



Effective factors on the development of medical tourism industry in the West Azerbaijan Province, Iran: Pattern presentation

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the market of medical tourism is considered as a revenue and competitive industry throughout the world, it is also regarded as a novel field of the sophisticated tourism. Therefore, most of the developing countries have focused on the medical tourism industry and they are planning for it. In 2016, the present research was conducted with the main objective of devising a pattern for medical tourism development in the West Azerbaijan Province. The statistical population consisted of all medical tourists who referred to the hospitals located in the province. With regard to the krejcie-morgan table and statistical population, the number of the sample was estimated to be equal to 260 persons. These persons were selected based on the multi-stage sampling method. The scholar made questionnaire and studies of the Ricafort and Kazemi were employed as the instrument of collecting data. The validity of questionnaire was confirmed by the experts, professors, supervising and advising professors after applying the required amendments. The reliability was realized using factor analysis method. The PLS method was utilized for analysis of the data. The findings indicate that %82.5 of the variations linked to the medical tourism development has been realized via changes in the two predictor variables (independent variable), including hospital selection and West Azerbaijan selection. Moreover, the two main factors, including hospital selection and West Azerbaijan selection with impact factors of 0.486 and 0.469, respectively have a direct and significant impact on the development of medical tourism of the province. West Azerbaijan Province has so many potentials, and due to this fact there exist very special conditions which can contribute to the development of the medical tourism industry in this region. It can be deduced that by carrying out measures, like creating a brand for province in the medical tourism field, coordination of the corresponding organizations related to the medical tourism and existence of responsible intersectional and policymaking institutions, we can contribute to the development of the medical tourism industry of West Azerbaijan.

Keywords: Health Tourism, Medical Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism is a phenomenon which can be traced back to the bygone, which had been focused by the human societies. This field has continued its dynamism in terms of the various economic and social needs [1], today, this industry is regarded as the biggest servicing activity. The tourism should be taken into account as an income and job creation source, national level, which can be used as an approach for economic development within national realm.

Nowadays, the tourism industry plays a significant role in social-economic development of the countries, in a manner that some economists have called the industry invisible export [2]. From among the various fields and branches of the tourism, the health tourism and its subsets have been considered to be so important due to their competitive capabilities and privileges. The health tourism is defined as an organized journey, which took place from living location of a person to another location, and the main of the journey is to maintain and restore the pervious individual physical and mental health [3].

The health tourism encompasses, other subfields including, medical tourism, recovery tourism and preventive tourism [4, 5]. Pertaining to the theme of the current research, the main aim is concentrated on the medial tourism. The market of the medial tourism is considered as the revenue and competitive industry, it is also a novel field of the tourism sector [6]. At the macro level, the governments are avid to utilize the economic advantages originating from the tourism industry in future years [7].

It is estimated that every medical tourist lead to import of foreign exchange three times more than a common tourist [8]. There is an increasing competition among the various countries, especially Asian developing countries that are seeking to attract medical tourists [9]. According to the report presented by World Tourism Organization in 2012, Iran ranks 66 among 188 countries in terms of income originating from foreign exchange due to the tourists. According to World Tourism Organization [10], the rank of Iran will promote to 61 in 2020. Based on the most recent statistics provided by World Health Organization [WHO], the annual growth rate of medical tourism was 33 percent, and about 60% of such growth belongs to countries including, France, Italia, Germany, Hungary and Turkey [11]. With regard to the availability of most active specialized and ultra-specialized clinical centers in Iran, particularly in the North West region [Tabriz and Urmia], the portion of Iran in terms of medical tourism growth rate is so low, compared to Turkey. Hence, do we plane to achieve an increase in Iran's portion of medical tourism and offer health services for neighborhood countries, we should figure out the needs and investigate the affairs in a comprehensive manner.

The numerous researches demonstrated that quality, price, time and fast availability of the services are among the most important factors of medical tourism[12]

By considering the above-mentioned statements and the strategic location of Iran, and Iranian brilliant and ancient medicine background and existence of skilled and prominent doctors in various branches and low price of therapy services, we can claim that this region of Iran has a potential capacities and abilities in order to become the therapy pole of Iran[13].

The geographical location of West Azerbaijan [neighboring Republic of Nakhichevan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iraq] can contribute to attraction of thousands of patient tourists to the treatment centers of the region.

Touring features of the West Azerbaijan is among other attractions for foreign patients. While, the transportation expenditure on the basis of geographical closeness, ethnic orientation and mutual religious beliefs, is regarded as the most important and significant factors which can lead to facilitation of medical tourism industry. Annually, Iran portion of medical tourism is equal to 200 to 300 thousands tourists, and based on this number the obtained income is estimated to be equal to 200 to 500 million dollar. But, with regard to the adjacent of West Azerbaijan to three countries [Nakhichevan, Turkey and Iraq], the portion of this province during the previous year [2015] was equal to 2000 medical tourists, who utilized health and treatment services of the region, and most of the patients were treated in the private hospitals.

So that, From among 1908 foreign patient tourists in 2014 year, 1629 persons belonged to the Iraq, 233 persons belonged to the Republic of Azerbaijan, 37 individuals were Afghan and 15 persons belonged to other countries, and all of them were treated in both private and public centers. With regard to such high potentials of the West Azerbaijan Province, the considerable income can be expected only if investors pay a heed to the health tourism sector of the province. According to the undesirable state of medical tourism of West Azerbaijan and realization of the mentioned advantages, this research was accomplished in order to design and present a practical pattern for organizing the medial tourism which can cause the development of this industry in the region. Moreover, such pattern will be regarded as a milestone in the medical tourism sector of the country and we will observe an increase in Iran's market portion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present survey was carried out with an aim of presentation of a pattern for medical tourism industry development of West Azerbaijan Province of Iran during 2015 till 2016. The research in terms of objective and results is descriptive and practical.

The theoretic fundamentals of the research were based on the studies accomplished by Smith and Forgiun [14].

The statistical population of the current research include all medical tourists who have had visa and they have visited six hospitals of Urmia City. According to the krejcie-morgan table and statistical population, the sample size is equal to 260 persons. The individual were selected based on the multi-stage sampling method.

This research is carried out using library and internet method. The instruments used for collecting consisted of a questionnaire with 67 items designed and developed by researcher, moreover, the studies accomplished by Ricafort(15) and Kazemi(16) were utilized. In this section, the scholar gathered the needed information on concepts, models and corresponding theories (17,18) and effective factors on the development of medical tourism industry, using textbooks, publications and valid databases, including SID, IranMedex, ProQuest, PubMed, Science Direct, etc.

The first part of the questionnaire focused on the demographic profile of the tourist (age, gender, marital status, education level, required specialization, number of visits, profession, source country, monthly salary in dollar, how did tourist get cognizant of the medical tourism of West Azerbaijan). The second part of the questionnaire includes 67 items, among which 29 items are designed for appraising of the determinant factors in selection of the province hospitals, and 25 items are related to evaluation of determinant factors in selection of West Azerbaijan Province and 13 items are designed for assessment of medical tourism development.

The content validity of the research questionnaires was confirmed by opinion of experts, after applying the required amendments. The construct validity was accomplished using factor analysis method. The results of construct exploratory factor analysis of selecting hospitals of West Azerbaijan Province with a method of principal component analysis (PCA) (KMO= 0.867, Bartlett=7168.9, Significance level= 0.000) indicate the desirable sufficiency and fitness of the collected data and suggested factor model.

For investigation and evaluation of the reliability aspect of the research questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient test was utilized. The closeness of calculated number to 1 value, indicates the higher reliability of the questionnaire. The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for hospital questionnaire and province questionnaire is equal to 0.916 and 0.907, respectively, which implies the high reliability of the designed questionnaires. The present study should be classified as a correlation research which utilizes structural equation modeling (Partial Least Squares).

From among 260 tourists, selected for statistical sample, about 76% were male, 24% were female and about 48% of the sample aged 45 and higher. The percentage of married samples was equal to 80.4%, while the remaining individuals were single (19.6%). About the education level of the medical tourist, it is worth noting that 31.9% did not have diploma, 17.7% have had diploma, 14.6% have had associates degree, 15.8% have had Bachelor of Science degree (BSc), 11.5% have had Master of Science degree (M.Sc.) and 8.5% have had Ph.D. degree.

Moreover, 14.6 %of the medical tourists were from Iraq, 53.9% were from Iraqi Kurdistan, 13.1% were from Turkey, 5.4% were from Azerbaijan, and 4.6% were from Nakhichevan, 1.2 and 7.3% came from Armenia and other countries, respectively to Iran. Almost, 70% of the sample have come to Iran for the first time, while the 30% claimed that it is not their first visit From among the respondents, the monthly income of 57.3% individuals were lower than \$2000, the monthly income of 35.8% were between \$2001 to \$4000, and the monthly income of 6.9% were between \$4001 to \$6000. Furthermore, it became evident that most of the medical tourists (15.8%) sought to accomplish plastic surgery and the least percentage (2.8%) of the patient were suffering from infertility. In addition, most of the tourists have become cognizant of the medical tourism capacity of West Azerbaijan Province via their relatives (50.4%), while the remaining tourists (2.3%) have become aware via newspapers.

Testing the measurement pattern:

Similar to LISREL method, the partial least squares method consisted of two sections. In the first section, the main aim is to evaluate the measurement pattern, that is, the main consideration is assessment of reliability (internal consistency) and validity (divergent validity) of the constructs and research instruments. For investigation of the constructs reliability, Fornell and Larcker (19) has proposed three metrics, including reliability of each item, combined reliability of each construct and average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 1: Reliability assessment of selection construct of West Azerbaijan Province Hospitals

| | Intersectional relations | Health care quality | Accreditation | Expenditures | Medical staff training program | Technology | Ads | Legal terms | Economic conditions | Political conditions | Cultural condition | General condition of tourist attraction | Public Infrastructure | Tourism development |
|------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| ρC | 0.98 | 0.92 | 0.94 | 0.98 | 0.91 | 0.87 | 0.87 | 0.95 | 0.99 | 0.92 | 0.89 | 0.93 | 0.96 | 0.86 |
| AVE | 0.91 | 0.76 | 0.89 | 0.97 | 0.59 | 0.55 | 0.55 | 0.80 | 0.99 | 0.65 | 0.53 | 0.52 | 0.93 | 0.53 |
| AVE | 0.98 | 0.89 | 0.88 | 0.97 | 0.88 | 0.84 | 0.84 | 0.94 | 0.99 | 0.91 | 0.85 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.80 |

Table 2: Correlation matrix and validity assessment of research variables

| No. | Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|-----|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| 1 | Health care quality | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Accreditation | 0/865 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Expenditures | 0/359 | 0.991 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Medical staff training program | 0.469 | 0.365 | 0.81 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Technology | 0.662 | 0.548 | 0.594 | 0.845 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Ads | 0.279 | 0.373 | 0.259 | 0.448 | 0.812 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Intersectional relations | 0.306 | 0.569 | 0.255 | 0.4 | 0.629 | 0.873 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Legal | 0.267 | 0.953 | 0.199 | 0.402 | 0.584 | 0.433 | 0.73 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 9 | Economic | 0.321 | 0.547 | 0.267 | 0.391 | 0.645 | 0.379 | 0.45 | 0.88 | 1 | | | | | |
| 10 | Cultural | 0.312 | 0.477 | 0.277 | 0.393 | 0.71 | 0.74 | 0.583 | 0.53 | 0.892 | 1 | | | | |
| 11 | Political | 0.443 | 0.763 | 0.445 | 0.509 | 0.863 | 0.621 | 0.655 | 0.804 | 0.764 | 0.84 | 1 | | | |
| 12 | General tourist attraction condition | 0.69 | 0.63 | 0.403 | 0.756 | 0.866 | 0.629 | 0.735 | 0.662 | 0.534 | 0.645 | 0.811 | 1 | | |
| 13 | Public infrastructure | 0.42 | 0.171 | 0.174 | 0.17 | 0.353 | 0.158 | 0.076 | 0.139 | 0.125 | 0.202 | 0.313 | 0.685 | 1 | |
| 14 | Tourism development | 0.332 | 0.334 | 0.298 | 0.32 | 0.587 | 0.277 | 0.32 | 0.352 | 0.358 | 0.408 | 0.658 | 0.531 | 0.463 | 1 |

For reliability of each item, the factor load is equal to 0.7, and the higher value of factor load indicates a well-defined construct (Fornell & Larcker)(19). Moreover, the items should not have significant factor load over the other constructs (20). The Dylan Goldstein coefficient (ρc) was used for assessing the combined reliability of each construct. The acceptable values (ρc) should be equal to 0.7 or higher (21). The third indicator of reliability assessment is average variance extracted (AVE).

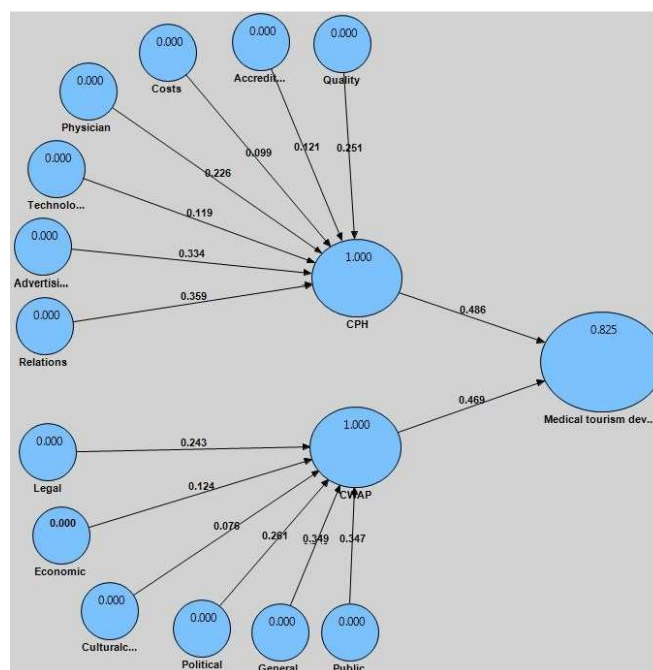
Fornell and Larcker (19) argues that 0.5 value of AVE, or higher values imply that the construct interprets about 50% or higher rate of its index variance. In the present research, all items have factor load more than 0.5 (ρc) and AVE and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each research construct are presented in table 1. The values of table 1 indicate the desirable reliability of the constructs.

For assessing the divergent validity of the constructs, Srite (21) has suggested that the square root of a construct AVE should be higher than the same construct's correlation with other constructs. It can be construed that the correlation of that construct with its own index is higher than the correlation of the same construct with other constructs. Table 2 presents the results linked to this metric, indicating the desirable validity of the constructs.

Testing the structural pattern

The PLS structural pattern and hypothesis of the research are feasible via assessing the path coefficients (beta) and R^2 values. Furthermore, the boot strap method (with 200 subsamples) was used for calculation of statistical values of T in order to determine the significance of the path coefficients. The path coefficients are used for determination of each predictor variable portion in interpretation of metric variable variance. The values of R^2 indicate the interpreted variance of metric variable by predictor variables. In diagram 2, The value of R^2 (0.825) implies that 82.5% variations of medical tourism developments have been realized by two predictor variables, including hospital selection and West Azerbaijan Province selection.

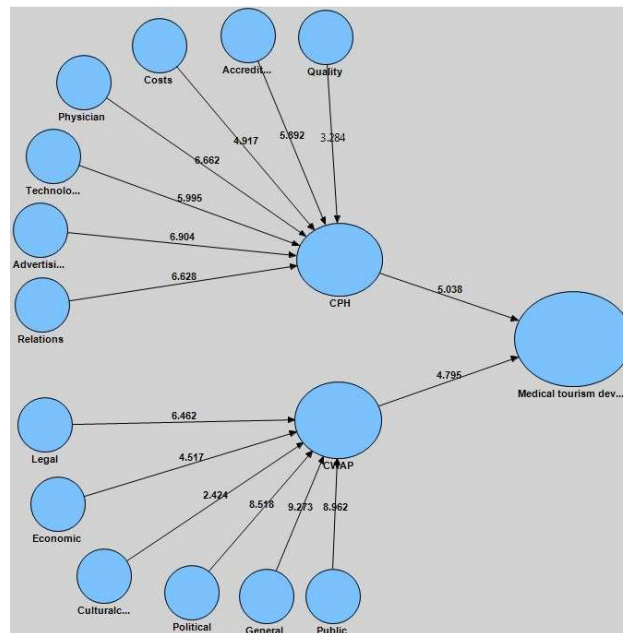
Diagram 1: Measurement of general model and questionnaire results in standard mode



In diagram 1, the measurement of general model and the results of the research questions are presented in standard mode. It is obvious that among the factors effective on the hospital selection, the intersectional relation factor (0.359) ranks the highest direct effect on the hospital selection, and among the factors effective on the selection of West Azerbaijan Province for medical tourism destination, the factors, including public infrastructure (0.347) and general conditions of tourist attraction (0.349) have the highest impact on selection of West Azerbaijan Province.

The path analysis method was employed for investigation of the relation between the independent and dependent variables and for approval of the entire model. The path analysis was realized using PLS Software. The output results of the PLS indicate the approval of all research questions (Diagram 2).

Diagram 2: Measurement of general model and results of research question in significance mode



Following table summarizes the significance coefficient and the results of questions.

Table 3: Results of research questions

| Questions | Standard | significance Level | Result |
|--|----------|--------------------|----------|
| The health care quality has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.251 | 2.979 | Approved |
| The accreditation has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.121 | 5.628 | Approved |
| The expenditures has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.099 | 4.403 | Approved |
| The medical team training has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.226 | 6.366 | Approved |
| The technology and communication has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.119 | 5.548 | Approved |
| The advertisement has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.334 | 6.564 | Approved |
| The intersectional relations have a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.359 | 6.685 | Approved |
| The legal conditions has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.243 | 6.552 | Approved |
| The economic has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.124 | 4.998 | Approved |
| The cultural conditions has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.076 | 2.051 | Approved |
| The political conditions has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.261 | 7.717 | Approved |
| The general conditions of tourist attraction has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.349 | 8.357 | Approved |
| The public infrastructures has a direct and significant impact on the medical tourism development. | 0.347 | 8.622 | Approved |

The obtained results indicate that the level of statistical significance of the impact factor of all paths on the medical tourism development is positive and its value is equal to $P < 0.001$. With regard to these facts, all research questions are approved and it can be inferred that two main factors, including hospital selection with impact of factor of 0.486 and West Azerbaijan Province selection with impact factor of 0.469 have direct and significant impact on the development of medical tourism.

Table 4: Measurement of redundancy and intersection index

| | Intersection Index | Redundancy Index | GOF Index |
|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
| The determinant factors in selection of province hospitals | 0.527280 | 0.199907 | 0.83 |
| The determinant factors in selection of West Azerbaijan Province | 0.899956 | 0.030947 | |
| Medical tourism Development | 0.802189 | 0.083935 | |

DISCUSSION

In this study, in most of the cases the medical tourist became aware of the medical tourism aspect of the West Azerbaijan via their relatives and friends (50.4%), while the lowest knowledge about the medical tourism potentials

of the province was acquired via newspapers (2.3%). Also, the participation rate of the advertisement in medical tourism was about 30.4%.

In the present study, there was a significant relation between advertisement, as an effective factor on the hospital choice and development of province tourism industry, which is line with the findings of researches conducted by Harryono[22].

According to a study accomplished by Tabibi, Nasiripour, Ayubian and Bagherian [23], it can be deduced that from among the variables of information science mechanism, there exist significant relation between advertisement media and medical tourist attraction, while other variables, like brochures, booklets, TV programs and electronic methods did not have an important role in attraction of the medical tourists. Hence, these findings are in line with the findings of present research. That is, the advertisement of country potentials and capacities related to the health services, doctors, technology and services quality in the overseas media causes attraction of medical tourist.

The obtained results showed that the factors, including medical staff training program, province hospitals accreditation, and expenditure of provided services, intersectional relations, technology and advertisement, all have a great impact on the development of medical tourism.

Moreover, these findings are in consistence with findings of studies carried out by Nasiripour and Salmani [24], Izadi et al. [25], who argued that the utilization of sophisticated medical tools with high global standards, low cost of the medical services, compared to other countries, clarification and explanation of the expend ties which are requested from foreign patients, and medical staff trainings and skills are among the most important factors playing a role in attraction of foreign patients and lead to development of health tourism.

The results of the study carried out by Černikováitė [26] showed that the effective factors on attracting medical tourists to Lithuania are as follows: fast service and exceptional patient care, the high-tech medical equipment and affordable prices of the medical services.

Paulo Moreira 2014 study showed that expected developments five key topics for European healthcare management developments: National regulation, Patients' movements, Issues on health systems financing and Health Insurance, Healthcare organizations and professional, Health communication and the Media Agenda.

In the present study, there exists a significant relation between quality of the services and their low expenditures. These findings are in line with the results of the report published in the International Medical Travel Journal (2011), Pham (2015) and Jones and Keith(2006), in which the scholars have claimed that the main factors required for attracting medical tourists encompass availability of high quality services with low cost and absence of waiting list. In addition, the studies accomplished by Khodayari [27], Asl, Nasiri, Shams and Hashemidehaghi [28] and Lagiewski and Myers [29] revealed that the ability to attract medical tourist in the international market is depended on the guaranteed quality of the services and attaining to the international standard, like JCI. Hence, the aforementioned research findings are in line with that of the present study.

The results of a study accomplished by Delgoshaei, Ravaghi and Abolhassani [30] showed that Tehran hospitals performance is average and no serious attempt is made to attract medical tourists at macro level. Although the quality, variety and cost of medical services and equipment in the selected hospitals are satisfactory, hospital international license is still a major problem which is consistent with the results of a recent study.

In the present research, The impact of the offered services cost on the medical tourism development was positive and significant, which is in line with the results obtained by Nasiripour, Tabibi, Raesi and Jahani [31], since they argued that high medical cost is the main reason due to which people try to resume their treatment in the less developed countries. Most of the respondents (57.3%) had income lower than \$2000. The insurance coverage can be an effective factor on the development of medical tourism. The absence of health insurance coverage is regarded as the deficiency of the province medical tourism development. The results of the research conducted by Jafari et al. [32] indicate that the cost of treatment interventions of Iran is so low, compared to other Middle East countries. In Iran, the insurance coverage of medical tourism cannot be utilized.

In the present research, there was a significant relation between intersectoral relations and the province tourism development. These findings are in line with the results of the study conducted by Kazemi (16). Kazemi argued that intersectional collaboration and participation at macro and operational level, human resource development (HDR), public and health infrastructure development, acquiring international fund for services providing tourism and health

services, and ultimately effective ads have a great impact on the tourism development of Iran. This research confirms the findings of the present study.

In the present study, the determination of the, political, economic, cultural conditions required for tourist attraction and public infrastructure as a factor effective on the province selection and its tourism industry development have been investigated.

In another research conducted by Shalbfafian [33], the scholar divided the development solutions of medical tourism industry into following subcategories, including executive-administrative, economic, legal solution, political and advertisement solutions.

In Shalbfafian's research, the general conditions and requirements for tourist attraction, including existence of attractive environmental condition and tourism locations for patients and their comrades during the treatment period, the province medical science development, low distance between the neighboring countries and the province, easy transportation between the region countries and the province, easy access to the province hospitals through airplanes, bus and train, building hospitals in well-known city of the province, all are considered as the factors effective on the development of province tourism industry, and such findings are in consistence with the results of a research conducted by Salimpour, Tajvar and Arab (34). Their main was on the importance of accomplishment of fundamental activities, including paying attention to the cross-organization issues of patient treatment like transferring the patient from airport to hospital, his accommodation, recreational services, accurate selection of the target market, acquiring the approval of international council, resolving visa problems and intersectional coordination.

In addition, the findings of the current research are in line with the results of a study carried out by Cohen [35]. With regard to the afore-mentioned researches, it became evident that for promoting the medical tourism industry, the hospitals should take measures as follows:

- a) Skilled and trained doctors should be employed.
- b) Investment in medical equipment and increase the quality of treatment unit.
- c) Separate the public environment of hospital from health section.
- d) Establishment of advising relation between doctor and patient via fast responding to the patient's requests by hospital staff. Ask them to present feedback.
- e) Seek the competitive edge.
- f) Offer facilities like, translation services, recreational facilities, coordination with hotel.

In the present research, a significant relation between cultural factors and the province medical tourism development was observed and this finding is in line with the results of a study done by Rokni, Moteiey Langroudi. Mahmoudi and Heidarzadeh[36]. They have demonstrated that cultural and religious similarities and the reputation of Iranian doctors play a prominent role in attracting the medical tourists.

According to Nagarajan [37], the development and execution of mutual strategy between the players of tourism industry are necessary for success of India tourism industry.

In the present study, there was a significant relation between the public infrastructure and development of the province medical tourism, and this finding is in accordance with the results of the study accomplished by Sadrand Agarahimi [38]. They have found a significant relation between tourism industry development and effective factors on the development.

In addition, from managers' point of view, the most important and effective factors on the development of medical tourism industry are as follows: development strategy of public infrastructure, strategy of human resource development [HRD], Strategy of information system, restoration and strategy of product development.

The above-mentioned findings are in line with the results of a research conducted by Harahsheh [39]. According to Harahsheh's research, it can be construed that the most important hindrances to the development of tourism industry are nascent of the industry, absence of required infrastructure, lack of specific marketing strategies and lack of attentiveness to the values of health tourism impacts due to the ignorance of tourism authorities.

Therefore, measure like development of public infrastructure and marketing is among the solutions which can cause tourism industry development and these findings are in accordance with that of the studies accomplished by Harahshesh [39] and Tourani, Tabibi, Tofighi and Shaarbafchi[40].

In the present study, there was significant relation between the province tourism industry development and measures, such as codification of programs for following up the patients after treatment, investments and supporting the private sector which is in line with the results of Jordan National Competitiveness [41].

In the present study, the traveler attitude toward the destination country was regarded as an important factor for medical tourism, which is in line with the results of a study performed by Ragavan, Heman and Sharif [42], as he demonstrated that the travel attitudes toward the Kuala Lumpur have played a significant role in tourists' satisfaction. Moreover, there exists a relation between journey properties and tourists' satisfaction. The destination country marketers can design their own market section and effective situation strategies via comprehending the destination country characteristics and their relation with tourists' satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

West Azerbaijan Province is ready to offer services for patients via its hospitals equipped with sophisticated technologies and diagnosis tools and promising specialized human resources, especially for the patients of neighboring countries who seek to restore their healthy conditions. Hence, the present article has utilized structural equation modeling for studying the effective factors on development of the province medical tourism industry. In this modeling, the effective factors on the province selection, including enhancement of legal, economic, cultural, political conditions along with general conditions of tourism attraction and public infrastructure have been presented. Moreover, the effective factors on the selection of province hospitals including enhancement of health care quality, existence of accreditation, reduction of expenditures, medical team training, availability of technology and communication, advertisements and intersectional relations are also introduced.

With regard to the presented effective factors, in order to develop the medical tourism industry of Iran and province, the act of creation and presentation of some activities can be so helpful: the three factors of establishment of brand for Iran and province in the field of health, coordination between related organizations and medical tourism, existence of responsible intersectional policy making institution all have a great impact on the tourism development of Iran and province.

The ignorance of such potential ability can lead to elimination of Iran name from the list of countries providing medical tourism services. One of the factors which has caused growth of the medical tourism industry in other countries, is coordination and mutual planning at macro level. Different organizations, including Ministry of Roads, international airports, customs, Ministry of Health, Medical Council, Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Immigration Office, Police, etc. all are involved in the act of facilitating the entry of foreign patients and the inhabitation and utilization of the services are subject to the afore-mentioned organizations' mutual decision.

Simultaneous attention to legislation and organized support of the active institution in the field medical tourism along with codification of comprehensive strategy, activating the centers offering health services, medical tourism, and tourism services all are important solutions for development of medical tourism sector. Also, in order to increase the portion of Iran and West Azerbaijan Province in the field of medical tourism development, following suggestions should be taken into account:

Holding specialized exhibition by Urmia Medical University for restoring the treatment brand life, establishment of a department for medical tourism development with a multi-sectional nature, codification of national document of the province medical tourism development, establishment of wide marketing network, design and develop acceptance strategies for supplemental insurance of the neighboring countries, supporting foreign investments on the medical tourism sector of the province, develop database of province medical staff, preparing tariff treatment for foreign patients with regard to their disease type.

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