

***THIRD PARTY IN DECISION
MAKING : ROLE OF WEB
BASED MEDICAL
FACILITATORS IN MEDICAL
TOURISM***

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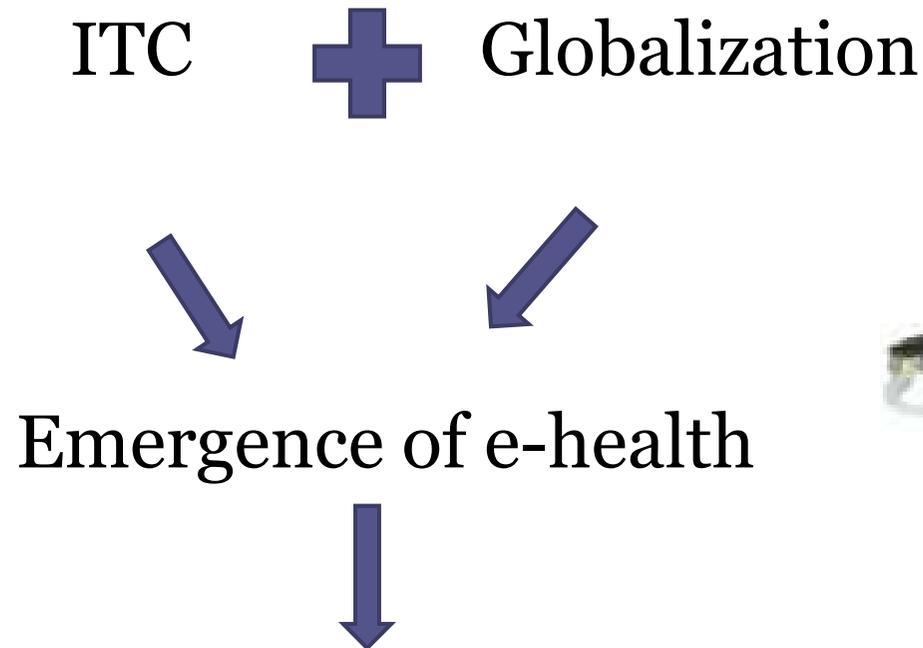
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Presentation Scheme

1. Introduction
2. Characteristics
3. Materials & Methodology
4. Results
5. Ethical Concerns
6. Conclusion



Background



Cross border availability of medical facilities

Typology of the websites

- Web portals
- Media sites
- Consumer driven sites
- Social networking sites



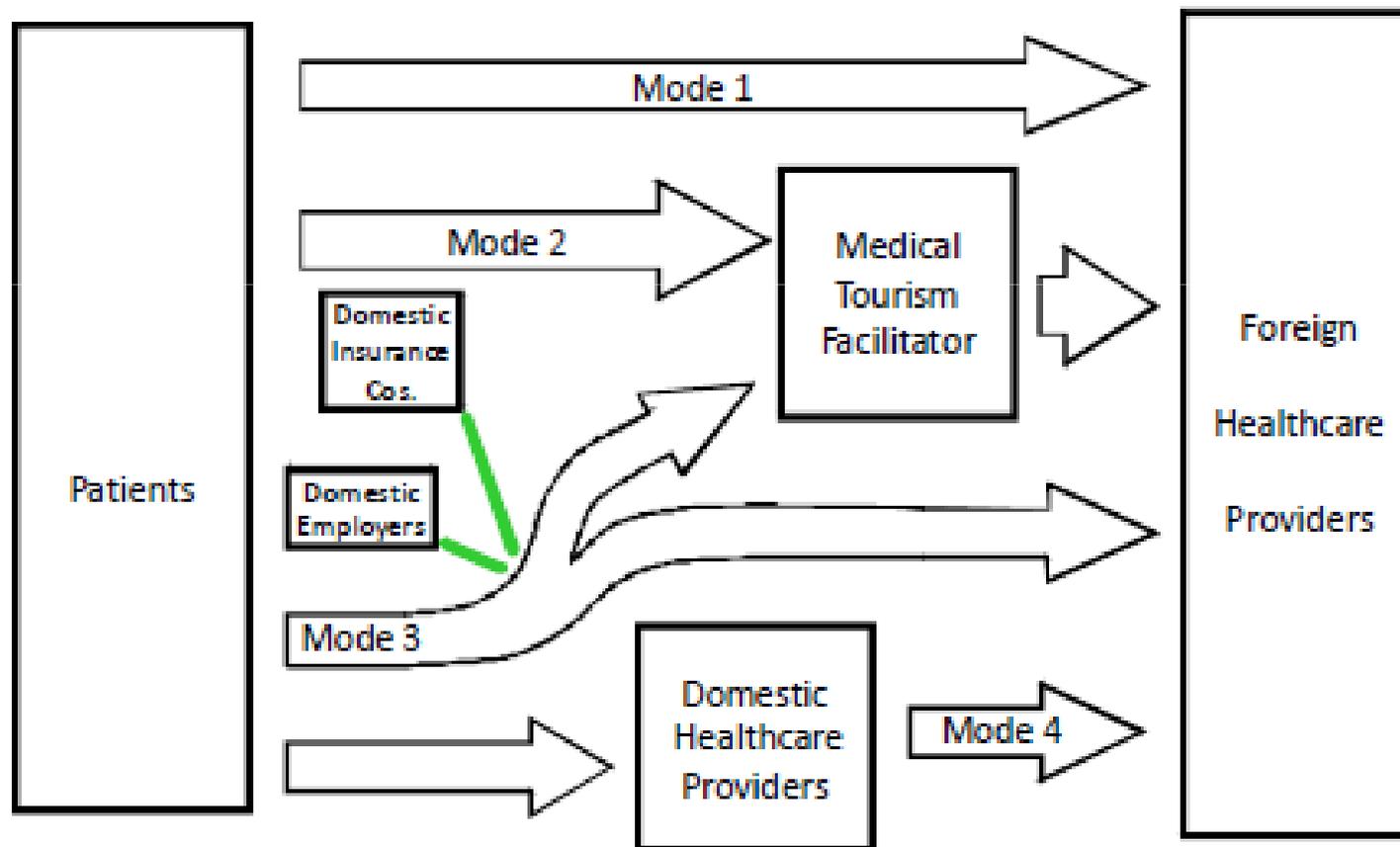
Introduction

“Using internet is an inherently interactive process that involves users in a continual process of decision making”. (Hardey 1999)

- Presence of these web resources raises important questions about their role and functioning
- How a surfer becomes a consumer of healthcare abroad?



Modes of Medical Tourism



Source: Lydia Gan & James Fredrick 2008

Who is the Medical Tourism Facilitator?

One of the fastest growing sectors in the medical tourism industry is the tourism facilitators or “agents”.

A medical tourism facilitator is an organization that provides seamless combination of all the arrangements required for the medical tourism needs .



About Facilitators

- Form a three-dimensional support to the traveller which is central to the business.
- Dual role- attracting consumers,
providing medical services
- They play an important function of bridging the gap between industry players and the consumer.
- Key players in growth of the MT industry

Materials & Methodology

- Facilitator dictionaries and medical tourism websites
 - Medical Tourism Association
 - World medical resources.com
- Review of 208 web portals
 - Over 40 countries
 - Most of them established after 2006, the oldest is established in 2003

Characteristics

- Medical tourism facilitators choose to differentiate their services in several ways, including the scope of countries and hospitals which they use , or the services they offer.
- All the facilitators are linked to their networked countries which are further linked to the hospitals.
 - Apollo hospital is networked with 55 facilitators across world

Categorization: Scope

- Domestic
 - Government facilitators
 - Medical tourism in Tamilnadu
 - Medtravel Costarica
- International facilitators
 - One facilitator having network in different countries
 - Medical retreat, or surgical trip of USA

Categorization: Scope.....

MTF I

- Networked with single country
- Eg. America's med solution

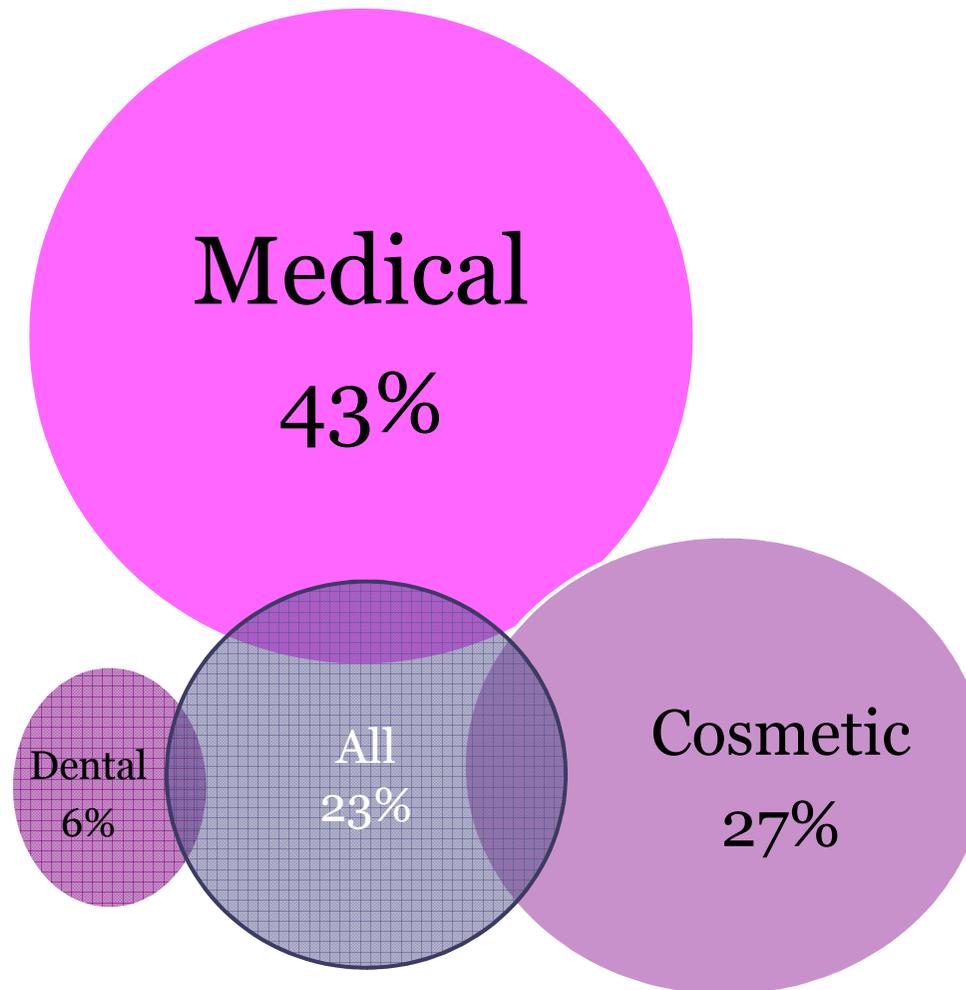
MTF II

- Networked with multiple countries
- Eg. Medical solutions company UK

MTF III

- Branches in different countries
- Eg. Indian portals Sahara and Taj has separate portals for UK and USA.

Categorization: Service Provided



Top five countries with the number of MTFs

Sr. No	Country	No. of facilitators	Network with India
1	USA	41	33 (80%)
2	UK	36	12 (33%)
3	India	18	18 (100%)
4	Canada	12	7 (58%)
5	Poland	10	2 (20%)

Country differences

USA

- Most of the facilitators are international, and they are linked with multiple countries for different kinds of services.

UK

- There is a mix of facilitators both domestic as well as international, in domestic it is mostly cosmetic and dental surgery.

India

- Most of the facilitators are domestic, as India is itself a destination country

Country -Differences

- Domestic facilitator from Afghanistan who helps patients to go out to a destination country.
- Where as the facilitators like India, Thailand etc. themselves act as the destination country.
- Most common destination countries
 - India which has links to 81 facilitators
 - Other common destinations, Thailand, Turkey



Why patients choose a facilitator?

- Acts as one stop enabler for medical tourism patients
- They have access to information that the individual medical tourist couldn't possibly know about.
- Offer lot of choice
- Different strategies to attract consumers



Choosing a facilitator....

- It is evident that people view the Internet as an important source for information on medicines.
- Complete translation of the doctor patient relationship
- Though the facilitators are not directly providing the services they have a role to play in the decision making process.

Ethical Concerns

- Easy entry into the market
- Non health professionals
- Contributors may post information without any quality control
- There are some MTFs like Perfect Profiles who are pioneers of the industry

Continued.....

Ethical Concerns....

- The reliability is questionable
- Confidentiality , security of the consumers
- Selective information is presented
 - After care issue
- Rare mention of the legal issues.
 - Medscapes india

Continued...

Ethical concerns

- No web site has info about patients rights
- No regulation by any private /government organization
- AMA has recently developed some guidelines but not sure about their implementation

Questions...

- Question needs to be asked about the boundaries and responsibilities of the facilitators
- Integrity is of high importance when advising medical tourist where to go
- On what basis they are basing their recommendations?

Conclusion

- These organizations will need to adopt or establish ethical standards to guide their members in ethical conduct, in the areas of research, development, commerce, and practice on the Internet
- Unfortunately, most of the Medical Tourism Facilitators mushrooming now leave more questions than answers and more problems than solutions.

- Thank you!

