Chapter 8
Understanding the Brand Management and Rebranding Processes in Specific Contexts of Medical Tourism

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ABSTRACT

With this chapter, the authors intend to understand the importance of brand management (specifically rebranding) in specific contexts of medical tourism and health and wellness. The case study will include an example of the medical tourism segment in Portugal. This research is particularly relevant for Portugal because it is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the health system, as health expenditures are mostly publicly funded. Models and best rebranding practices will be studied in the health and wellness sector in Portugal (e.g., medical tourism). The chapter starts with a conceptual framework based on branding and rebranding models. From this theoretical base, the concepts and models are derived. This study aims at discussing brand management in healthcare management and medical tourism contexts. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this research brings together inputs from relationship marketing, medical tourism, and healthcare management (service excellence).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, companies take their presence in the online world as imperative, be it to reach new customers, promote the brand, better know their customers, stay competitive or to maintain their relevance. In this context, a (digital) brand is not limited to creating value for the consumer, but also for the company, becoming an active, having a social value and a financial value. Overall, much of the financial value of a company is based on its intangible assets. The brand is a special intangible asset. In many companies is the most important asset (Kapferer, 2012). Building a brand driven culture is a lifelong commitment to a mindset and a way of life that takes time, planning and perseverance. it produces intangible outputs, which include greater customer satisfaction and loyalty (repetition), reduced price sensitivity, fewer customer defections, a greater share of customers' wallets and more referrals (Sousa & Silva, 2015). The main drivers of rebranding occur because of the need for repositioning and / or the need for a change in brand image (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). According to Muzellec & Lambkin (2006), these authors explain that the change of the brand name is a risk, insofar as: it may lead to losing the brand's reputation and all the time it has led to market positioning. Being the knowledge of the essential component name of the brand, this action could undermine brand equity. Changing the name can undermine the brand as well as destroy it. Thus, a rebranding involving a name change may clear the consumer's mental image of the brand (Aaker, 1991). The first key concept is brand building, so we have the strategic analysis of the brand, the definition of brand identity and finally the implementation of brand identity. Next we have two key concepts that we must take into account, the brand image and the value of the brand. And as the main and ultimate key concept we will address the rebranding, its definition, its causes, the elements that make up the rebranding-mix, and the existing rebranding models and processes.

According to Pinho, Borges and Zahariev (2017), health systems sustainability is one of the major challenges public policymakers in developed countries face. Since the second half of the 20th century, health expenditure has been increasing at a faster pace than national income levels all over the world. For instance, in specific tourism contexts, the practice of healthcare management and medical tourism depends on successfully informing potential patients about procedure options, service excellence, treatment facilities, tourism opportunities, travel benefits and destination choice and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Rodrigues, Real, Vitorino and Cantista, 2011; Rodrigues and Borges, 2015). As a niche tourism example, medical tourism is becoming an increasingly popular option for patients looking to access procedures that are seemingly unavailable to them in their home countries due to lack of affordability, lack of availability or lengthy waiting lists (Sousa & Alves, 2019). Medical tourism and its related businesses and organizations have been regarded as one of the most lucrative hospitality sectors for many destination countries and cities, in specific developing ones (Han, 2013; Heung et al., 2011; Van Niekerk, 2014; Demicco, 2016). Reviewing the research on medical tourism, not to mention domestic medical tourism, is challenging due to the novelty of the concept, lack of specific data, and somewhat amorphous nature of the concept (Hudson & Shephard, 1998; Chambers & McIntosh, 2008; Hudson & Li, 2012; Cham et al., 2020). The demand for global healthcare services is experiencing tremendous growth. The ease of seeking medical treatment and services overseas contributes to the globalization of the healthcare market. According to Smith and Forgione (2007), the growing trend of medical tourism is not merely seen on an individual patient basis - many corporations are also investigating the potential benefits.

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