



Strategic Analysis of Medical Tourism in Turkey and Strategy Recommendations

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

The progress in the Health Tourism emerged in connection with the developments in medicine (Connell, 2006). In this respect, it is sector in which medicine and Tourism come together and integrated. During the period when medicine and technology were not adequately advanced in the developing and underdeveloped countries, the patients, who can afford, from those countries used to go to the developed countries for medical treatment. However, since in recent years the developing and underdeveloped countries, particularly Turkey, improved themselves in medical sector so now they can compete against the developed countries, and since the medical treatment expenses are cheaper than they are in the developed countries, the route of the Health Tourism has completely changed.

It is obvious that observed new situation is the important opportunity for export of health services abroad. In this connection, to get the largest share of health exports, countries improve competency strategies, business models, and regulations and to make infrastructure investments. In addition to the commercial aspect of health tourism, it is possible that health tourism can be new research area in the literature. Since the accumulation of the data is not enough, so far scientific studies include basic definitions.

To determine the current status of Turkey's Health Tourism, following studies will be done:

- To determine the distribution of the medical Tourism patients who come to Turkey in public and private hospitals,
- To determine in which hospitals which branches do the medical Tourism patients who come to Turkey prefer,

- To determine which cities and what kind of hospitals have priority in Turkey within the scope Health Tourism,
- To analyze the Health Tourism according to the data obtained,
- To make evaluation for creating market by identifying which countries would prefer Turkey in the field of medical Tourism.

In addition, in this study the current state of Turkey has been evaluated within the framework of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. SWOT analysis provides a balanced assessment on the state of Health Tourism in Turkey, forming the basis of the policy documents (both strong and weak, both in terms of opportunities and threats) that would be developed in the future.

Methodology

The main contribution of this study is making analysis and assessment of data provided by the Department of Health Tourism. The information, qualified as primary data was gathered by the following two ways:

- An official letter No. 2082 dated January 16, 2012 has been sent to 81 provincial health directorates which request all public and private hospitals in the provinces to provide data under two categories, “Health Tourism” and “Health Tourists”,
- Department of Health Tourism has a website called “Foreign nationals Patient Tracking System.” This web registration system registers the data related to the foreign patients in all hospitals in 81 provinces. The data stored in the system is obtained as monthly reports.

After data collection, the data were analysed for the purposes of the study. Excel and SPSS programs were used. Results are interpreted.

In this study there are two limitations. First, information regarding the small-scale health care institutions and data related to medical tourists who have not been recorded in the country were excluded from evaluation.

Second, because of collecting last two-year data by the ministry of health, advance analysis (factor analysis, trend analysis, etc.) cannot be made.

Discussion

Overall strategy should be supported by some sub strategies, during determining the vision, strategic purposes or master plan regarding to medical tourism. These sub strategies are described as follows:

- i. Position strategy.
- ii. Core competence strategy
- iii. Business model strategy

In order to become a leader for Turkey in the medical tourism sector; paralleling the strategic approach, the following concrete steps should be taken:

- Focus on marketing studies.
- Give importance to standardization and accreditation.
- Medical tourism platform should be initiated through both public and private support.
- Establish, audit and develop the trust systems in government-sponsored.

- Establish the integrative systems.
- Promote subcontractors in the medical tourism.
- Prepare the national master plan of medical tourism.

In order to have a competitive advantage in the global level, there is an urgent need for conscious and planned approaches in the framework of long-term “visionary competitive strategy” instead of cyclical and improvised solutions. Medical tourism due to creating the high value added, has become a sector, where large scale investments by developed countries and the competition increased day by day. To achieve and sustain competitive advantage in the medical tourism sector with high competition:

- (i) first mover advantage
- (ii) unique competencies
- (iii) continuous investments to competencies.

The aspect of “vision and leadership” achieving above aims will be important steps.

Positioning Turkey in the global market, building the institutional competencies and developing effective business models are required from the perspective of management. From the point of scientific view, on the other hand, diverse studies in field of human resource, marketing, institutional and management capacity, potential foreign markets, and etc. are immediately needed. It will be more much useful giving the opportunity for international comparisons.