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Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Medical Tourism: A Qualitative Exploration of Hyderabad's Healthcare Ventures

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Abstract:

This qualitative research paper focuses on the entrepreneurial ecosystem that is moving medical tourism in Hyderabad, India, and how healthcare ventures, healthcare policies, and market forces interplay dynamically to shape the city into a global healthcare destination. This study uses semi-structured interviews with healthcare entrepreneurs, hospital administrators, and policy makers, document analysis, and observations to determine success factors, issues, and opportunities in the medical tourism environment in Hyderabad. The results indicate that the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Hyderabad enjoys a combination of the following factors, i.e., world-class medical infrastructure, cost-competitive advantage, availability of medical professionals, and active government action, i.e., Telangana Rising 2047 policy. The paper pinpoints some of the major patterns of entrepreneurship, such as technology-based health startups, specialized tertiary care businesses, and medical facilitation businesses, which all play a significant role in making the ecosystem vibrant. Nevertheless, there are still difficulties in the areas of standardization, international marketing, and harmonization of regulations. This study is useful in the medical tourism literature, as it offers context-dependent data on entrepreneurial processes in medical tourism destinations and reflects implications for all policymakers, medical entrepreneurs, and stakeholders who could develop sustainable medical tourism systems.

Keywords: medical tourism, entrepreneurial ecosystem, healthcare entrepreneurship, Hyderabad, Telangana, health startups, qualitative research.

1. Introduction

Medical tourism has become one of the major phenomena in the world, capturing the healthcare delivery paradigm and opening up unparalleled opportunities to entrepreneurial activities. The intersection of the healthcare services with international mobility of patients has given rise to a multifaceted ecosystem where the concepts of clinical excellence, cost competitiveness, and service innovation are coming together to produce value to a variety of stakeholders (Bagga et al., 2020). India has established itself as a key player in this emerging industry with its unique set of features of advanced medical services and cost-efficiency basis, and the market is expected to increase by 16.18 percent per year between USD 8.18 billion in 2024 and USD 27.17 billion in 2032 (Credence Research, 2025).

In the Indian context of medical tourism, Hyderabad has become a unique hub, which is defined by a solid healthcare framework, entrepreneurial spirit, and favorable business climate. The way the city has transformed into a modern healthcare and technological hub out of the old-time City of Pearls illustrates the changing potential of the strategic development of ecosystems (Startup Genome, 2024). The ambitious vision of the government of Telangana, which was expressed with the help of such initiatives as the Telangana Rising 2047 document and the project on a 1,000-acre medical tourism hub in the area of



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Shamshabad airport, predetermines a strategic interest in making Hyderabad a global healthcare center (Deccan Chronicle, 2025).

The concept of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is based on biological metaphors, is useful in explaining the complex networks between different actors, institutions, and resources that facilitate and support entrepreneurial activity in a geographic location (Rahman, 2019). In the medical tourism industry, such an ecosystem comprises hospitals and clinical centers, healthcare start-ups, medical facilitation firms, supporting infrastructure, policy frameworks, and human capital development institutions. The interaction and evolution of these factors is a key to coming up with a sustainable approach towards maximizing the creation of value and providing quality and ethical standards in healthcare provision.

The paper fills an important gap in the medical tourism literature by offering a qualitative analysis of the entrepreneurial dynamics in the healthcare ecosystem of Hyderabad. Although past studies have explored medical tourism in terms of demand-side factors such as patient motivations and decision making, little has been done to understand the medical tourism supply-side entrepreneurial ecosystem that facilitates the creation and maintenance of competitive advantages by medical tourism destinations (Malhotra and Dave, 2022). This study aims to reveal the subtle experiences, approaches, and challenges of the healthcare entrepreneurs who work in the medical tourism ecosystem in Hyderabad by taking a qualitative approach.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main aim of the research is to understand entrepreneurial ecology in medical tourism in the healthcare sector in Hyderabad. In particular, this study will seek to: (a) define and describe the most important actors, institutions, and resources that make up the medical tourism entrepreneurial ecosystem of Hyderabad; (b) examine the conditions that facilitate and limit entrepreneurial activity in the healthcare sector; (c) analyze how healthcare ventures utilize these conditions to create and capture value in the medical tourism market; and (d) learn how policy frameworks and institutional support shape the entrepreneurial outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Medical Tourism: Conceptual Foundations.

Medical tourism, also known as health tourism or medical travel or medical value travel, is the act of traveling beyond the national boundary to obtain healthcare services (Mishra and Sharma, 2021). Globalization, advances in medical technology, the cost difference between healthcare systems, and growing awareness of patients about the treatment options that can be offered in other countries have contributed to the rise in the phenomenon. According to the Medical Tourism Association, the number of patients who visit other countries to seek medical care each year is around seven million, and the market capabilities in the whole world are estimated to be above USD 50 billion (KPMG & Google, 2018).

India has become one of the leading medical tourism destinations, gathering patients from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the countries of the SAARC, as well as from developed economies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young, 2019). The competitive advantages of the country are cheap treatment costs, which amount to about 20-30 percent of similar treatment in Western nations, English-speaking medics, state-of-the-art technology, and globally approved medical institutions. The efforts by the Indian government to encourage medical tourism, such as the introduction of an e-medical visa to citizens of 167 countries and the Ayush visa category, which targets wellness tourism, have only contributed to the arrival of medical tourists (ICRA, 2024).

2.2 Healthcare Entrepreneurial Eco Systems

The conceptual framework of the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a system understands entrepreneurship as a part of a complex web of interacting actors, institutions, and processes that hold new ventures of creation and development both in a system and limit them (Startup Genome, 2024). This ecosystem in the healthcare scenario includes clinical service providers, technological innovators, research institutions, regulatory agencies, financing sources, and support organizations that interrelate to produce a favorable environment for healthcare entrepreneurship. Medipreneurship or healthcare entrepreneurship is a unique



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type of entrepreneurial practice, a blend of clinical expertise and business skills that solves the problem in the healthcare system by developing new businesses (Nilam et al., 2014).

Studies of healthcare entrepreneurship have found that access to capital, availability of skilled human resources, friendly regulatory frameworks, market demand, and technological infrastructure are some of the critical success factors (Jashwant, 2023). Other factors that gain relevance in the medical tourism context would be international accreditation, destination marketing capability, patient facilitation services, and cultural competency in serving the different international patient populations. The combination of these aspects determines the competition of medical tourism destinations and the chances of healthcare entrepreneurs.

2.3 Healthcare Landscape of Hyderabad

The city of Hyderabad, which is the capital of the state of Telangana, has become one of the most active healthcare and technological centers in India. The city can be described by the fact that it has large hospital chains such as Apollo Hospitals, KIMS Hospitals, Yashoda Hospitals, Continental Hospitals, and AIG Hospitals that provide tertiary and quaternary care and address various areas of expertise (Travel and Tour World, 2025). Hyderabad and the southern part of India have about 35 per cent of the medical tourism market, which makes it a huge portion of the healthcare market in the country (Credence Research, 2025). The technological foundation of the city has also seen impressive growth, with such programs as T-Hub, the largest startup incubator in India with a total area of 585,000 square feet, being able to support any emerging venture in various industries such as healthcare (YourStory, 2022). Availability of top educational institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), and Indian School of Business prepares a strong pool of skills and research work. Incubators that specifically focus on biotechnology, healthcare, and technology startups include the Atal Incubation Centre at CCMB and the CIE at IIIT Hyderabad (Failory, 2024).

 Table 1- Major Healthcare Institutions in Hyderabad's Medical Tourism Ecosystem

Institution	Bed Capacity	Key Specialties	Accreditation
Apollo Hospitals	750+	Cardiac, Oncology,	NABH, JCI
		Transplants	
KIMS Hospitals	4000+	Orthopedics,	NABH, ISO
		Neurology, Cardiology	
AIG Hospitals	500+	Gastroenterology,	NABH, NABL
		Hepatology	
Yashoda Hospitals	1800+	Multi-specialty,	NABH
		Emergency Care	
Continental Hospitals	750+	Bariatric Surgery,	JCI, NABH
		Oncology	

Note. Compiled from hospital websites and accreditation databases (2024-2025).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this study is a qualitative research design, where the epistemological approach is interpretivist, which acknowledges the socially constructed nature of the phenomena of entrepreneurship (Merriam, 2002). A qualitative approach is especially appropriate in the case of investigating the dynamic and context-specific nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems in which the processes, meanings, and relations are central. This research aims to employ a set of data collection methods to achieve the triangulation of findings and to increase the credibility of the results, which is an essential part of the research on medical tourism (Malhotra and Dave, 2022).

3.2 Data Collection



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Semi-structured interviews with 28 participants who are the representatives of different stakeholder groups in the medical tourism ecosystem in Hyderabad were used to gather primary data. The sample was made of healthcare entrepreneurs and medical tourism start-up founders (n=10), hospital administrators and international patient service managers (n=8), medical tourism facilitators, government officials, and policy stakeholders (n=5). The use of purposive sampling was to make sure that the ecosystem was represented by various types, sizes, and specialties of organizations.

Interviews were semi-structured with the interview protocol that was designed following the scholarly literature on the topic of entrepreneurial ecosystem and finalized after pilot testing. Themes addressed were one of the entrepreneurial motivations and entry modes, acquisition and mobilization strategy of resources, competition and position in the markets, policy environment and institutional environment, issues, and growth opportunities. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, and were recorded on audio tape with the consent of participants to be transcribed and analyzed later.

The secondary data collection was done through various sources like government policy reports, industry reports by organizations like FICCI, CII, and ICRA, hospital publications and websites, news media reports, and academic literature. The analysis of the documents gave the contextual meaning and allowed the triangulation with the data of the interviews (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Also, the observational data that was gathered was obtained by going to hospitals, incubators, and health start-ups in Hyderabad.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out in the form of constant comparison that is in line with the qualitative research traditions (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Both deductive codes based on the entrepreneurial ecosystem framework and inductive codes based on the transcripts were used to code interview transcripts. The analysis was applied in an iterative process consisting of swapping of data collection and analysis stages in order to refine the themes emerging and to provide theoretical saturation. NVivo software was used to process the qualitative data of a large size and provide systematic coding and theme development. Member checking, peer debriefing, and keeping comprehensive audit trails of analytical decisions were used to improve the credibility and trustworthiness.

Table 2- Study Participant Demographics and Characteristics

Stakeholder Category	N	Male		Avg. Experience (Years)
TT 1/1	10	7	2	` '
Healthcare	10	/	3	12.4
Entrepreneurs				
Hospital Administrators	8	5	3	18.6
Medical Facilitators	5	3	2	8.2
Policy Stakeholders	5	4	1	15.8
Total	28	19	9	13.8

Note. N = number of participants.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Structure of Hyderabad's Medical Tourism Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

The review of the interview information demonstrated the presence of a multi-layered entrepreneurial ecosystem involving various actors and institutional structures. The clinical service providers, big chains of hospitals, and small boutique healthcare institutions are at the heart of this ecosystem. Large hospital groups such as Apollo Hospitals, KIMS Hospitals, and AIG Hospitals have formed exclusive international patient services units that act as entrepreneurial departments within bigger organizational set-ups. These units create tailor-made service offerings, form global marketing alliances, and establish patient-centered experiences varying with different cultural backgrounds.



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Health-tech startup is one of the fast-growing segments of the ecosystem. Among the new ways of doing things that come up due to the innovation in Hyderabad startups can be ventures like eKincare, which offers AI-driven corporate health benefits and digital health records, and StanPlus, which offers 24/7 medical transportation and emergency services (GUVI, 2025). The existence of incubators and accelerators, especially T-Hub, which has already aided more than 2,000 startups since the creation of the organization, possesses essential infrastructure to foster healthcare entrepreneurship (YourStory, 2022). One of the participants, in the form of an entrepreneur, stated: T-Hub provided us with access to healthcare/business mentors. It is a combination that is hard to find and priceless.

The other significant ecosystem component is the medical tourism facilitators who connect the international patients with the healthcare providers. These businesses offer services in end-to-end, such as treatment coordination, visa planning, travel, accommodation, and treatment follow-up. Firms such as Vaidam Health and GetWellGo have created advanced digital applications, which allow remote consultation, cost-saving, and smooth management of patient journeys (GetWellGo, 2025). The facilitator has shifted in the ecosystem to value-added service delivery as the ecosystem has become more sophisticated.

Table 3- India's Medical Tourism Market Growth Indicators (2020-2035)

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Year	Market	Value (USD Medical	Tourist YoY Growth (%)
	Billion)	Arrivals (La	akhs)
2020	5.2	1.82	-68.0
2022	9.0	4.5	+28.0
2023	12.0	6.1	+33.0
2024	8.18	6.4	+16.2
2025 (E)	18.2	7.3	+14.1
2032 (P)	27.17	12.0	CAGR 16.18
2035 (P)	58.2	18.0	CAGR 12.3

Note. E = Estimated; P = Projected. Data compiled from Credence Research (2025), ICRA (2024), and Future Market Insights (2025).

4.2 Enabling Factors for Healthcare Entrepreneurship

The analysis revealed several enabling factors that are important to the success of entrepreneurs in the medical tourism ecosystem of Hyderabad. To begin with, the presence of highly qualified medical practitioners who are trained in internationally accepted programs is a source of the clinical base, which is the foundation of quality healthcare delivery. Only as one of the hospital administrators remarked: Our doctors have been educated in the best institutions around the world. This assures the international patients that they will be provided with care that is similar to the one they would have had back home, at a fraction of the price.

Second, digital capabilities and technological infrastructure have also become more significant differentiators. The technology hub of Hyderabad, having developed IT corridors, namely, the HITEC City and Gachibowli, offers healthcare enterprises tech talent and digital facilities. Startups in health technology have taken advantage of this opportunity to come up with novel solutions such as telemedicine options, AI-enabled diagnostic devices, and patient journey management software. The combination of healthcare and technology has provided a business opportunity to entrepreneurs with cross-competencies in the clinical and technical fields.

Third, the Telangana government policy has provided a good environment for healthcare entrepreneurship. The innovation policy of the state, incentives offered to startups such as tax exemptions and seed funds, and the specific programs via organizations such as the Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC) have reduced the entry barriers in healthcare startups. This is an indication of long-term governmental investment in the sector, with the recent announcement of the plans to develop a 1,000-acre medical tourism hub by Shamshabad airport and include medical tourism as one of the priority sectors in the Telangana Rising 2047 document (Deccan Chronicle, 2025).



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4.3 Challenges and Constraints

In spite of the enabling environment, the participants have noted a number of factors that limit the growth of an entrepreneur. Standardization of quality is still an issue, and the disparity in service delivery among providers may also have an impact on destination reputation. Where large hospitals ensure international accreditations such as JCI and NABH accreditation, the smaller players might not be at the same level. One participant who acted as a facilitator commented: It is the issue of consistency in terms of quality. A single experience turns out to be bad and will spoil the reputation of not only one hospital but a whole destination.

Another issue is the complexity of regulations, especially when a venture functions between healthcare and technology. The regulatory environment in healthcare, compliance with data protection policies, cross-border service delivery policies, and professional licensing policies make the compliance environment a complicated one. Entrepreneurs said that they had to spend a lot of resources on going through regulatory requirements, which are not value-creating activities. These difficulties are further aggravated by the lack of a single regulatory framework that is specific to medical tourism.

There are other challenges in international marketing and brand building. Although India as a region and Hyderabad as a city as a whole have grown to be known as a healthcare destination, active access to the potential patients in the source markets involves long-term marketing investments and alliances. The threat of competition from existing medical tourism destinations like Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia, and other new entrants like Turkey and Malaysia, encourages the necessity of unique positioning and value proposition communication.

Table 7- SWOI Analysis of Hyderabad SW	Medical Tourism Entrepreneurial Ecosystem	
Strengths	Weaknesses	
9	 Quality inconsistency across providers Complex regulatory environment Limited international brand recognition Infrastructure gaps in transportation Post-treatment follow-up challenges Fragmented facilitator market 	
Opportunities	Threats	
 Telangana Rising 2047 policy initiatives 1,000-acre medical tourism hub development Digital health and telemedicine expansion 	 Competition from Thailand, Singapore, and Turkey Global health crises (pandemic risks) Currency fluctuation impacts Geopolitical instability in source markets Ethical concerns about commodification Talent migration to Western countries 	

Note. Analysis based on interview data and secondary sources.

4.4 Entrepreneurial Strategies and Value Creation

The medical tourism ecosystem of Hyderabad was filled with healthcare business entrepreneurs who use different strategies to create and capture value. One of the main strategies turned out to be specialization, and the venture involved very specific forms of treatments where specialized expertise could be built. The case of AIG Hospitals, dealing with gastroenterology and hepatology and getting most of its patients across 66 countries, is a good example of an effective specialization strategy (New Kerala, 2025). This



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strategy allows the focus of resources, clinical excellence growth, and creation of referral networks in special competencies.

The other strategic theme is technology integration. Health-tech startups are building systems that address the medical tourism process pain points, such as pre-visit consultations, treatment planning, cost transparency, travel arrangements, and post-treatment follow-up. These online technologies improve patient experience and develop operational efficiencies for healthcare providers. The adoption of artificial intelligence in diagnostics, telemedicine in pre and post-treatment consultations, and digital health records in a seamless flow of information is a manifestation of technological sophistication in the ecosystem.

Network and partnership strategies have been useful in ventures that are resource-limited. Partnerships with hospitals, facilitators, hospitality providers, and tourism operators generate combined service packages that can be used to improve patient experience. International cooperation, such as the creation of the liaison office in the source market and cooperation with healthcare providers in the sending countries, increases the market penetration and cultivates confidence with the potential patient. The significance of the international network formation can be seen in the fact that hospitals such as Apollo and Fortis have opened international patient assistance centers in several countries (Invest India, 2024).

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this research help explain the entrepreneurial relations of the development of medical tourism in the emerging market. The ecosystem of Hyderabad has features that are in line with the known entrepreneurial ecosystem models and has its unique characteristics due to its specifics, shaped by the conditions of the healthcare sector and the local environment of the institutions.

The government, as an ecosystem architect, comes out strongly in the analysis. The multidimensional design of the Telangana government, which entails the development of infrastructure, policy incentives, support of innovations, and promotional programs, indicates a reliable ecosystem development policy. The 1,000-acre medical tourism project at Shamshabad is a major undertaking in developing physical infrastructures that can accelerate additional investment and entrepreneurship by the private sector. The given finding is consistent with the literature on the effective medical tourism destinations in which the governmental support is emphasized as a facilitating factor (Rahman, 2019).

The union between the healthcare and technology industries provides unique entrepreneurial possibilities in Hyderabad. The fact that the city is a dual healthcare and technology center allows the cross-fertilization of opportunities and resources. Health-tech startups have the advantage of being close to clinical expertise, as well as technical talent, and they can develop innovative solutions that deal with sector-specific problems. This convergence is a source of competitive advantage potential as compared to destinations that have not developed technology ecosystems.

Medical tourism has ethical aspects, which need to be considered. Equity, access, and the possibility of prioritization of wealthy international clients over local ones are questions brought up by the fact that healthcare is now a market commodity (Medical Tourism Association, 2015). To achieve ecological development successful equilibrium should be created between economic goals and ethical requirements so that the development of medical tourism does not negatively impact medical care to the local population. The formation of proper regulatory solutions and a code of ethics gains significance in this scenario.

Table 5- *Comparative Treatment Costs: India vs. Western Countries (USD)*

Procedure	USA	India	Savings (%)
Cardiac Bypass Surgery	123,000	10,000	92%
Hip Replacement	40,000	7,000	82%
Knee Replacement	35,000	6,200	82%
Liver Transplant	300,000	69,000	77%
Dental Implants (per tooth)	2,800	500	82%



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Procedure	USA	India	Savings (%)
IVF Treatment (per cycle)	12,000	3,000	75%

Note. Costs are approximate and vary by provider and complexity. Data from the Medical Tourism Association and hospital sources (2024-2025).

6. CONCLUSION

The qualitative research has analyzed the entrepreneurial ecosystem that fuels medical tourism in Hyderabad and has shown that it is dynamic and evolving with various actors, facilitating institutions, and new challenges. The results show that the medical tourism ecosystem in Hyderabad enjoys the syncretic combination of such factors as the world-class medical infrastructure, the cost-competence advantages, the human resource skills, technological potentiality, and the supportive government policy. All these are factors that have made the environment friendly to the growth of healthcare entrepreneurship and medical tourism.

The study establishes several entrepreneurial approaches that are used in the ecosystem, such as specialization, integration of technology, and approaches that are based on partnership. The value that healthcare ventures are developing is based on clinical excellence, improvement of patient experience, and development of new models of service delivery. The meeting of the healthcare and technology industries establishes unique conditions to pursue hybrid businesses that use the capabilities of both worlds.

Nonetheless, issues remain in the quality standardization provisions, the complexity of regulation, and global brand establishment. The solutions to these issues must be a concerted effort by the ecosystem stakeholders, such as healthcare providers, government agencies, industry associations, and support organizations. The creation of cohesive regulatory systems, systems of quality control, and destination marketing programs would enhance the competitive advantage of the ecosystem.

This work is relevant to the medical tourism literature as it offers context-specific details on entrepreneurial processes in a new healthcare center. The implications of the findings on policymakers, medical tourism destination developers, entrepreneurs in the healthcare sector pursuing opportunities in the market, and researchers investigating entrepreneurial ecosystems in specialized industry settings can be found in the findings. Future studies may include changes to this study, such as longitudinal studies of ecosystem development, comparative studies among medical tourism destinations, and quantitative evaluation of the results of entrepreneurship.

Since Hyderabad is on a path to becoming a global medical tourism destination, an entrepreneurial ecosystem will be critical in determining the results. The vision of Telangana Rising 2047, when it is suggested to conduct medical tourism as the priority sphere, is the way to develop in the long term. The achievement of such a vision will be achieved through further investment in infrastructure, human capital, and institutional capabilities, accompanied by consideration of ethical concerns and quality imperatives. The entrepreneurial spirit that is evidenced with regard to the healthcare industry in Hyderabad, coupled with the supportive policy conditions, puts the city in a good position to tap into the opportunities in the global medical tourism arena that are emerging.

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