The Role of Health Tourism in Development Process (Concepts and Applications)

Mohammad Taleghani, Mahmood Samadi Largani and Seyyed Javad Mousavian

Department of Business Management and Accounting, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Mazandaran, Iran.

Department of Management, Astara Branch, Islamic Azad University, Astara, Iran.

Abstract: Motivation and satisfaction are two concepts widely studied in tourism literature; the relevance of these constructs being derived from their impact on tourist behavior but which focus at tourism in general. However the purpose of this paper is to undertaken realizing the need to examine closely the aspects of health tourist motivation and satisfaction, a relatively new player in the industry. This study intends to describe health tourist motivation and satisfaction based on known attributes and to understand key motivation and satisfaction dimensions. In addition identifying travel motivation and satisfaction levels of health tourists allows insight to the areas of strength and weaknesses of the local healthcare industry.

Key words: tourism, health tourist, motivation, tourist satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism also called medical travel or health tourism is a term initially coined by travel agencies and the mass media to describe the rapidly growing practice of traveling to another country to obtain health care. Health tourism as a niche has emerged and has rapidly grown to become an industry where people travel long distances to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care while simultaneously having a holiday. It has grown dramatically in recent years primarily because of the high costs of treatment in developed Western countries, long waiting lists, the relative affordability of international air travel, favorable economic exchange rates and the ageing of the often affluent post-war baby boom generation (Connell, 2006). Today, health care tourism is the highest growth world's tourism industry and in global scale is higher than oil and gold industry and is called as the third industry of the world and some countries such as Spain are living through this industry (Asadi Boshni, 1389).

Now more than 30 countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe are most active in the field of health tourism that among them Asian countries have won fame and first place and among the Asian countries five countries: Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, India and the Philippines had been identified as the major tourist destinations in Asia's health tourism market (Hosseini, 1387,1389).

Research Significance:

Short distances due to the growth of the transportation industry and information technology cause to the formation of global markets for services and industrial and developing countries relying on its comparative advantages in competition with others search their share in these markets.

Trade in services include about 22 percent of the global economy and plays a major role in the prosperity of the countries, such that more than two thirds of employment and gross national income of some developed countries allocated to them. The relationship between economic developments on health had been well identified. In new approaches, it is not only the health sector benefits from economic growth, but also it can create many businesses to the countries and in addition to creating new sources of financing for infrastructure development and technology, play an important role in the meta-sect oral strategies for sustainable development. Among this, health tourism is an issue which has a new look to the concept of using the health service (A summary of the articles of the Conference in capabilities of the northern provinces of the country in Tourism, 1389). Significance and consequences of medical services can be summarized in employment, increase incomes and improve health care, prevent brain drain, tourism development and attracting foreign investors and ultimately elevate the status of countries in a global perspective (Salimpour, 1385).

Global health tourism revenue increased of about $ 20 billion in 2005 to more than 56 billion dollars in 2007 and this growth is expected to continue increasingly and until 2012 may reach about four and a half dollars (Sobouti, 1385).

Corresponding Author: Mohammad Taleghani, Department of Business Management and Accounting, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Maandaran, Iran.
E-mail: m.taleghani454@yahoo.com
Tel: +989111314029
Health Tourism:

World Tourism Organization (WTO) is defined health tourism as: The services that leads to improve health and enhance the morale of the individual (Using mineral water, weather, or medical interventions) and is in the place of residence which takes more than 24 hours and less than a year (Hooebin, Ye. ben, 2010).

Health tourism, is a form of tourism to preserve, enhance and retrieve physical and mental health of individuals that takes over 24 hours and less than a year (Health Tourism) and divides as following:

Wellness Tourism:

Travel to health villages and areas having hot springs and mineral water (Spa) for relief from the stresses of everyday life and revitalizing without the intervention and medical supervision and in the cases where tourist has not clear physical illness is called health tourism.

Curative Tourism:

Travel to the use of natural curative resources (Mineral water, salt, mud, etc) for the treatment of certain diseases or livelihood recovery under Therapeutic interventions is called curative tourism.

Medical Tourism:

Travel to treat physical illness or a surgery done under the supervision of doctors in hospitals and medical centers is called medical tourism. In this type of health tourism, the patient may after treatment require the use of spaces and curative tourism services (such as Spas) (www.Wikipedia.com).

There is no one definition for medical tourism but it is generally accepted that this term is used to refer to travel activity that involves a medical procedure or activities that promote the wellbeing of the tourist. Figure 1 illustrates the components of medical and healthcare tourism (TRAM, 2006).

![Fig. 1: Medical and Healthcare Tourism and Components. Source: Modification from TRAM 2006.](image)

As shown in the model, medical tourists move from their originating regions (their countries of residence) to destination regions (those regions where the care is available). The transit refers to both the actual mode and trajectory of the transportation utilized for this movement as well as any constraining and/or facilitating forces in the travel experience. A destination is a medical tourism destination, not just because of the healthcare facility available there, but also because of the additional provision of destination attractions, both natural and cultural. The core product is the healthcare provided, but tourist comforts do form an important hygiene factor in medical tourism (Messerli and Oyama 2004).

![Fig. 2: Comprehensive model of medical tourism.](image)
Ghazali (2002) noted that most writers divide health tourism into three major components namely medical care, wellness and fitness:

a) The medical market seeks cure in ways of medicinal and spa treatments, surgical operations, alternative medicine and rehabilitation.

b) The well-being tourism market requires the activity that rejuvenates, maintains the state of wellness physically, mentally and socially.

c) The fitness market stresses more in getting the optimum level of fitness by performing more strenuous activities which eventually helps to maintain health and prevent ailments.

Generally, the health tourism market can be divided into three broad segments:

a) Surgeries like orthopedic surgery, heart by-pass surgery, cancer therapy, eye surgery, and organ transplantation.

b) Plastic surgery or cosmetic surgery.

c) Health spas, weight loss exercise centers, hot springs and holistic treatment including wellness therapies. (Dosh, 2008).

Medical Tourism Industry Certifications:

One of the primary concerns for health travelers is whether foreign providers can offer the same high-quality medical care they receive in their country of origin. This growing demand for foreign healthcare providers has prompted the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the best known healthcare accreditation group in the USA, to form an international offshoot known as the Joint commission international(JCI). In 1999, the JCI began surveying and accrediting hospitals and healthcare facilities outside of the USA. There are now over 220 accredited hospitals worldwide and most are providing quality services for the medical tourism industry. Aside from the JCI, there are alternative non-profit groups providing accreditation for healthcare organizations in the USA. Also aside from the accreditation bodies based in the USA, there are a number of international accreditation organizations in the medical tourism industry that are based abroad. These organizations perform a similar international role as the JCI, providing accreditation to international or regional health providers. For example Trent Accreditation Scheme (TAS). (www.health-tourism.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For Exporting Countries:</strong> Generate foreign exchange earnings to increase resources for health reduce brain drain.</td>
<td>• Create dual market structure may crowd out local population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Upgrade health infrastructure, knowledge.</td>
<td>• Unless these services are available to local population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Standards and quality.</td>
<td>• Diversion of resources from the public health system.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>For Importing Countries:</strong> Overcome shortages of physical and human resources in specialty areas.</td>
<td>• Outflow of foreign exchange.</td>
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<td>• Receive more affordable treatment.</td>
<td>• Difficult follow-up treatment.</td>
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Motivation in Tourism:

The importance of motivation in tourism is clear; because it explains the causes for travel or reasons the particular options of tourism (Parino, 1988). Motives and needs cause to begin and continue to activities and to specify the total behavior of people; in other words, motivation is the desire to try to provide targets or forces that cause people to behave a certain way (Newstorm and Davis, 2004).

The Motivation of Health Tourists:

Motivational factors are physical needs that play an important role in a person's sense of physical balance. Imbalance that can near to equilibrium through a journey experience. (Crompton, 1979).

This group of passengers to use medical services travel to places where their desired facilities exist; therefore this journey are includes a variety of activities that are aimed at providing health or the individual or tourist health. Examples of this type of trips are as following:

Health Care:

Travel to a place to go to certain doctors or clinics, in order to achieve a method of treatment which does not apply in the country or where the person is living.
Bodybuilding:
Travel to a place or to deliver or set up especially for the loss / gain weight, studies and complete physical examination or special exercises. Many hotels and resorts equipped with some of these facilities.

Recovery and Rehabilitation Courses:
Travel to a center, an organization that provides care to people or travel to a place that is known of the health and safety and people are travel there for recovery and rehabilitation course.

Travel for keeping health is stretching a lot to attract tourists. In the past few decades, a generation of people who are accustomed to modern methods of treatment, to have reached retirement age. It is expected that these people are to seek some collections to maintain their health in old age while previous generations when they reach this age, do not such an expect. A large part of the generation has economic power to benefit from health care. High levels of knowledge and more attention to people's health has increased the appeal of these trips (Kazemi, 1386).

Needs are prompting to stimulate certain behavior and to understand the motivation. In this regard, it is essential that these needs are discovered and how they meet. What people buy is neither product nor service, but they expect consistency, desirability and benefits to meet needs (Crompton and McKay, 1997). For health tourism, in addition to discussing the costs, other factors such as quality of health care providers, the trip comfortable, and attractive destinations and security and stability of nations which are in search of the ideal destination for medical services, are effective.

For the best service, low cost is usually the primary motivation that makes the health of tourists to travel to abroad and in addition to receiving medical services be benefit from a leisure opportunities. According to Yap, people travel for four types of healthcare:

- Essential healthcare: where the care is not available in the home country, either because the country does not have that level of medical sophistication, or has yet to allow the particular procedure, or has long waiting lists due to resource constraints.
- Affordable healthcare: where the care is available but out of reach the particular patient which simply cannot afford it. This could be because of high costs or insufficient insurance coverage.
- Quality of healthcare: where the care available locally is perceived to be of inferior quality to the healthcare available overseas.
- Premium healthcare: where traveling for healthcare is seen as a luxury and patients choose the healthcare of another country because it adds prestige and demonstrates that they can afford it or that they have the better sense to select it (Yap, 2007).

According to Garcia-Alte’s, the short time for surgery is a key factor that enhances the ability of health destinations to attract foreign patients (Garcia-Alte’s, 2005).

Tourist Satisfaction:
Understanding the factors that bring satisfaction to tourists is one of the most important research areas in the tourism industry, because satisfied tourists want to share positive experiences with others and repeated their visit (Alen and Fraiz, 2007). Studies show that satisfaction level of tourists from a trip is a result of various factors. Satisfaction from the comparison of tourist's perception often from quality goods and services that they receive with their expectations before and during travel, is determined (Bigne and Andreu, 2004).

Health Tourist Satisfaction:
Patient satisfaction is of paramount importance for medical service providers, not only because it is a quality indicator (Yellen et al., 2002) but also because of increased competition in the profession. One of the fastest growing industries in the service sector is the health-care industry. The rapid growth of this sector has been accompanied by dramatic changes in the environment, challenging health care managers and administrators to find alternative ways of remaining viable. These forces of change, that include competitive pressures, alternate health care delivery mechanisms, changing cost structures, monitoring by public and private groups, increased information availability, and a markedly better-informed clientele have begun to exert significant pressures on health-care providers to reassess their strategies. Many providers, with help from the research community, are beginning to realize that providing customer satisfaction is a key element of strategy and a crucial determinant of long-term viability and success. (Andaleeb, 1988). Thus (Donabedian, 1988) suggests that "patient satisfaction may be considered to be one of the desired outcomes of care…information about patient satisfaction should be as indispensable to assessments of quality as to the design and management of healthcare systems.

There is a growing consensus that assessment of the quality of hospital care should perceptions of overall care and patient satisfaction (Carmichael, 1996).
Customer satisfaction represents a profitable competitive strategy variable because studies have shown that the public is inclined to pay more for care from quality institutions which are better disposed to satisfy customers’ needs (Boscarin, 1992). Its value as a competitive tool also derives from the fact that hospitals with better images have been able to translate these into increased utilization and market share (Buscarino, 1992).

Delivering customer satisfaction is also imperative because today’s buyers of healthcare services are better educated and more aware than in the past. These buyers carefully study and monitor the options available to them; they are, therefore, more discerning buyers, knowing exactly what they need these changes are being driven by the abundance of information that is available to them from public and private sources. According to Heistand, customers are relying less on doctors to choose the “right” hospital. Reflecting on the importance of the patient’s point of view (Heistand, 1986). Petersen suggests that: “It really does not matter if the patient is right or wrong what counts is how the patient felt even though the caregiver’s perception of reality may be quite different.” Hospitals that fail to understand the importance of delivering customer satisfaction may be inviting possible extinction. (Petersen, 1988).

Satisfaction is determined by both tangible and intangible factors. In the medical sense, the intangible components will be responsiveness, assurance and empathy by the doctors, nurses and attendants towards the patient. The tangible validation is what the patient would have accessed in the hospital such as medical equipment and drugs. For instance, a hospital could have the best technology in the world, but would not be able to satisfy the patient if he or she had a negative intangible experience during the course of the treatment in a hospital setting, both tangible and intangible elements are equally important in influencing the level of the patient's satisfaction (R. Dosh, 2008).

Healthcare service possesses certain characteristics that customers may find it difficult to evaluate after the event because they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to make the necessary judgments, and are obliged to trust the providers (Zeithaml, 1981). However achieving high level of patient satisfaction can lead to loyalty and generate referrals that enhance long term success (Yucelt, 1994).

In theory, satisfaction is the result of a subjective comparison between expectations and received product attribute levels (Oliver, 1980).

Tam had measured nine factors as being the key aspects of the medical services encounter and influences on patient satisfaction. They are doctor's technical quality, doctor's interpersonal care skills, quality of nurses, quality of support staff, efficiency of the appointment system, waiting time, duration of consultation, physical environment and respect for patient's privacy (Tam, 2007).

Tam also included the overall satisfaction with the visit and intention to revisit and comments and suggestion which could be used to further improve or revise the service offerings to the patients. There is a positive impact of quality improvement on patient satisfaction and intention to revisit (Tam, 2007).

Babakus and Mangold had examined the usefulness of the SERVQUAL scale for assessing patient's perceptions of service quality in the hospital environment. The study had measured the patient's perception and expectation with five dimension (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy), intentions and overall rating (Babakus and Mangold, 1992). Oon (2006) also used same instrument to measure patient's satisfaction in Island Hospital, but he had included additional dimensions of accessibility and affordability (e.g. adequate parking facilities, accessible location, and affordable charges). Mostafa used SERVQUAL to measure the current expectation and perception held by patients and identified the relevant service quality dimension used by patients to evaluate service quality. (Mostafa, 2005) Cho et al., had measured 30 items which were developed based on three focus group interviews and the SERVQUAL scale and satisfaction (3 items) was measured using a previously validated scale (Cho et al., 2004). Tucker and Adam considered accessibility, communication outcomes, caring and empathy dimensions in assessing the patient's satisfaction (Tucker and Adams, 2001). Andaleeb had used a five factor model (communication with patients, competence of the staffs, staffs demeanor quality of facilities, perceived costs) which explains considerable variation in customer satisfaction with hospitals (Andaleeb, 1998). Yildiz and Erdogmus used 40 items and identified 35 items which was labeled as nutritional care physician care, room atmosphere, procedures of incoming patients, room cleanliness and other serving in related to the patients satisfaction (Yildiz and Erdogmus, 2004).

Conclusion:

It is possible to identify five but not necessarily mutually exclusive categories of patient mobility: Temporary visitors abroad, Long-term residents, Common-borders, Outsourced patients, Medical tourists (lunt Neil and Carrera Percivil, 2010).

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Health tourism as a niche has emerged and has rapidly grown to become an industry where people travel long distances to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care while simultaneously having a holiday. (Connell, 2006).
Most Writers divide health tourism into three major components namely medical care, wellness and fitness (Ghazali, 2002). Generally, the health tourism market can be divided into three broad segments: surgeries, plastic surgery and health spas, weight loss exercise centers (Dosh, 2008).

An important issue in health tourism industry and its global destinations is international credit which provides services to tourists. JCI and Trent are two of the most prestigious credentials.

Various factors are determining tourist behavior including health tourist which the most important of them is in the framework of motivations and satisfaction determinates.

Due to the different nature of health tourism with other branches of tourism, motivation factors and tourist satisfaction criteria is somewhat different and of course, due to its novelty, limited research has been done in this regard.

A medical visit can be take place by motivation to get health care, bodybuilding recovery and rehabilitation courses.

Research show that motivations of health tourists to travel to a health and leisure can be from travel expenses, services quality, the ease of travel, attractive destination, and safe destination (Dosh, 2008).

According to Yap, people travel for four types of healthcare: Premium healthcare, Affordable healthcare, Quality of healthcare, Essential healthcare (Yap, 2007).

Satisfaction of tourists, especially for purposes of seeking to create loyal customers and develop their markets is very important. The important point is that patient satisfaction comes from the comparison from their expectations with the services they receive and this comparison is based their understanding which in many cases not consistent with reality.

Satisfaction in health care is determined by both tangible and intangible factors. In the medical sense, the intangible components will be responsiveness, assurance and empathy by the doctors, nurses and attendants towards the patient. The tangible validation is what the patient would have accessed in the hospital such as medical equipment and drugs (Dosh, 2008).

Other researchers such (Tam, 2007), (Babakus and Mangold, 1992), (Oon, 2006), (Mostafa, 2005), (Cho et al., 2004), (Andaleeb, 1998), (Yildiz and Erdogmus, 2004) have been assessed various aspects of patients' satisfaction from the hospitals which their research results can be used to measure health tourist satisfaction from health care centers in countries of destination.

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