

Medical tourism

Abbas Ghanbari^{a*}, Khadijeh Zirak Moradlu^b and Morteza Ramazani^c

^aDepartment of Management, Hidaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Hidaj, Iran

^bMeshkinshar Valiasr hospital, Ardabil University of Medical Sciences, Meshginshahr, Ardabil, Iran

^cDepartment of Management and Accounting, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

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ABSTRACT

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Medical tourism is considered as one of the tourism dimensions and it can contribute to the stabilized and dynamic development of a country's economy. Since it is cost-effective industry, most developing countries have focused on this industry and they are planning to develop this industry. Not only does Zanjan province, as the central region in medicine services, enjoy different kinds of variety and acceptable medical specialties but also it has historical, natural, and religious tourism potentials. In this survey, the researcher investigated the existing potentials of Zanjan province based on descriptive - analytical tourism in offering and providing medical services and accommodation. The survey reports that offered services in tourism were not acceptable and satisfactory.

1. Introduction

Tourism industry, as the biggest service industry in the world, has received much attention in the world. The majority of the developed or developing countries have considered tourism industry as their first economic priorities. Therefore, they plan to achieve to the highest rate of international tourism statistically. The importance of tourism is not limited in the creation of career opportunities and income generation. Tourism or tourism industry has had remarkable changes since 1950 that some researchers named them tourism revelation. These kinds of changes have led to massive tourism changes and in the near future, it will turn to qualitative tourism. Currently, tourism is a kind of strong and professional activity in the world. Tourism industry has developed substantially during the last 50 years and it has changed to an international major industry, which is regarded as the biggest economic source (Hallmann et al., 2012). Tourism is a kind of complex social and economic activity, which must be investigated at various levels to achieve the intended and organized development (Risteski et al., 2012). In order to design programs in tourism industry, we should consider various kinds of tourism and their definitions. Since the demands and the required services are not at the same

*Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: ghanbari_a71@yahoo.com (A. Ghanbari)

level for different types of tourists (Kazemi, 2006). Nowadays the countries that aim to increase their national gross income have considered tourism industry as an essential industry with the highest financial circulation, generative job creation, and great profits. Increase in the rate of international trips and getting interested in tourism destinations have branched out this term to some great extent. Thus, there are various kinds of tourism such as religious tourism, sport tourism, war tourism, leisure tourism, medical Tourism, etc. Medicine tourism is considered as one of the most important kinds of tourism. Currently medical tourism has received industries (Connell, 2013). Zanzibar city enjoys tremendous historical and natural tourism attractions it is a major tourism destination among tourists. Therefore, the improvement of medical services in terms of place and technical features plays essential role for economic development. In fact, when a health tourist utilizes the medicinal potentials of the city can be attracted to other types of tourism attractions and vice versa. Tourism can be classified and defined for various reasons but one of the most important groups can be medicinal tourism. Different definitions have proposed for medicinal tourism. In one of the definitions, medicinal tourism or medicinal tourism can be regarded as a kind of travel to other countries to have cure, dentistry, and operation services. This travel, at least, should contain one night accommodation outside one's destination (Sadremomtaz & Agharahimi, 2010). In addition, medical tourism refers to the travels of people to other countries for receiving health services. Medical tourism is one of the most important indices in tourism industry and has high economic and social benefits and also they are called international travels that an individual makes use of them to have cheaper cure services compared with the original country. It should be considered that one of the medical tourism fields is the field that nurses, doctors and other employed individuals in cure field follow voluntary activities in the developing countries (Edelheit, 2008). In spite of having costly medical expenses and problems in travelling to other countries, the patients are more likely to travel to other countries to have medical treatment. Tourism industry should be supported for many reasons. Healthcare can help us gain the required exchange incomes. It can help improvement of regional healthcare systems in the country with the provision of better (Risteskia et al., 2006).

In the middle of 90th, the following reasons were intensified for the development of this industry,

1. The development of medical tourism services companies. Hence, a great number of individuals will travel to other countries to receive Medical care services (Priest, 2007).
2. Expenses: for example, American patients can be cared just with one fourth of all total cost and sometimes with one tenth of domestic costs in foreign countries.
3. Growing trend towards receiving care services: Because of elderly population increase and expenses in developed countries, most of the Japanese companies send their employees to Thailand for having annual checkup. Also in Canada delay in operation is considered a major problem and not having access to family doctors can make treatment more difficult and these kinds of patients can take advantage in travelling to countries such as Thailand and India (Turner, 2007).
4. Some patients are not interested and other individuals get informed about their treatment especially plastic surgery, beauty, and infertility so they travel (Ildoromi & Sefidi, 2011).

The most important surgeries that have received great attention in the world are the following ones. knee and thigh artificial implant, heart surgery, dentistry services, and different types of beauty surgeries. Furthermore, other kinds of care services can be categorized in the mentioned care services. Thus, a health tourist can gain his mental and physical health with travelling to other country. At present time, over 50 countries use medical Tourism as a type of national industry and can earn a lot of income (Gahlinger, 2008). There is not accurate information about the patients who receive health services in medical tourism destinations. The main problem in the determination of these tourists is associated with the definition of tourists. In fact, the reported statistics contain foreign residents in the target country, business passengers, and the tourists who require some health services during their residence. In addition, the number of people who have Ayurveda and other types of health services such as yoga and massage will be added too. unlike these limitations, it is evident that most of

patients have cooperation in medical tourism process (Delgoshae et al., 2012). Fig. 1 shows many different reasons besides care situation system and hospital capacities, which must be considered in order to achieve medical tourism goals.

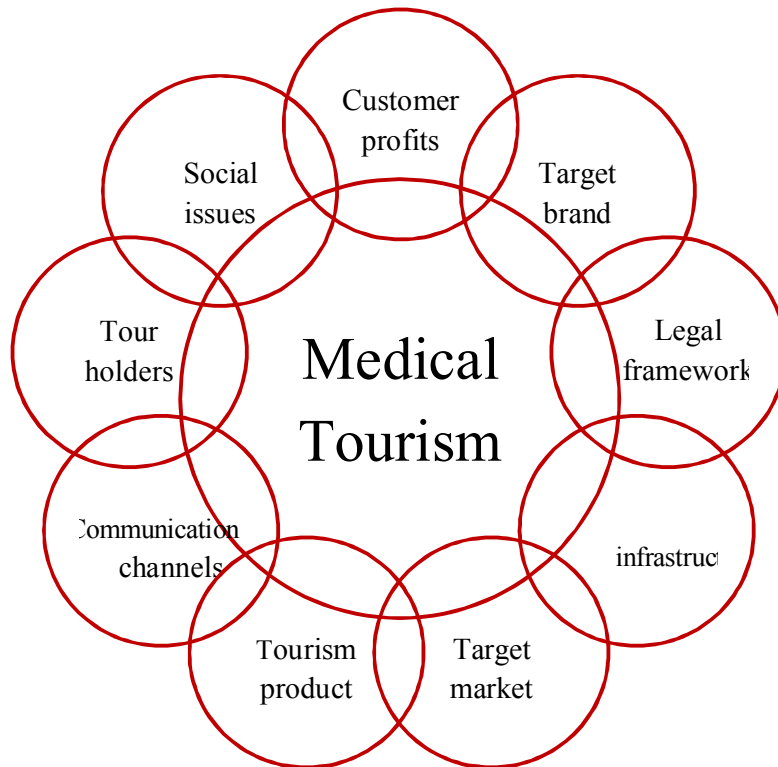


Fig. 1. Medical Tourism system model

To achieve success in medical tourism field except infrastructure plans, medical tourism should be investigated in a structured framework. Destination in tourism can be a country, a region, and a city that focuses on the improvement of its unique attractions to increase its competitive goals between other destinations (Hallmann et al., 2012).

2. The proposed study

2.1. Research Hypotheses

The proposed study of this paper considers the following three hypotheses for the study of this paper.

1. Zanzan city enjoys medical health potentials in the provision of medical services.
2. Zanzan city enjoys accommodation potentials and food services for tourists.
3. Zanzan city enjoys medical health potentials in the provision of tourism services.

The present research is a kind of applied study in terms of goal and follows measurement method in data collection. The participants of the study are physicians and tourism experts of Zanzan province. The experts are the ones who are familiar with the medical Tourism issues. Data collection procedure is based on snow ball method because of our research topic novelty and limitation in participants. 100 questionnaires were distributed between eligible individuals and out of 100 questionnaires 85 questionnaires were used in the research. Library research was used to complete literature review section and for data collection, field studies were conducted with the distribution of questionnaires that contained seven point Likert scale. In this questionnaire, questions 1 to 6 were related to the measurement of facilities and services variables, questions 7 to 12 were related to the measurement of accommodation and food services variables, and questions 13 to 18 were related to the measurement

of urban and tourism services variables. The validity of the questionnaire was based on content validity and confirmation of expert individuals. Cronbach's Alpha index was calculated as 0.86, which proves its reliability. T-test was used for the analysis of research hypotheses.

3. Result, discussion and conclusion

For data analysis T-test was used and the results are observable in Table 1 as follow,

Table 1
The results of T-test analysis for the first hypothesis

Hypothesis	Mean	SD	t	df	P-Value	Result
H1	1.5238	0.30785	-26.265	84	0.000	Accept
H2	1.7417	0.46183	-14.924	84	0.000	Accept
H3	3.4233	0.84361	2.749	84	0.010	Reject

Based on the results of Table 1, the first and the second hypotheses are supported but the third hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that medical services and facilities in health care centers of the city would not enjoy acceptable level based on the tourism experts' viewpoints. The results of our investigations are consistent with findings earlier reported by Yu and Ko (2012), Awodzl and Pando (2006), Carrera and Bridges (1995) and Sadrmomtaz and Agharahimi (2010).

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