

Chapter 2

Medical Tourism: Understanding the Phenomenon

Oğuz Doğan

Antalya Bilim University, Turkey

Nedim Yüzbaşıoğlu

Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The number of travels around the world to benefit from health services provided abroad is increasing every year. The high level of global demand for health services has influenced the rapid development of the medical tourism industry. Due to these developments in the industry, a global market has emerged, the medical tourism market. Countries operating in the industry are also striving to gain share from this large market or to increase their existing market shares. In this study, different perspective on global phenomenon, medical tourism, medical tourism market, and leader destinations in the industry are examined in detail.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a dynamic industry that is constantly changing and renewing itself. The rapid changes in the industry have affected the change of tourism preferences and the emergence of new types of tourism. The new types of tourism have contributed to the diversification of the tourist profile and the emergence of tourism industries that serve different tourist profiles (Durgun, 2007). One of these industries is the medical tourism industry.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3427-4.ch002

Medical tourism emerging from the combination of health services and tourism services, can be defined as travelling abroad to get health services that are not available or expensive for individuals in their home countries. Individuals can also benefit from the tourism services provided in the countries where they have travelled to receive health services. Although the demand for medical tourism has increased in recent decades, travels to be healthy are as old as human history. For example, in the Middle East tradition, it is believed that Cleopatra established one of the world's first SPA centers in BC 25. Also, it is stated that there were many SPAs and thermals built by Romans in Europe, Middle East, and North Africa between BC 54 and AD 450 (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2009).

Today, medical tourism has become a global phenomenon. Millions of patients travel abroad every year and the number of these patients are increasing very fast. Moreover, many destinations providing high-quality medical tourism services at low prices have emerged. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of this phenomenon. For this purpose, in this chapter different opinions on the term medical tourism, motivational factors driving medical tourism, medical services offered in the industry, and leader destinations are discussed.

THE CONCEPT OF MEDICAL TOURISM

Globalization has contributed to emergence of medical tourism (Roy et. al, 2018), which is a way to offer healthcare services to foreign patients in a host country (Rydbäck & Hyder, 2018). Medical tourism is a kind of niche tourism arising as a result of the rapid rise of the number of travels abroad to access to medical services (Suess et. al, 2018). Thus, it has become a global phenomenon in the few decades (Chew & Darmasaputra, 2015).

There is no consensus on the definition of medical tourism (Lee & Spisto, 2007) but it can be defined as travelling across international borders with the intention of obtaining healthcare services (Roy et. al, 2018) in order to find a solution to health problems or improve the health conditions. Although there is a debate whether traveling abroad for obtaining healthcare services should be called as “health tourism” or “medical tourism”, Pocock & Phua (2011) stated that there is a consensus in the related literature that medical tourism is a subset of health tourism. Smith and Puczko (2009) stated that health tourism is composed of medical tourism and wellness tourism, which means that medical tourism is a subset of health tourism. Garcia-Altes (2005) used the term “health tourism”, as an umbrella term, to explain the all health-related tourism activities. Connell (2006) expressed that there should be a differentiation between medical tourism and health tourism, as medical tourism is a correct term used in cases requiring medical operations. Saiprasert (2011) specified

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/medical-tourism/269334

Related Content

Importance of Creativity and Innovation for Gastronomy and Business Tourism

Nurgül Bozand Hande Mutlu Ozturk (2020). *Accelerating Knowledge Sharing, Creativity, and Innovation Through Business Tourism* (pp. 261-280).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/importance-of-creativity-and-innovation-for-gastronomy-and-business-tourism/257348

Explaining Consumer Behavior in the Hospitality Industry: CSR Associations and Corporate Image

Patricia Martínezand Ignacio Rodríguez del Bosque (2015). *Handbook of Research on Global Hospitality and Tourism Management* (pp. 501-519).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/explaining-consumer-behavior-in-the-hospitality-industry/135823

Impact of Leadership on the Relationship Between Innovation and Performance: Portuguese Hotel Sector

Cláudia Ferreira Leitão, Jorge Gomes, Denise Capela dos Santosand Bruno Melo Maia (2021). *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Digital Age* (pp. 29-49).
www.irma-international.org/article/impact-of-leadership-on-the-relationship-between-innovation-and-performance/269290

Analysis of the Traditional Gastronomic Offer as an Engine for Local Tourism Development: Guayas, Ecuador

Alejandra Ycaza, Verónica Baquerizo, Javier Vallejoand Guido Valero (2022). *Gastronomy, Hospitality, and the Future of the Restaurant Industry: Post-COVID-19 Perspectives* (pp. 48-70).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/analysis-of-the-traditional-gastronomic-offer-as-an-engine-for-local-tourism-development/302152

Value Chain Mapping of Tourism in Birbhum

Debdip Khanand Sudatta Banerjee (2020). *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Digital Age* (pp. 23-33).
www.irma-international.org/article/value-chain-mapping-of-tourism-in-birbhum/259005