

Challenges Facing Medical Tourism in Jordan from View of Tourism Decision Makers

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Abstract

Viewpoint of a sample of decision-makers in the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism. To achieve this goal, a questionnaire of 13 items was constructed. After verifying its validity and consistency, it was applied to a random sample of (180) members of the tourism decision makers in the sector. Therapeutic tourism, data were entered into the SPSS program for analysis. The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan due to the two sex variables with scientific qualification, while statistically significant differences appeared due to the impact of the experience variable. In light of the previous results, the researcher recommended the necessity to take into consideration the list of challenges revealed by the current study and work to solve them in order to promote medical tourism in Jordan. The need to review the cost of medical treatment and reduce taxes as much as possible in this sector, where the high cost represents the most prominent challenges facing the tourism sector in general and particularly medical tourism.

Keywords: Jordan, Challenges, Medical Tourism.

Introduction

Tourism represents the desire of individuals to move from one place to another for a temporary or limited period of time for many purposes, including comfort, pleasure, recreation or treatment. Each year, it is of great importance to prove the effectiveness of tourism in the environmental, economic and cultural aspects. Medical tourism is considered one of the main types of tourism whose main objective is to improve or maintain health, due to the high demand for this type of tourism in order to obtain advanced health care (Tyagi and Lama, 2016).

According to Uygun, & Ekiz, (2016) health tourism can be divided in three categories first: tourism for the elderly and the handicapped people which known as Wellness Tourism and including the nature tourism. Second: rehabilitations patients and SPA which known as health care tourism. Finally, Medical Tourism, which using modern technologies in surgical operations and advanced treatment methods

There is no uniformed definition of medical tourism, but most specialists use the term to refer to a journey that is motivated by medical action or activities that promote human physical and mental well-being (Carmen and Iuliana, 2014). Medical tourism is generally a general term that describes patients traveling for health services (Behrmann and Smith, 2010). According to Carrera and Bridges (2006) the concept of medical tourism means "organized travel outside the mandate of natural health care to promote individual health or restore it through medical intervention" and many literatures agree (Crozier and Baylis, 2006; Song, 2010) that, medical tourism means "travel for treatment in places where quality medical services are available at affordable prices. while Jagyasi (2009) mentioned that, the medical tourism was those activities related to the individual's desire to obtain health services elsewhere. Eggertson (2006) believes that the importance of medical tourism to the growing number of tourists seeking health care abroad is either due to the high cost of treatment internally or the desire to access services not available locally, such as innovative surgical techniques that have not yet been approved by Public or private insurance. However, despite the importance of medical tourism and its role in attracting tourists, many studies have shown that there are many challenges facing medical tourism, where (Iordache, 2013) that one of the main challenges facing medical tourism in industrialized countries is the high cost of treatment in those countries. The results of the study

(Priya, 2019) indicate that the main challenges facing medical tourism are the difficulty of coordinating the requirements of accommodation (hotels, restaurants) and the whereabouts of medical tourism, in addition to low support from governments to develop medical tourism and the high cost of medical tourism.

Regarding medical tourism in Jordan, the statistics issued by the official authorities the ministry of tourism, showed that medical tourism, which is considered as a major source of the economy, received income from medical tourism in Jordan amounted to 1.1 billion \$. Tourism income increased in 2018 by 29%, compared to 2015, and amounted to 3.727 billion Jordanian dinars, which represents what tourists spent on food, beverage, accommodation, and transport services, and benefiting service providers. (Al-Malkawy, 2019). On the other hand, several studies conducted on medical tourism, such as (Al Sarayrah, 2015 and Jabbari et al. 2012) indicated that there are many obstacles encountered medical tourism in Jordan, so this study revealed the main challenges facing medical tourism.

The Study Problem

Various countries of the world seek to strengthen their components of tourism, especially curative ones, due to its impact on the national income of these countries, and Jordan has succeeded in being the first in the Middle East and North Africa region as an attractive center for medical tourism. However, Jordanian officials confirm that there are many challenges that The medical tourism sector is facing, and this study seeks to uncover these challenges, and thus the problem of this study is determined by answering the following questions:

- What are the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan?
- Are there any statistical differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the challenges facing medical tourism due to the variables of sex, educational qualification, and experience?

Objectives of the study

This study aims to achieve the following:

1. Uncover the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan.
2. Identify the differences between the sample members in the challenges facing medical tourism due to the impact of gender, academic qualification and experience.

Importance of Study

This study is of theoretical and practical importance as follow:

First: Theoretical importance: the field of research in the field of medical tourism challenges is new in the Arab environment, as well as the scarcity of researches and studies dealing with this vital sector, which contributes to fill the shortage in this area; the usefulness of this sector when identifying the challenges facing it, which contributes to overcome the challenges.

Second: Practical importance: to alert decision-makers to the need to pay attention to this sector through the adoption of wise policies that will overcome the challenges facing the medical tourism sector in Jordan.

The Limits of the Study:

The present study was limited to the following determinants:

- A sample of workers in the Ministry of Tourism for the year 2019.
- The instrument of the study and its sincerity and consistency, therefore, the generalization of the results of this study is limited to the objective framework of its tools.

Literature review

Due to the importance of the tourism sector in general and medical tourism in particular, several studies have sought to reveal the most prominent challenges facing this sector where he

conducted (Hyder, Rydback, Borg, and Osarenkhoe, 2019) study aimed to uncover the factors affecting medical tourism in the Philippines, and to achieve this goal, an interview was conducted with a sample of (16) experts in the field of medical tourism in three medical centers: (Clinic Alpha), (Hospital Beta) and (Hospital Gamma) in the Philippines, and after analyzing the interviews, the results showed the existence of several challenges facing medical tourism, including the weak promotion of medical tourism products globally, the weakness of translation services with medical tourists from other countries, and the relative high Prices of some medical tourism services.

Radmanesh (2016) identifies the factors affecting the decision of American tourists and the study included research on cost factors, and quality of care Services, insurance, specialist doctors, travel opportunity, medical failures and communications for medical tourists throughout the case of medical tourism in eight countries. The results showed that the most important factors affecting medical tourism such as the cost of care, the results indicated that Factors have a mutual and important impact for tourists in making final decisions.

Hijazi (2016) conducted a study to identify the level of health care quality and its impact on the medical tourism industry in Jordanian hospitals through the selection of a sample of (573) patients, the results showed that the quality of health care ranged between medium and high, and that the most important factors affecting the medical tourism industry in Jordan is characterized by technological development and speed of service delivery, but the high cost of service was among the most prominent challenges facing the medical tourism industry in Jordan. In addition Al Sarayrah (2015) sought to assess the places of medical therapeutic tourism in Jordan in the Dead Sea region, and identify the most important sites facing natural tourism in Jordan, and the level of satisfaction of tourists with the quality of therapeutic services provided.

Jabbari et al., (2012) conducted a study to uncover the main challenges facing medical tourism in Iran. Qualitative research was adopted to collect data from representatives of private and public hospitals, government agencies and medical institutions. The results indicate that policies and regulations, government support, costs, capacity problems and community health care needs are the main obstacles to the development of this medical tourism in Iran.

More specific. Al Ebesat (2012) sought to assess the reality of medical tourism in Jordan and the evaluation of marketing systems in hospitals and the level of therapeutic services and factors affecting medical tourism in Jordan and the study concluded that there are many challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan, especially poor performance Institutional and high treatment costs, in addition to the weakness of physiotherapy sites in Jordan due to lack of medical technologies. Zagade and Sherkar (2020) attempt to highlights the effective management and HR policies along with a high level of international hygiene and infrastructure standards required for smooth operating system. Collection of information from the medical tourists through questionnaires from administrative heads of various hospitals and wellness center, and Collection of information through personal interviews. The researcher finds that cost is an important parameter compared to quality of doctors and treatment. The study shows that personal grooming and hygiene is given more importance, also hospitality of medical tourists is also an important parameter. Moreover, Availability of prescribed medicine in home country or city is a major hurdle in process of discharge or admission process.

A review of the previous studies shows that the challenges facing the tourism sector vary from place to place, which gives this study great importance in the Jordanian affairs, where the study adopted in the detection of these challenges by exploring the views of tourism decision makers in Jordan.

Methodology and Procedures

The methodology of the present study was based on three main steps: Reviewing the challenges facing medical tourism addressed by the theoretical literature, and then extracting a list of the most prominent challenges and classifying them within (13) patterns.

The study sample

A simple random sample consisting of (180) members of the decision makers in the medical tourism sector. This type of samples will provide an opportunity for all members of the original community to enter the research sample equally, without prejudice or direct intervention from researcher.

Study Tool

The study tool was constructed through a thorough review of the previous literature on therapeutic tourism, where a list of (13) paragraphs representing the most important challenges facing medical tourism was extracted. These challenges were also reformulated to conform to the nature of the tourism environment in Jordan. In order to ensure the accuracy of these paragraphs, the list was presented to a group of experts in Jordan to find out their views that these paragraphs are appropriate for the subject of the present study.

To ensure the validity of the construction of the questionnaire was applied to a survey sample of (20) workers in the medical tourism sector and the correlation coefficient of each paragraph with the tool as a whole ranged correlation between (0.57-0.88) correlation coefficients were acceptable degrees and statistically significant. The coefficient of stability of the questionnaire was calculated by the method of internal consistency according to the Cronbach Alpha equation (Cronbach Alpha) it has reached (0.84).

Results

This section presents the most important results of the field study which aimed to know the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan. The main findings are as follows:

What are the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan?

To answer this question, the frequency, percentages, arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the study sample were calculated on the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan. The table below shows that.

Table 1: Frequency distribution, percentages, arithmetic averages and standard deviations of medical tourism challenges in Jordan.

Rank	N	Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Disagree Never		Mean	Std. Deviation	level
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1	1	The high cost of medical services in Jordan	96	53.3	44	24.4	29	16.1	8	4.4	3	1.7	4.23	.99	high
2	11	Difficult access to places of medical tourism in Jordan	94	52.2	48	26.7	26	14.4	8	4.4	4	2.2	4.22	1.00	high
3	12	Lack of availability of modern equipment in medical tourism centers	95	52.8	44	24.4	25	13.9	14	7.8	2	1.1	4.20	1.02	high
4	3	Lack marketing of medical tourism in Jordan	80	44.4	66	36.7	23	12.8	11	6.1			4.19	.88	high
5	2	Lack of public facilities in medical tourism	78	43.3	66	36.7	30	16.7	3	1.7	3	1.7	4.18	.89	high
6	6	Lack of financial resources to stimulate the therapeutic swimming sector	85	47.2	56	31.1	22	12.2	13	7.2	4	2.2	4.14	1.03	high
7	13	Lack of interest in improving the quality of medical tourism services	87	48.3	50	27.8	26	14.4	11	6.1	6	3.3	4.12	1.08	high

Rank	N	Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Disagree Never		Mean	Std. Deviation	level
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
8	8	Lack of interest by senior management in identifying the health services needed by the paints	82	45.6	55	30.6	28	15.6	10	5.6	5	2.8	4.11	1.04	high
9	7	Lack of capacity of medical tourism places in Jordan	74	41.1	62	34.4	26	14.4	14	7.8	4	2.2	4.04	1.03	high
10	10	High taxes imposed on the medical tourism sector in Jordan	73	40.6	65	36.1	23	12.8	15	8.3	4	2.2	4.04	1.03	high
11	5	Lack of development of legislation governing the tourism sector in line with changes in the medical tourism sector	76	42.2	55	30.6	28	15.6	21	11.7			4.03	1.02	high
12	9	Increased competition in the neighboring countries of Jordan in the medical tourism sector	69	38.3	68	37.8	23	12.8	11	6.1	9	5.0	3.98	1.10	high
13	4	Lack of qualified human cadres in some medical tourism requirements	73	40.6	53	29.4	32	17.8	20	11.1	2	1.1	3.97	1.06	high

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of the sample of the study to the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan, where it is noted that most of the ratios and averages of ferries tended to have a high degree of impact in the field of challenges. The results of a square test were calculated for the differences in the respondents' opinions regarding the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan.

From the tabl(1) it showed that the challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan have a high impact. The previous result may be due to the fact that these challenges represent real obstacles that hinder the activation of medical tourism in Jordan. The study (Jabbari et al. 2012) indicated that there are many challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan.

Table 2:Theresult of the test of the square of differences in the opinions of respondents regarding the challenges facing medical tourism

N	Items	Value of kai square	Probability value	Median	level
1	The high cost of medical services in Jordan	5	.000	155.167	very high
2	Lack of public facilities in medical tourism	4	.000	135.500	High
3	Lack of availability of modern equipment in medical tourism centers	4	.000	73.467	High
4	Lack of qualified human cadres in some medical tourism requirements	4	.000	85.722	High
5	Lack of development of legislation governing the tourism sector in line with changes in the medical tourism sector	4	.000	42.800	high
6	Lack of financial resources to stimulate the therapeutic swimming sector	4	.000	126.389	high
7	Lack of capacity of medical tourism places in Jordan	4	.000	103.556	high
8	Lack of interest by senior management in identifying the health services needed by the paints	4	.000	116.056	high

N	Items	Value of kai square	Probability value	Median	level
9	Increased competition in the neighboring countries of Jordan in the medical tourism sector	4	.000	101.000	high
10	High taxes imposed on the medical tourism sector in Jordan	4	.000	106.778	high
11	Difficult access to places of medical tourism in Jordan	5	.000	150.444	high
12	Lack of availability of modern equipment in medical tourism centers	5	.000	147.389	high
13	Lack of interest in improving the quality of medical tourism services	4	.000	122.833	high

Table 2 shows that the median value was (5) for the responses of the study sample to the phrases (1, 11 and 12), and the median value (4) for the rest of the statements. Significant in the sense that there are significant differences at the level of significance (1%) and depending on what is shown in table (2) these results indicate the existence of statistically significant differences and at the level of significance (1%) between the answers of the members of this sample for the benefit of those who answered, I strongly agree with regard to the challenges facing medical tourism.

Table 3.Result of Kay square test for the total degree of challenges facing medical tourism in Jordan

	Value of the kai square	Probability value	Median	level
Challenges as a whole	4	.000	441.067	high

Table (3) shows that the median value was (4), for the answers of the study sample on all fields and the total score. It was also found that all the values of the square Kai calculated to denote the differences between the number of answers were significant values meaning that there are significant differences at the level of significance. According to Table 1 these results indicate that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance (1%) between the answers of the respondents in favor of the respondents who agreed with regards to the challenges facing medical tourism.

Are there any statistical differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the challenges facing medical tourism due to the variables of gender, educational qualification and experience?

To answer this question, tripartite analysis of the impact of gender, educational qualification and experience on the challenges facing medical tourism was used in Table

Table 4: Analyze tripartite variation of gender impact, educational qualification, and experience of the challenges facing medical tourism

Contrast Source	Total squares	Degrees of freedom	Average squares	Value of F	Statistical significance
Gender	33.336	1	33.336	.051	.821
Experience	5136.457	2	2568.228	3.943	.021
Qualification	2995.646	2	1497.823	2.300	.103
error	112016.394	172	651.258		
Total	126426.200	179			

Table (4) shows the following:

- There were no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) attributable to the effect of sex, where the value of P 0.051 and statistically significant 0.821.
- The presence of statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) attributable to the impact of experience, where the value of P 3.943 and a statistical significance of 0.021, and to show the marital differences statistically significant between the arithmetic averages were used post comparisons verbally as shown in Table (5).

– The absence of statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) attributable to the impact of scientific qualification, where the value of 2.300 p and a statistical significance of 0.103. The previous result may be attributed to the fact that these challenges face all medical tourists, regardless of their gender or scientific qualification, because these challenges are related to the same tourism sector, for example, the high cost of treatment or the weak capacity of medical tourism places in Jordan are all challenges that all tourists face.

Table 5: Dimensional comparisons in Scheffe' Test to the effect of experience

	Mean	Less than 5 years	5 years - 10 years	More than 10 years
Less than 5 years	123.45			
5 years - 10 years	137.14	13.69*		
More than 10 years	126.15	2.70	10.99*	

Table (5) shows that there are statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the experience category 5 years - 10 years on the one hand and each of the two categories of experience less than 5 years and more than 10 years on the other hand.

The previous result can be explained by emphasizing that experience plays a major role in identifying the nature of the challenges facing the tourism sector in Jordan, as high experience makes its owners fully aware of the most important challenges on the one hand and how to limit the impact of those challenges on the other hand.

Recommendations

In light of the above results, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Taking into consideration the list of challenges revealed by the present study and working to solve them in order to promote medical tourism in Jordan.
2. Increasing government support for the medical tourism sector in order to develop the facilities of this sector
3. Enacting legislations that facilitate the entry of tourists to Jordan and away from bureaucratic procedures in order to encourage tourist attraction.
4. Reconsidering the cost of medical services and reducing taxes as much as possible in this sector, where the high cost represents the most prominent challenges facing the tourism sector in general and medical tourism in particular.

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