a significant change in the approach of individuals towards supporting the use of natural drugs. Kerala is the heavenly kingdom of Ayurveda as it is sacred, has perfect weather, and has plenty of natural herbs. The study covers the perception of the management of Ayurvedic health tourism centers towards the marketing environment. Besides, the study focuses on customer satisfaction, the factors influencing customer satisfaction, and the factors that motivate tourists to select Ayurvedic health tourism from Kerala. Thus, the study concentrates on two aspects: Ayurvedic health tourism centers and foreign and domestic tourist patients.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Ayurvedic Services, Ayurvedic Health Tourism Centres, Marketing Environment, Customer Satisfaction, Motivating Factors, Foreign and Domestic Tourists

1. INTRODUCTION

Kerala has the potential to become a leading Ayurvedic health tourism destination. To realize this potential, there is a need to market Ayurvedic services in Kerala to both foreign and domestic tourists by providing high-quality services. This study focuses on the marketing of Ayurvedic healthcare services to promote Ayurvedic health tourism. A key aspect of this is the effective implementation of marketing mix strategies. Understanding the marketing environment, customer satisfaction, and the factors that motivate tourists are all crucial elements of marketing Ayurvedic services. The researcher's aim is to explore the various Ayurvedic services provided and the marketing aspects of Ayurvedic healthcare tourism.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rastog, Pandey, and Singh 2020¹ described Ayurveda as having ample capabilities for preventing and curing COVID-19. People can be categorized into four categories: undetected indications, detected indicators (quarantined), slight COVID-19 symptoms and modest to acute signs of COVID-19. For all these stages, some suggestions are recommended in Ayurveda.

Varghese and Zacharias 2020² tried to identify the preferences made by tourists when selecting several online marketing devices and the strategies used by health tourism centers to attract tourists. Online communication is a vital strategy for attracting patients from abroad, and clients also rely upon the information received from online transactions. Trip Advisor, Google Review, Trivago, and own agencies are the generally utilized online devices.

Saravanakumar and Muthukumar 2019³ studied the elements that attract tourists to Kodaikanal. Beautiful and approachable nature, fruitful flora and fauna, a favorable climate in all seasons, and other services are the factors of attraction to Kodaikanal. The paybacks from tourism events immensely influence people and specialists.

Adhikary, Shawon, and Ali 2018⁴ evaluated patients' satisfaction with various healthcare amenities offered and decided on the aspects that encourage the satisfaction of healthcare beneficiaries in Bangladesh. The majority of the respondents were not happy with the amenities offered by healthcare centers. It is suggested that physical facilities, confidentiality, and the expertise of the benefactors be improved.

Meng, Li and Zhang (2018) measured patient satisfaction in healthcare organizations in Wuhan, China, in 2018. They concluded that the patient's satisfaction level is satisfactory both as a whole and dimension-wise. The five dimensions under study are doctor-patient relationship and communication, service sector establishments and accommodations, continuous and cooperative medical care, easy access to significant data and support and healthiness, and other interrelated amenities.

Stumpf, Vojtko and Valtrova 2018⁶ studied the satisfaction of tourists visiting European Union countries to spend their holidays. They concluded that different countries in the European Union provide different services to tourists, and so there are variances in the satisfaction level of the visitors. The strengths and weaknesses of particular countries have been taken as a benchmark for the satisfaction of the guests in selecting their destination.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Kerala is one of the prominent tourist destinations in the world; it has beaches, backwaters, hills, mountains, wildlife sanctuaries, places of heritage, lake resorts, and medical tourism to create a center of attraction. Various foreign and domestic tourists prefer Kerala as their medical tourism destination because of the various Ayurvedic medical tourism facilities offered by different Ayurvedic medical tourism centers in Kerala. The present study is a prominent one because it reveals the role of the marketing environment, factors on the satisfaction of the tourist patients, and the motivating factors that influence the tourists to select Ayurveda. The study intends to raise awareness and encourage Ayurvedic health tourism centers, academicians, government, and other stakeholders to perform more efficiently and effectively, which will be a great encouragement for tourists to visit Kerala for Ayurvedic healing. The government/ the policymakers, by using the current findings, should be able to improve their existing policies, rules, and regulations to encourage Ayurvedic health tourism.

3.1. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is prominent because it reveals the role of the marketing environment and other factors in the satisfaction of tourist patients and the motivating factors that influence tourists to select Ayurveda.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even though there is a chance of misuse of Ayurvedic services in various Ayurvedic centers, sacrificing ethics and moral consciousness leads to the exploitation of the people who use these services. Similarly, the advent of modern medicine has overshadowed the significance of Ayurvedic services to a great extent. It is important in this context to

throw light on the effect of the commercialization of Ayurvedic services, setting aside all the ethical standards. Similarly, the overwhelming presence of modern medicines standing in the way of Ayurveda shall also be brought to analysis. The attempt is to help restore the originality of Ayurvedic services and make it more competitive to stand up to challenges caused by other systems. Thus, these services may be better used to promote the overall wellness of the people as a whole. The quality of services provided by the Ayurvedic health tourism centers measures the satisfaction derived by tourists who visit the Ayurvedic health tourism centers. While going through the literature, the researcher goes through the following research questions while studying the marketing aspects of services in Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala.

4.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore, the present research efforts to examine the following major issues:

What is the marketing environment of Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala?

What is customer satisfaction in Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala?

What are the motivating factors that influence tourist patients to consume services of the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala?

4.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- This study aims to examine the perceptions of Ayurvedic health tourism centers regarding the marketing environment of Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala.
- To analyze the customer satisfaction with the Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala.
- To identify the factors motivating the consumption of Ayurvedic health tourism services from Kerala.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used for the study is descriptive. The study also applied a scientific approach and techniques for data collection and building data structures that describe the prevailing features of the defined target population.

5.1 SOURCES OF DATA

Both Primary and secondary data were collected for the study. The secondary data were gathered from several secondary sources, including theses, journals, magazines, government registers, websites, etc. Primary data essential for the study was collected from 272 Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala and 544 tourist patients, 272 foreigners, and the rest nationals.

5.2. POPULATION

As per the statistical information published by different agencies like the Ayurvedic Hospital Management Association, there are 924 Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala. Different Ayurvedic treatments are available in these centers. Foreign and domestic tourists visiting these centers are getting treatments at rates different from those of these centers. These treatment centers are spread over 14 revenue districts in Kerala. The Ayurvedic health tourism centers in different districts are Thiruvananthapuram 100, Kollam 50, Pathanamthitta 41, Alappuzha 66, Kottayam 89, Idukki 28, Ernakulam 100, Thrissur 100, Malappuram 75, Kozhikode 92, Palakkadu 80, Wayanad 24, Kannur 59, and Kasargodu 20.

5.3. SAMPLE DESIGN

Stratified random sampling was applied to collect the data from the managers of Ayurvedic health tourism centers. Out of the total 924 centers spread all over Kerala, three regions were formed: southern, central, and northern, which is

the base for stratification. The southern region covers a total number of 257 from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, and Alappuzha. The central region covers a total number of 317 from Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Kottayam. The northern region covers 350 numbers from Kasargod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Palakkadu, and Malappuram. The ratio formed from these three regions is nearly 5:6:7. A structured interview schedule and a structured questionnaire are about to be developed to collect the data from the respondents. The sample size, according to the size of the population, is 5:6:7 and covers 75 centers from the southern region, 91 from the central region, and 106 from the northern region by using random sampling. From each center, we will select the tourists by using convenience sampling. A total number of 544 tourists are enlisted as respondents for the in-depth study, i.e., 150 tourists from the southern region, 182 from the central region and 212 from the northern region.

5.4. SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size for the Ayurvedic health tourism centers, as well as the tourist patients, was determined by using Cochran's (1977) formula for quantitative data. Where n is the required sample size, s is the standard deviation of the key variables, E is the acceptable margin of error for the estimate of the mean, and t is the value from the table of probabilities of the t distribution for the desired confidence level ($t = 1.96$ in our study for 95% confidence interval). The expression under the square root is the finite population correction factor, where N is the known population size. The sample size for the Ayurvedic health tourism centers was obtained based on the marketing environment index variable.

5.5. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A structured interview schedule was used to collect data from the management of Ayurvedic health tourism centers, and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the foreign and domestic tourist patients visiting these Ayurvedic health tourism centers.

5.6. TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

The data collected from the management of Ayurvedic health care centers and the tourists were analyzed with the help of IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square Test, Mann Whitney U Test, ANOVA, Independent Sample t -test, Conventional Ranking approach and Friedman Test

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1. PERCEPTION OF THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM CENTERS ON THE MARKETING ENVIRONMENT OF THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM SERVICES IN KERALA

The perception of the management of the Ayurvedic hospitals and resorts on different dimensions of the marketing environment of the Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala was measured using a five-point scale. The options were labeled as "Highly Negative," "Negative," "Neither Negative nor Positive," "Positive," and "Highly Positive," and these responses were coded as 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. The measurement scale consisting of six items was found reliable as per the coefficient alpha ($\alpha = .914$). The managers' responses reported in Table shows that more than 95 percent of the respondents perceived that the marketing environment of the Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala was positive. In comparison, only a small proportion, less than four percent, perceived that the marketing environment was negative. It is interesting to note that more than half of the managers of the Ayurvedic tourism centers in the sample felt that the marketing environment of the Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala was highly positive. A dimension-wise examination of the perceived marketing environment shown in the table shows that more than 94 percent of the respondents perceived that the marketing environment concerning all six dimensions of Ayurvedic health tourism services was positive. In comparison, only between three to six percent of them perceived that different dimensions of the marketing environment were negative.

Table 1 Perception of the Management of Ayurvedic Health Tourism Centers on the Marketing Environment of the Ayurvedic Health Tourism Services in Kerala

Sl. No.	Dimensions of Marketing Environment		Responses					Total
			Highly Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Highly Positive	
1	Demographic	Count	9	1	1	133	128	272
		%	3.3	0.4	0.4	48.9	47.1	100
2	Economic	Count	8	1	1	121	141	272
		%	2.9	0.4	0.4	44.5	51.8	100
3	Natural	Count	8	2	4	100	158	272
		%	2.9	0.7	1.5	36.8	58.1	100
4	Political	Count	3	6	5	132	126	272
		%	1.1	2.2	1.8	48.5	46.3	100
5	Technological	Count	4	6	1	138	123	272
		%	1.5	2.2	0.4	50.7	45.2	100
6	Socio-Cultural	Count	8	8	0	71	185	272
		%	2.9	2.9	0	26.1	68.0	100
	Overall Marketing Environment	Count	40	24	12	695	861	1632
		%	2.5	1.5	0.7	42.6	52.8	100

Source Primary Data

7. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH CENTRES IN KERALA

7.1. THE PATTERN OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH CENTRES IN KERALA

This section depicts the patterns of customer satisfaction with Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala in terms of five aspects

7.1.1. SIZE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX

Table 2 The Pattern of Size-wise Distribution & Descriptive Statistics of the Customer Satisfaction Index of the Ayurvedic Health Centres in Kerala

Distribution Pattern of the Customer Satisfaction Index					Descriptive Statistics	
Sl. No.	Customer Satisfaction Index (%)	No. of Respondents	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage	Statistic	Value (%)
1	< 80	70	12.9	12.9	Mean	87.38
2	80 - 85	130	23.9	36.8	S.D.	6.23
3	85 - 90	137	25.2	61.9	Minimum	60.61
4	90 - 95	157	28.9	90.8	Maximum	100.00
5	95 -100	50	9.2	100.0	Median	87.12
	Total	544	100.0		N	544

Source Primary Data

The customer satisfaction index of the respondents ranged between 61 percent and 100 percent. The degree of customer satisfaction exceeded 80 percent for more than 87 percent of the respondents, and it was more than 90 percent for around 38 percent of the customers. It shows that a very large proportion of tourist patients experienced a very high level of customer satisfaction with Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala.

7.1.2. THE ASSOCIATION OF THE SIZE-WISE DISTRIBUTION WITH THE TYPE OF TOURIST PATIENTS,

Table 3 The Pattern of Size-wise Distribution of the Customer Satisfaction Index across the Domestic and Foreign Patients of the Ayurvedic Health Tourism Centres in Kerala

					Total	Chi-square Test Results
			Domestic	Foreign		
Customer Satisfaction Index (%)	Less than 80	Count	36	34	70	$\chi^2 = 3.774$
		%	13.2%	12.5%	12.9%	
	80 - 85	Count	65	65	130	$d.f. = 4$ $p = .438$
		%	23.9%	23.9%	23.9%	
	85 - 90	Count	67	70	137	
		%	24.6%	25.7%	25.2%	
	90 - 95	Count	73	84	157	
		%	26.8%	30.9%	28.9%	
	95 & Above	Count	31	19	50	$Cramer's V = .083$ $p = .438$
		%	11.4%	7.0%	9.2%	
Total		Count	272	272	544	
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source Primary Data

A comparative picture of the size-wise distribution of the customer satisfaction index across the domestic and foreign respondents is given in Table 3. The chi-square test of association revealed that there was no statistically significant association between the size-wise distribution of the customer satisfaction index and the type of tourist patients, $\chi^2 (4, N = 544) = 3.77, p = .438$. This means the pattern of distribution of the customer satisfaction index did not significantly differ across the population of domestic and foreign tourist patients. Therefore, the general pattern that we observed in the distribution of the customer satisfaction index can be generalized to both domestic and foreign tourists as well.

7.1.3. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ACROSS THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURISTS

Table 4 The Summary Statistics of the Level of Customer Satisfaction of the Domestic and Foreign Patients of the Ayurvedic Health Centres in Kerala

Sl. No.	Type of Tourist Patient	Mean (Score)	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean (Index)	N	Independent Samples T-test Statistics
1	Domestic	3.50	0.25	-0.20	-0.51	87.6%	272	$t = 0.798$ $df = 542$ $p = .425$
2	Foreign	3.49	0.25	-0.25	0.44	87.2%	272	
	Total	3.50	0.25	-0.22	-0.05	87.4%	544	

Source Primary Data

Table 4 shows the customer satisfaction scores and percentages of foreign and domestic respondents. The independent sample t-test results indicate that the mean score of the customer satisfaction of foreign patients was not significantly different from that of the domestic tourist patients in the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala, $t(542) = 0.79$, $p = .425$. This means that the foreign and domestic customers were almost equally satisfied with the services of the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala.

7.1.4. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ACROSS MALE AND FEMALE TOURISTS

Table 5 The Summary Statistics of the Customer Satisfaction Index of The Male and Female Patients of the Ayurvedic Health Tourism Centres in Kerala

Sl. No.	Gender	Mean (Score)	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean (Index)	N	Independent Samples T-test Statistics
1	Male	3.49	0.25	-0.16	-0.29	87.31	276	$t = -0.259$ $df = 542$ $p = .796$
2	Female	3.50	0.25	-0.29	0.23	87.45	268	
	Total	3.50	0.25	-0.22	-0.05	87.38	544	

Source Primary Data

The gender-wise pattern of customer satisfaction shown in Table 5 indicates that both male and female respondents were almost equally but highly satisfied with the services offered by the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in the sample. This was confirmed by the independent sample t-test results, which show that the mean score of the customer

satisfaction of male patients was not significantly different from that of the female tourist patients in the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala, $t(542) = -0.26$, $p = .796$

7.1.5. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF DOMESTIC PATIENTS ACROSS THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION IN INDIA

Table 6 Summary Statistics of the Relative Intensity of the Customer Satisfaction of Domestic Patients from Different Indian Regions

Sl. No	Region	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Customer Satisfaction Index (%)	N	One-Way ANOVA Statistics	
1	South India	3.48	0.23	-0.18	-0.08	86.92	114	<i>F</i>	12.189
2	North India	3.58	0.24	-0.36	-0.60	89.54	111	<i>df</i>	(2, 269)
3	Central Indian	3.38	0.28	0.26	-0.56	84.62	47	<i>p</i>	< .001
	Total	3.50	0.25	-0.20	-0.51	87.59	272	<i>N</i>	272

Source Primary Data

Domestic tourist patients from almost all Indian states except Kerala were included in the sample. A comparison of the customer satisfaction of the domestic patients from three different regions of India is shown in Table 6. A one-way between-group analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to determine the relative intensity of the customer satisfaction of the domestic patients from the three different Indian regions. The results showed (See Table 6) that there was a statistically significant difference in the intensity of the customer satisfaction of the domestic patients from the three different Indian regions, $F(2, 269) = 12.19$, $p < .001$. The follow-up pairwise comparisons based on Tukey HSD revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the intensity of customer satisfaction in all three pairs compared. The patients from northern India perceived the highest level of customer satisfaction, followed by the customers from southern India, and the patients from central India experienced a relatively lower level of customer satisfaction, even though their absolute level of customer satisfaction was high.

8. THE FACTORS ATTRACTING TOURIST PATIENTS TO THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM CENTRES IN KERALA

Motivating factors in Ayurvedic health tourism are the causes that influence tourists to select Ayurveda for their treatments and other rejuvenation purposes. In Ayurvedic health tourism, several factors fascinate patients from international locations and from different sites of India to Kerala. This section attempts to analyze the key factors that motivated tourists to undergo Ayurvedic health tourism services from Kerala. To understand the tourist patients' perception of the important factors that motivated them to undergo the Ayurvedic health tourism services from Kerala, the respondents were asked to rank 17 important motivational factors by assigning 1 to the most important one and 17 to the least important one.

8.1. RANKING OF THE FACTORS ATTRACTED TOURIST PATIENTS TO THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM CENTRES IN KERALA–THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH

The rank-sum, mean rank and median rank for each of the factors and the ranking of the factors based on these summary measures are presented in Table 7. The high quality of Ayurvedic health care in the centers, the expertise of the doctors and other medical staff, and the availability of whole-body medical treatment were the most important factors that motivated the tourists to undergo Ayurvedic treatment in Kerala.

Table 7 Ranking of the Factors that Attracted Tourist Patients to the Ayurvedic Health Tourism Centers in Kerala

Sl · N o.	Motivational Factors	Ran k Su m	Mean Rank	Media n Rank	Rank
1	High Quality of Health Care	893	1.64	1.00	I
2	Expert Services (Doctors & Others)	1257	2.31	2.00	II
3	Availability of Whole-Body Medical Treatment	2137	3.93	4.00	III
4	International Standards	2589	4.76	4.00	IV
5	Use of Natural Products as Medicines	3098	5.69	5.00	V
6	Holistic Approach to Treatment	3520	6.47	6.00	VI
7	Health Gracious Behavioural System	3731	6.86	6.00	VII
8	Eco-friendly Nature of Ayurveda	4185	7.69	7.00	VIII
9	Holistic Approach to Health	4850	8.92	9.00	IX
10	Good Weather	5634	10.36	10.00	X
11	Educated People	6290	11.56	11.00	XI
12	Vivacious Culture	7238	13.31	13.00	XII
13	God's Own Country Tag of Kerala	7334	13.48	14.00	XIII
14	Amazing Contradictories	7363	13.53	14.00	XIV
15	Cost-Competitive Advantage	7417	13.63	15.00	XV
16	Diverse Geography	7777	14.30	14.00	XVI
17	The offering of Good Holidays	7919	14.56	16.00	XVII

Source Primary Data

8.1.1. THE FACTORS ATTRACTED DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURIST PATIENTS TO THE AYURVEDIC HEALTH TOURISM CENTERS IN KERALA

This section compares the factors that attracted domestic and foreign tourist patients to the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala. The summary statistics presented in Table 8 show that the ranking of the factors that attracted domestic and foreign tourist patients to the Ayurvedic health tourism centers was not much different. Therefore, they were almost similar to the aggregate analysis results that we presented earlier. Mann-Whitney U test results presented in the table indicate that there was a significant difference between the domestic and foreign tourist patients in the intensity of eight out of the 17 factors. The intensity of attractiveness of the foreign tourist patients was significantly

higher than that of the domestic tourist patients towards the international standard of the centers, God's country tag of the Kerala state, and diverse geographical features of Kerala compared to the domestic tourists. In comparison, the intensity of attractiveness of the domestic tourist patients was significantly higher than that of the foreign tourist patients towards the use of natural products such as medicines, health, gracious behavioral systems, good weather, educated people, and cost-competitive advantage.

Table 8 Ranking of the Factors that Attracted Domestic and Foreign Tourist Patients to the Ayurvedic Health Tourism Centres in Kerala

Sl. No.	Motivating Factor	Type of Tourist Patient						Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics	
		Domestic		Foreign		Total		Mann-Whitney U	p
		Mean Rank	Median Rank	Mean Rank	Median Rank	Mean Rank	Median Rank		
1	High Quality of Health Care	1.66	1.0	1.62	1.0	1.64	1.0	36201.00	.622
2	Expert Services (Doctors & Others)	2.23	2.0	2.39	2.0	2.31	2.0	34288.50	.123
3	Availability of Whole-Body Medical Treatment	3.96	4.0	3.90	4.0	3.93	4.0	36595.00	.823
4	International Standard	5.10	4.0	4.42	3.0	4.76	4.0	33299.50	.038
5	Use of Natural Products as Medicines	5.53	5.0	5.86	5.0	5.69	5.0	31883.50	.004
6	Holistic Approach to Treatment	6.71	6.0	6.23	6.0	6.47	6.0	34862.50	.239
7	Health Gracious Behavioural System	6.72	6.0	6.99	7.0	6.86	6.0	33211.00	.033
8	Eco-friendly Nature of Ayurveda	7.58	7.0	7.80	7.5	7.69	7.0	33678.00	.060
9	Holistic Approach to Health	8.98	9.0	8.85	9.0	8.92	9.0	36061.50	.604
10	Good Weather	10.12	10.0	10.60	11.0	10.36	10.0	32580.00	.014
11	Educated People	11.16	11.0	11.97	11.0	11.56	11.0	31416.50	.002
12	Vivacious Culture	13.26	13.0	13.35	13.0	13.31	13.0	36594.00	.826
13	God's Own Country Tag of Kerala	13.79	14.0	13.17	14.0	13.48	14.0	31958.00	.006
14	Amazing Contradictories	13.61	14.0	13.46	13.0	13.53	14.0	34942.50	.257
15	Cost-Competitive Advantage	13.29	14.0	13.97	15.0	13.63	15.0	32898.00	.024
16	Diverse Geography	14.59	15.0	14.00	14.0	14.30	14.0	29794.50	<.001
17	Offering of Good Holidays	14.71	16.0	14.40	16.0	14.56	16.0	36192.00	.652
Friedman Test Statistics		$\chi^2=3363.75, df=16$ N = 272, $p<.001$		$\chi^2=3356.41, df=16$ N = 272, $p<.001$		$\chi^2=6703.33, df=16$ N = 544, $p<.001$			

Source Primary Data**9. FINDINGS**

The major findings that emerged from the study are:

- A very high level of customer satisfaction exists among a very large proportion of the tourist patients of the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala. The dimension-wise analysis of customer satisfaction reveals a high level of customer satisfaction.
- There was no statistically significant association between the size-wise distribution of the customer satisfaction index and the type of tourist patients.
- The foreign and domestic customers were almost equally highly satisfied with the services of the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala.
- The gender-wise pattern of customer satisfaction indicates that both male and female respondents were almost equally but highly satisfied with the services offered by the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in the sample.
- The patients from northern India perceived the highest level of customer satisfaction, followed by the customers from southern India, and the patients from central India experienced a relatively lower level of customer satisfaction, even though their absolute level of customer satisfaction was high.
- The high quality of Ayurvedic services, expert doctors and other medical staff, and the availability of whole-body medical treatment were the most important factors that influenced the tourists to experience Ayurvedic treatment in Kerala.
- The intensity of attractiveness of the domestic tourist patients was significantly higher than that of the foreign tourist patients towards the use of natural products such as medicines, health, gracious behavioral systems, good weather, educated people, and cost-competitive advantage.

10. CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic health tourism plays a crucial role in the economic development of a country by attracting tourists. In this context, the marketing of Ayurvedic services has brought a new definition to attract foreign and domestic tourist patients. The study was carried out to clear the research gap, which was recognized through a detailed review of the extended literature. Through a detailed review of the literature, the researcher identified the relevant variables. Ayurvedic hospitals and resorts engaged in Ayurvedic health tourism services experience a very positive marketing environment for their Ayurvedic health tourism services throughout Kerala. The study also reveals that customer satisfaction persists with Ayurvedic health tourism services in Kerala. The high-quality health care, expert services, availability of whole-body medical treatment, the international standard, use of natural products as medicines, holistic approach to treatment, health gracious behavioral system, and eco-friendly nature of Ayurveda are the most important factors that motivate the tourist patients to consume services of the Ayurvedic health tourism centers in Kerala.

11. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above findings and the conclusion of the study, the following are the suggestions presented for improving the current situation.

- Proper environmental scanning is necessary frequently to understand the changes in the marketing environment that are beyond the workforce's control. New innovative technologies for treating treatments, like machines for Shiordhara, must be understood and adopted. Ayurvedic healthcare workers must embrace emergent healthcare technologies to stay relevant in the upcoming periods.
- To avert the troubles caused by floods, the government may initiate necessary strategic involvements, such as improving flood warning systems and flood resilience, tackling climate change, constructing buildings above flood level, etc.

- To ensure the satisfaction of the tourist patients among the tourists, the Ayurvedic health tourism centers may enhance the involvement of the employees to impress the customers with their safety. They may interact politely and in a friendly manner with the tourist patients. The centers should make sure to provide full support to the employees so that they perform their duties with courtesy.
- Willingness to help and prompt services to tourist patients are two important factors that will increase the quality of services and satisfaction of tourist patients. The management of Ayurvedic health tourism centers has to ensure that they follow the commitments at the proper time.
- The Ayurvedic health tourism centers may retain well-maintained equipment and tangible facilities as they play a crucial role in attracting tourist patients to Ayurvedic health tourism centers.
- The management of Ayurvedic health tourism centers may plan and arrange people, infrastructure, and other material components to change existing centers and create new services.
- Concentrate on different stages in product development to bring a product to the market, such as creating the idea, screening, emerging the concept, etc.
- Realize that product usage influences the satisfaction of tourist patients positively and negatively. Encourage the tourists to use the treatment methods that are relevant to them.

12. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Human resources is one of the most crucial factors in Ayurvedic health services.
- There is scope to study the satisfaction level and motivating factors that induce people to continue in the specific institution.
- It is desirable to study the satisfaction of Ayurvedic health tourism centers.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Adhikary, G., Shawon, S. R., Ali, M. W., Shamsuzzaman, M., Ahmed, S., Shackelford, K. A., et al. (2018). Factors influencing patients' satisfaction at different levels of health facilities in Bangladesh: Results from patient exit interviews. *Plos One*, 1-13.
- Meng, R., Li, J., Zhang, Y., Yu, Y., Luo, Y., Liu, X., et al. (2018). Evaluation of Patient and Medical Staff Satisfaction regarding Healthcare Services in Wuhan Public Hospitals. *International Journal of Environment Research and Public Health*, 1-17
- Rastog, S., Pandey, D. N., & Singh, R. H. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic: A pragmatic plan for Ayurveda intervention. *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine*, 1-4.
- Saravanakumar, S., & Muthukumar, K. (2019). Factors Influencing the Tourists to Visit Kodaikanal. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6(1), 92-95.
- Sharma, A., Prasai, N., Ajmera, P., Yadav, S., & Madan, S. (2020). Challenges Faced By Medical Tourists In India And Its Growth Prospects (A Descriptive Study). *International Journal of Science and Technology Research*, 9(2), 5-11.
- Silva, O., Medeiros, T., Moniz, A. I., Tomás, L., Furtado, S., & Ferreira, J. (2019). Tourists' Characteristics, Travel Motivation and Satisfaction. *Advances in Tourism, Technology and Smart Systems*, 427-436.
- Singh, J. P. (2015). Healthcare Tourism in India: Opportunities and Challenges. *TRANS Asian Research Journals*, 4(3), 37-47.

- Sohail, M. S. (2003). Service quality in hospitals: More favorable than you might think. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 13(3), 197-206.
- Soundari, B. P. (2016). PEST Analysis of the Health Care Sector in Coimbatore District. *Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 3(5), 271-274.
- Sreenivas, T., Srinivasarao, B., & Rao, U. S. (2013). An Analysis on Marketing Mix in Hospitals. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 2(4), 187-207.
- Stumpf, P., Vojtko, V., & Valtrová, B. (2018). Satisfaction of European Tourists – Benchmarking of EU Countries. *Global Business & Finance Review*, 23(1), 1-14.
- Tharakan, Y. G. (2015). Health and Wellness Tourism: A Study on Magnificent Manipal. Chennai: DR. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, University.
- Thawesaengskulthai, N., Wongrukmit, P., & Dahlgaard, J. J. (2015). Hospital service quality measurement models: patients from Asia, Europe, Australia and America. *Total Quality Management*, 26(10), 1029–1041.
- Tresna, P. W., & Padjadjaran, U. (2017). External and Internal Environment Analysis (A Study in Tasikmalaya City Embroidery Industry). *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 6(1), 401-411.
- Varghese, A. A., & Zacharias, S. (2020). Influence of Digital Marketing on Ayurvedic Tourism in Kerala. *Our Heritage*, 68(30), 424-440.
- Vuuren, C. V., & Slabbert, E. (2011). Travel Motivations and Behaviour of Tourists to South African Resorts. (pp. 295-303). Algarve: Book of Proceedings.
- Yarimoglu, E. K. (2014). A Review on Dimensions of Service Quality Models. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 2(2), 79-93.
- Yeoh, E., Othman, K., & Ahmad, H. (2013). Understanding medical tourists: Word-of-mouth and viral marketing as potent marketing tools. *Tourism Management*, 196-201.