

Study on the growth potential of the medical escort industry based on swot analysis

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Abstract. The medical escort industry has attracted much attention with the deepening of social aging. Its service targets cover the elderly, pregnant women and other special groups, filling the gap in the demand for family escorts. This paper analyses the industry using swot, and the results show that the industry has problems such as unclear price positioning and low barriers to entry for practitioners, which affect service quality and industry reputation. Despite the fragile development of the industry, it has great potential. Through caring services, integration with smart technologies, and the provision of ongoing 'aftercare' services, the industry is expected to expand its service offerings to a wider range of services. However, challenges such as high prices and low barriers to entry still need to be overcome. This suggests that the medical escort industry has both opportunities and challenges for future growth, which need to be overcome in a concerted effort to provide better service quality.

Keywords: Medical escort industry, ageing society, service quality, swot analysis.

1. Introduction

At present, China is in the social background of digitalisation, informationisation, normalisation of loneliness and ageing, this paper analyses the background of escort research from three aspects: audience group structure, social reality and medical escort demand [1-2].

From the viewpoint of audience structure, on 11 May 2021, the results of the seventh national census were announced, the national population is 1443497378 people, the survey shows that China's population is large, and there is a big demand for escorting for the general public; "The results of the fourth sample survey on the living conditions of the elderly in urban and rural areas of China" shows that in 2020, China's elderly people with incapacities reached 42 million, and the empty-nested and solitary elderly people reached 118 million, and the demand for escorting for the elderly is very high[3-4]. The fourth China urban and rural elderly living conditions sample survey results show that in 2020, China's disabled elderly reached 42 million, empty nesting and living alone elderly reached 118 million, the elderly-oriented accompanying services there is a broad market space, accompanied by the diagnosis of a new occupation also came into being, very practical to meet the needs of some patients. Data show that in the past year there are 26,000 people in Taobao search "escort"; according to incomplete statistics[5-6], Taobao, Jingdong and other e-commerce platforms to provide escort services in more than 500 shops, good business shops monthly sales of 1,000 single, the team and Taobao Chengdu escort customer service to get in touch with, learned that the monthly sales of basically 700 +, but most of them are to run errands, queuing for the elderly, but also to provide escort services for the elderly. Most of the errands, queuing for the service, the type of service is relatively single, which reflects the need to "accompany the doctor" a wide range of people, not only the elderly, but also children, pregnant women, young people living alone, foreign patients and other types of groups, of which young people are predominantly media surveys to reach more than 60%. However, the safety and reliability of the various escort platforms on the net is still to be considered. Take mobile phone apps as an example, there are numerous escort platforms, such as Youxiang escort, Xiaoqiang escort, but the ratings are low, the download volume is also small, and the type of service is the same as the single Taobao escort service. This shows that the escort services that appear now cannot match people's needs[7-8].

Moreover, in the newly revised Dictionary of Occupational Classification of the People's Republic of China (2022 Edition), which was announced to the public by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security on 27 October 2022, the occupation of "escort" has not yet been included.

From the point of view of social reality, the fast pace of social development brought about by the sacrifice of family companionship, is urbanisation, aging problems deepen the social conflicts brought about by the aggravation of market development often comes from the needs of the people. Elderly people alone at home unaccompanied, when there is a disease suddenly difficult to cope with, but the children are busy with work is also a distraction, often difficult to reconcile family and work. The wave of information technology brought about by the digital age has further widened the "digital divide" between the elderly and the intelligent society, and many elderly people are at a loss when facing computers, mobile phones and automated machines. A professional medical companion should have certain medical knowledge and at the same time have certain medical resources. In this way, when patients have the need for medical consultation and accompanying services, the companion can get the best possible service. Most of the young urbanites work alone in unfamiliar cities and are not prepared to face illnesses. When the hospital "difficult to see the doctor" and the pressure of work come together, often patients and their families are exhausted. Many hospitals have set up triage counters and volunteers to guide patients to better medical treatment. However, the scarcity of human resources and busy hospitals are often difficult to meet the needs of all patients, and can not be achieved like the "professional consultant" in general, not only to meet the one-on-one responsibility, but also with the basic norms[9].

From the perspective of the demand for medical escorts, many patients need to solve not only the problem of medical treatment, but also intergenerational conflicts and the need for companionship. Hospital counters and volunteers are only able to satisfy patients' questions during medical treatment, but they are not able to understand patients' specific situations and inner feelings. However, the warmest and most unique feature of the "professional consultant" is the fully personalised service. Practitioners are able to address some of the emotional needs and gaps of patients, and they are also better able to provide targeted assistance to different customer groups. For the elderly, the "professional clinician" may act as a family member or a child; for urban youth, the "professional clinician" may become a strange but close friend. Those prompted the need for a more in-depth study of the industry's growth potential and possible future directions. Therefore, this paper applies the swot to explore growth potential of the medical escort industry[10].

2. SWOT Analysis

2.1. Strength

2.1.1 Huge market potential

The target service population of professional accompanying doctor is the elderly, pregnant women, the disabled and other special groups. The professional accompanying doctor can solve their medical problems such as complicated classification of hospital departments, long waiting time for consultation, cumbersome examination items, and no one accompanying them to see the doctor. Accompanying personnel familiar with the hospital environment, understanding of the consultation process, not only can replace the patient registration, queuing, medicine, but also guide the patient to communicate with the medical care, etc., can effectively improve the efficiency of the patient to see the doctor. According to official data, by the end of 2021, China's elderly population aged 60 and above reached 255 million, accounting for about 18% of the total population, with the deepening of China's population aging, the elderly population still claimed to be a growing trend; according to statistics, in 2021, 800 million people in China went to hospitals, and there were more than 8 million foreign patients in Beijing alone. From this point of view, the professional accompanying doctor has a broad market.

2.1.2 High social concern

In recent years, the escort service and escorts have gradually come into the public eye, and gradually become the hot spot of concern for the general public. Data show that in the past year, 26,000 people searched for "escort" on Taobao. According to incomplete statistics (utilize Python crawler network retrieval), Taobao, Jingdong and other e-commerce platforms to provide escort services of more than 500 shops, good business shops monthly sales of thousands of single. Accompanying the larger potential for the development of the industry so that many people smell business opportunities, more people to join the accompanying services industry, to a certain extent, can accelerate the industry's own improvement, to provide higher quality services; for the accompanying diagnostician with professional medical knowledge, more people "share the cake" will also prompt them to constantly update their own ability to enhance their own competitiveness.

2.1.3 The escort industry provides "warm service".

When the escort industry first appeared, many people did not look favourably on it, it is believed that the work of the escort doctor to register and pay the fee on behalf of the scalper, and the Meituan errand service can be completed. But in fact, for those who need help, professional escort is in the heart to help them solve the difficult problem of registration, difficult to see the doctor, and make up for the loneliness arising from the family is not around to accompany. The biggest difference between the professional escort and the scalper and errand service is the temperature of the profession itself. In addition to accompanying and cooperating with the patient to complete the process of seeing the doctor, the patient's most touching should be the professional companion to accompany the sense of satisfaction brought about by the heart. Relying on the unique characteristics of providing "warm service" is one of the important advantages of the escort industry can develop.

2.2. Weaknesses

2.2.1 High price and vague pricing basis

Accompaniment as a high-end service, accompanied by the price of the pricing basis is vague, China's current accompaniment market, each order is priced at the time of pricing, according to the different cities, pricing per hour ranging from 200 yuan to 500 yuan, and the process of seeing a doctor from registration to see the clinic, inspection, pick up the report to the payment of fees need to queue up, the whole set down to basically one day, the price is far more than the acceptance of the average family level.

2.2.2 Low barriers to entry for practitioners and gaps in the industry's regulatory regime

As a new service industry that has emerged in recent years, a large number of non-professionals have entered the profession due to their high income, resulting in a mixed bag of practitioners. There is no special training institutions, accompaniment, appeasement, guidance, help to register (grab the expert number), take the number, take the medicine, take the examination report, record the medical advice, pick up and drop off and so on to become a companion to the clinic teacher's work content, these jobs are not high-end, a lot of hospitals are familiar with the non-professionals will be to act as a role, and as a companion to the clinic teacher, not only to familiarise with the hospital clinic process and the distribution of the location of the various departments, but also has certain Medical professional knowledge, emergency response ability, responsibility, professional ethics, in the patient accident can do timely and effective treatment.

2.2.3 Lack of offline counselling service

Most of the accompanying consultants are booked online, with little publicity and lack of formalised and standardised platform operation, so it may be difficult to find them, while the current demand for the services of accompanying consultants is concentrated in the elderly, pregnant women and other disadvantaged groups, and in the geographically unfamiliar groups of people such as those who seek medical treatment in other places, who are not able to quickly find professional accompanying consultants.

2.2.4 The scope of the audience is small

Accompanying the diagnosis industry is in the budding stage, now accompanying the diagnostician mainly for the elderly, pregnant women, foreign clinic and other groups, most of the elderly can not accept the high price of accompanying the diagnostician, pregnant women are younger and clear about the process of the local clinic, foreign clinic crowd, which is mainly in the concentration of medical resources in a few first-tier cities, but the condition of the degree to the degree of the necessity of foreign clinic, the patient and his family will certainly choose the local medical treatment, the relative audience of accompanying the diagnostician is small. Comparatively speaking, the audience of the accompanying physician is relatively limited.

2.2.5 No detailed standards for job content

The work content of the accompanying doctor includes instead of appointment, instead of queuing, instead of taking results, instead of taking medicine and other related matters, but due to the low entry threshold of the accompanying doctor, the industry norms are missing, and the standard of the scope of service is inconsistent.

2.3. Opportunities

The escort industry caters to the continuously growing market demand and has considerable potential for the future. In addition to accompanying patients in the hospital environment, the industry can add a series of caring services, such as pre-diagnosis reminders, post-diagnosis care, and reminders to take medication. Can also add some continuous "after" services, such as the agent to fulfil the obligations of family members, the agent for medical insurance and health insurance reimbursement business, etc., is also a huge space for the expansion of escort services. At the same time, the accompanying service can also be linked with more medical and elderly services, combined with intelligent technology, and continue to become an accompanying service with a wider audience coverage, a larger scope of business, and a more scientific and effective service, so as to realise a deeper social value.

2.4. Threats

2.4.1 High pricing, unable to achieve real convenience and benefit to the people

With the deepening of national aging and the acceleration of medical information technology, more and more people need new types of medical escort services. The emergence of escort can help people with such needs for more comprehensive and professional escort services. However, the price of the escort service is high, and many people in need of this service cannot afford to pay for it, which leads to the fact that this service cannot be truly convenient and beneficial to the people.

2.4.2 Low threshold of practice, the threat of cheating patients, seeking profits and increasing risks

As a new industry in recent years, the threshold of entry is low, and it is difficult for people to define the difference between a doctor and a "scalper" or "medical trustee". Many non-professionals want to enter the industry to get a piece of the pie, and they are willing to cheat patients in order to gain benefits; moreover, as a doctor, you need to handle the patient calmly and professionally when the patient is in an unexpected situation. At present, the threshold of entry of the accompanying medical practitioners is low, and many of them lack professional medical knowledge, so when an accident occurs, it is difficult to deal with it effectively, which will increase the risk.

2.4.3 Vague work content, easy to "get paid not to do" situation

Accompanying diagnosticians lack of industry norms, industry regulation, work content is vague, but also on time charges, easy to "get money not to do" situation, and even to delay time, cheating patients.

The overall swot analysis of this industry is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of analyses

Development Advantages	development disadvantage
1. Huge market potential 2. High social concern 3. The escort industry provides "warm service".	1. High prices and vague pricing basis 2. Low entry threshold for practitioners and gaps in the industry's regulatory system 3. Lack of offline counselling offices 4. Small scope of audience 5. No detailed standards for work content
1. Caring services 2. "Aftercare services" 3. Link with medical aged care service 4. Integration with smart technology	1. High pricing, unable to achieve real convenience and benefit to the public 2. Low threshold of practice, with the threat of cheating patients, seeking benefits and increasing risks. 3. Ambiguous work content, easy to "get paid not to do" situation
Development Opportunities	development threat

3. Conclusions

The medical escort industry is attracting attention as a rising service sector. This industry responds to the medical needs of groups such as the elderly, pregnant women, and those living alone, filling a gap in their medical care. However, this emerging industry is accompanied by a series of potential problems. Ambiguous price positioning makes the service relatively expensive and does not match the financial situation of some families, limiting the popularity of the service. The quality of practitioners varies, and the lack of professional healthcare knowledge and emergency management skills affects service quality and industry development. In addition, the lack of service standards may lead to inconsistent service quality, affecting the reputation and credibility of the industry. The safety and reliability of current escort services have also become a focus of consumer concern, adding to the challenges facing the industry. However, the industry has a promising future. Professional escorts work with the elderly, pregnant women and other groups, and the services provided by the industry are of great concern to the community. Professional escorts provide cosy escort services to their clients and fill the gap of family companionship. Although the industry faces problems such as unreasonable prices, uneven service quality, and safety, it is expected to open up wider market space through caring services, the development of smart technology integration, the provision of ongoing aftercare services, and links with medical and elderly services. However, the industry still faces challenges, such as high prices, low barriers to entry and ambiguity in service content, which will require concerted efforts from all parties in the industry to address.

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