

Chapter 8

Health Tourism–Based Destination Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Visits of people for their health caused health tourism to be created. Health tourism has a great market share in the world with a volume of 100 billion dollars. A big battle has started between companies and countries that want to get share from this market. It became necessary to be act professionally because of the competition in health tourism sector. It is very important to know the market, to determine customer requests and needs, to know the advantageous and disadvantageous of competitors and to positions itself at the correct place. It is necessary to focus on international market at health tourism process. Politicians and the government has a big role in being a destination in health tourism sector. All the factors in service process are important parts of both service quality and of branding process.

INTRODUCTION

Health care services go back to the most ancient times and will continue to exist as long as human beings live on earth. Globalization, economic development, demographic changes, transportation facilities and most importantly the development of technology have led to changes in the health care supply and demand (Tucki & Cleave, 2014, p. 2). Customer satisfaction has become the most important element of service delivery in terms of quality and reliability. Health care is the backbone of the economies of some countries, as well as being the part of the international market (Khan, 2010, p. 1). The greatness and high incomes of the health service market have caused to the formation of the health tourism sector. This sector has recently become an international market where professional marketing tools are used and strategies are applied based on the principles of competition. Countries such as US, India, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Turkey spread on effort to get a share of this market. Apart from the service quality and using advanced technology; the reasonable service costs, creating a brand in health institu-

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tions and using marketing techniques have become increasingly important in getting a share of this great market. Brand of health services is especially important for the patients who do not care about costs. The internationally outstanding hospitals in the United States can be given as the best examples in this context.

Developments that have occurred in recent years in the field of health tourism, the intersection of the health and the tourism sector, are so remarkable that both the developed and the developing countries have begun to show more interest in this field (Tucki & Cleave, 2014, p. 2; Khan, 2010, p. 5). The developing countries such as Turkey need to focus on developing the product range, identifying the right target market and boosting the marketing activities in order to benefit from the health tourism effectively. In this context, to become a destination place in the sector of health tourism requires strong government support and consultancy service given by professional marketers (Connell, 2013, p. 10).

THE HISTORY OF HEALTH TOURISM

In general terms, health tourism means to travel somewhere else in order to get health care. Archeological findings support the view that people have travelled to get health treatment since BC. (Kevan, 1993, p. 113; Khan, 2010, p. 1). “Patients in Ancient Greek Empire would go to Mediterranean countries to get thermal water treatments, but the rich Europeans would prefer going to the Nil to get spa treatment after the 18th century” (Aydın, 2012, p. 93; Tucki & Cleave, 2014, p. 2). At the end of the 20th century, it is observed that people in the developing countries traveled to developed countries for health care services. Reasonably, people have resorted to health institutions in developed countries to access higher quality health care treatments unavailable in their own countries. (Connell, 2013, p. 2; Jadhav, Yeravdekar & Kulkarni, 2014, p. 109; Tucki & Cleave, 2014, p. 2; Khan, 2010, p. 1). Through the 21st century, people have become more prone to health tourism due to the changes in demographic structure of countries, easier and cheaper transportation and prolongation of lifespan as well as other developments in the communication technology (Connell, 2013, p. 2; Tucki & Cleave, 2014, p. 2).

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH TOURISM AS A TOURISM SECTOR

Tourism is one of the world’s largest and most important service sectors. If well planned, tourism plays a big role in removing interregional inequality, decreasing unemployment, protecting cultural values and uncovering the wealth of country or region. In addition, it’s the most important source of foreign exchange earnings of any country (Pekin, 2011, p. 32; Khan, 2010, p. 4)

The development of health tourism at the international level contributes to the development of the economy, community and tourism. It helps to establish a win-win relationship between the health sector and the tourism sector. For many countries; health tourism, the backbone of the tourism sector, is bound up with different industries in the way that it supports their sectoral development. The destination in health tourism is not local, but international markets (Connell, 2013, p. 10), because foreign exchange is conducive to the development of the country. Health tourism market provides economic benefits to the whole world, and therefore encourages economic development, so it will be one of the strongest sectors of the future. Personal communication and economic exchanges provided by health tourism improve the cooperation and communication between countries so that they led to extensive improvement in

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