

## Effective Factors on Development of Health Tourism (Case Study: Fars Province)

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**Abstract:** Health tourism is a branch of Industrial tourism. Health tourism provides medical services and makes it necessary to observe basic principles of tourism. Therefore, attention to health and medical infrastructures along with tourism industry infrastructures are of great importance as the secondary attractions; specifically in the regions with the health tourism in their development plans. Iran is among noteworthy regions with the ability to compete with other countries such as the Persian Gulf countries, because of its relative advantages in the treatment, whether natural (hot springs, mud, medical plants, pleasant climate, etc.) or unnatural (medication and treatment). This point is more serious and requires more profound studies and attention in some specific areas of the country (including Fars Province), since they possess more potentials in this regard. Therefore, in this study, Fars Province has been concentrated and investigated. The result of the study revealed a close and meaningful relationship between the province economic and social infrastructures as well as macro planning and management and its health tourism development.

**Key words:** Health tourism, socio-economic infrastructures, Fars Province, areas, country

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### INTRODUCTION

Health tourism is one of the greatest tourism industries resulted from interconnection of two lucrative industries: tourism and medicine.

Iran with a long history in medicine and treatment (traditional and modern) can change into one of the best medical tourism destinations in the global village. However, this has not realized yet and despite of the country's high potentials, it has not gained a wide share of this huge invisible export.

Health tourism is actually one branch of tourism. It emphasizes on providing medical services, however, it may cover other forms of tourism with the content of tourist's health. Development of these branches may affect the health of society. Referring the concept of health in physical, mental and social aspects, one may assign more profound meaning to health tourism in order to embrace some other branches such as nature tourism or ever sport tourism. However, restriction of the health tourism just to provide the tourists with medical treatment in health centers has led to consideration of these patients as tourists (Ali, 2011).

According to the WTO, one motivating goal for tourism is health. Actually, health tourism is practiced to maintain, improve and regain physical and mental health. These travels varies from 24 h, 1 year.

Tourists leave their permanent settlements and travel to use medical services in destinations and to recover and

regain their mental and physical health. In other words, health tourism means to use opportunity in order to offer tourism services. Of course planning for such services provides appropriate possibilities for tourism development. Health tourism is not just providing medical services but it is a combination of these services and basic principles of tourism. For this purpose, we have to consider the medical centers as the primary attractions and then concentrate on the secondary attractions.

The primary attraction is what motivates tourist to visit a destination, however, an attraction requires proper facilities as the complementary services. Moreover, since the tourist select destination for treatment, the complementary or secondary services should satisfy the tourist's related needs, so that they can experience and feel relaxation of healthy life. This requires that the health tourism and reception of tourists to be assigned to the specialized sections (Vali, 2007).

The medical centers which are to be applied for this purpose should be deployed as offices with the secondary tourism facilities. It requires a more precise definition of health tourism as well as more facilities to provide more favorable services.

Obviously, there are differences between the tourist who seeks just treatment and one who wants more tourism services and facilities beside treatment. These differences need different plantings.

Since, special medical services such as stem cells, spinal cord injuries, infertility, aggressive radiology,

kidney and liver transplantation in Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Mashhad are superior that those in neighbouring countries, authorities must attempt to develop this branch of tourism. The importance of the problem makes it necessary to conduct more studies in this regard.

**Literature review:** Atkinson studied health tourism in the United States and concluded that health tourism is more efficient in the cities with high quality medical facilities.

Edward (2007) conducted a study in China and reported that health tourism has activated many capacities through Chinese traditional medicine and changed it into the most profitable branch of tourism in the country. Zamani in his thesis under the title of "Effect of Health Tourism on Development of Tehran" concluded that improvement of the health tourism infrastructures in Tehran may help the metropoli's sustainable development. Kazemi (2006) in a similar study using a survey and comparative research methods among the Tehran and Isfahan statistical population and applied a questionnaire as the research instrument for data collection. The research assumptions were approved. Rahnamai (2008) in a research on "consequences of optimal distribution of the health tourism infrastructures" concentrated on preparing appropriate infrastructures and increase of domestic and foreign tourists in Tehran.

The findings of the research revealed that the present tourism attractions in the city are able to motivate many tourists to visit but to make the city capable of competing with the Persian Gulf countries requires changes in investment mechanism and more secure investment conditions. It worth mentioning that there has not any comprehensive research on health tourism development in Fars Province (Rezvani, 2009).

**Health tourism in Fars Province:** Fars Province and its center Shiraz have potential and actual medical capabilities as well as unique medical tourism. Shiraz is one of the health tourism destinations of Iran.

The city has been a major medical center in the country and in the region from the past. This city is one of the most important transplant centers in the country with over 10 thousands corneal, liver, bone marrow, pancreas, heart and cochlear transplants. Moreover, Fars Province is famous for the medical initiatives, including the first open spinal cord of the fetus in the womb in the Middle East; implanting miniature telescope in the patient's eye and joining to the two countries carrying this surgery in the world; production of three recombinant proteins for diagnosis of human tuberculosis; production of blood clotting pad for the first time in Iran; successful skin graft from the brain dead patient; treatment of a certain type of eye distraction using leg muscle in Shiraz;

successful separation of the conjoined twins; concurrent liver and kidney transplantation for the first time in the country; establishment of the largest hospital for injuries and burn accidents in the Middle East; hundreds of hospitals equipped with advanced medical devices; holding hundreds of national and international medical conferences with participation of physicians and specialists from various countries, etc. They have caused many people from Persian Gulf states and neighboring provinces to visit Fars and to receive medical services.

The capacity of the province (especially Shiraz) is to the extent that apparently it has potential to become a medical hub in the Islamic countries through a precise, detailed and comprehensive plan (Amini, 2012).

Shiraz health tourism accommodations depending on the country's regulations and culture are as follows: in-hotel medical tests such as diabetes, cholesterol and hypertension, treatment regions, daily exercise program, yoga, heated pools, massage, Sauna, hydrotherapy, sunbathing (under medical supervision), addiction withdrawal mud bath, muscle training, relaxation, beauty treatments, etc. Generally, these services include health and health tourism (medical supervision and natural treatment) and medical rehabilitation programs.

#### **SPECIALIZED FACILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH TOURISM IN SHIRAZ**

**Namazi hospital:** Namazi hospital is public, educational, specialty and sub-specialty center established in 1955. The hospital is in a garden with the area 25 ha, 7500 m<sup>2</sup> infrastructure and 300 beds. It was the most equipped hospital of the time in the Middle East and developed in the next years.

Now it possesses an initial examination, 4 emergency departments and 29 hospitalization sections in four specialties: internal medicine, surgery, special care and children; 9 paraclinics and 9 outpatient sections as follows:

**Emergency departments:** Screening and triage, intensive treatment level 2: A and 2: B (Heart emergency), assessment and clinical treatment, ICU emergency, Pediatric emergency and Infants emergency.

**Internal section:** General 1, general 2, digestion, kidney and lymph, blood, neurology 1 and 2, bone marrow, heart cares 1 and 3.

**Surgical section:** Post-anesthesia cares, general surgery 1 and 3, pediatric surgery, cardiac surgery, plastic and reconstructive surgery or pediatric surgery, neurosurgery, kidney and urinary tract surgery.

**Specialty sections:** Transplantation, central intensive care, cardiac care 2, internal intensive care, pediatric intensive care, intensive surgery care, neurosurgery intensive care, neonatal surgery intensive care, surgical intensive care of children.

**Children sections:** Pediatric internal 1, 2 and 3 (pediatric surgery, pediatric internal intensive care and pediatric and infants emergency sections are active in surgery, internal and emergency sections of the Namazi hospital).

**Paraclinical sections:** Laboratories (immune serology, parasitology, blood bank, biochemistry, urinalysis, hematology, cytology, microbiology, quality control laboratory, nuclear medicine, surgical supplies, pharmacy, radiology (angiography, MRI, radiography, ultrasound, CT scan, fluoroscopy, mammography), physiotherapy, ECG, bone densitometry, blood gases measurement.

**Outpatient section:** Endoscopy, echocardiography (pediatric and adults) angiography, cardiology, nuclear medicine, hemodialysis (pediatric and adults), crusher and chemotherapy.

**Specifications of Namazi hospital:** Namazi hospital is owner of the first modern medical document system in the country. It is also the first center of transplantation surgery in the country where kidney, liver, pancreas, heart and bone marrow transplants are performed. Among the other services of this hospital, we may refer to plastic, pediatric and neurologic surgeries. Its nuclear medicine section is the greatest center in the country and its services covers the neighboring provinces.

Having various specialties (orthopedic, pediatric allergy and immunology, anesthesia, pathology, transplantation, nuclear medicine, general surgery, kidney and urinary tract surgery, neurosurgery, radiation oncology, radiology, gynecology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, pediatrics, infectious disease, heart cardiology, neurology, internal medicine) and subspecialties (plastic and reconstructive surgery, thoracic surgery, vascular surgery, cardiac surgery, blood and cancer internal medicine, glands, gastroenterology and hematology, pediatric infectious diseases, pediatric endocrinology, pediatric cardiology, cardiovascular, pediatric kidney, pediatric gastrointestinal, pediatric gastroenterology, pediatric neurology and infants).

Having specialized research centers of transplants, trauma, hematology, endocrinology and metabolism, gastroenterology, clinical microbiology and the center for clinical developments.

**Construction of cancer hospital in South country**

**(Shiraz):** Construction of the cancer hospital has been started in an area of 700 thousand m<sup>2</sup> with participation of the Shiraz Medical Science University and Endowment office of Fars Province called the South Cancer Association, beside the center for transplant medical education center in Shiraz. It is estimated that the new hospital requires 1000 bln. rials which would be provided, by charitable intuitions and people as well as issuing securities in Tehran and Fars Provinces.

The securities are issued for 500, 1000 and 2000 thousands rials and citizens may buy them to the same extent they are able to participate in this charity.

**Subspecialty hospital of mother and child Shiraz:**

The hospital is the first pediatric specialized hospitals and one of the largest centers for treatment of infertility and laparoscopy in South of the country. It is equipped with the most advanced medical devices, in order to provide the patients with high quality and precise services as one of the hospital's crucial policies.

The hospital consists of the largest laparoscopy surgery section in South Iran, center of obesity treatment, center of medical tourism, centers for (telemedicine), cleft palate, homeopathy, infertility and IVF, speech therapy and audiology, stem cells and gene therapy, pediatric orthopedic, cosmetic and plastic surgery, gynecology and obstetrics and endoscopic gynecology, physiological delivery (in-water delivery) and PICA, NICU, pediatric emergency, clinic, surgery, ophthalmology, ear, nose and throat, neurology, nephrology, laparoscopy, physiotherapy, plastic and cosmetic surgery and tests to determine the allergens and allergies.

**Specialty and subspecialty or Dibeheht hospital:**

Ordibeheht hospital was established in 2003 in Shiraz with participation and cooperation of the prominent professors and experts of Shiraz Medical Sciences University. It possesses specialized and sub-specialized sections of: boarding emergency, open heart surgery, ICU, Cardiac surgery, CCU, heart patients CCU, angiography and angioplasty post CCU, specialized obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmic and internal medicine, etc., as well as specialized surgical sections: various fractures and orthopedics, neurosurgery, general and reconstructive, cosmetic and plastic, gynecology, ear, nose and throat, eye, jaw and face, kidney and urinary tract and paraclinical sections: radiology, ultrasound, laboratory and pathology, pharmacy, heart rehabilitation, exercise testing, cardiography and electrocardiography.

**Health complex plan for Fars Province (site):** The project is in an area of 922 ha in North West Shiraz with a nice weather. The necessary studies have been started and they are currently underway in the final stages. To use ease further and providing facilities and special advantages to investors of the project, the region joined the special economic zone. All investors of the project would benefit the related advantages and facilities. The complex would have following centers and sections: specialized clinics (stem cells, orthopedic, transplant, obstetrics and gynecology and infertility, ophthalmology, dentistry, cosmetics, skin and hair, mental disorders, etc.); specialized polyclinics and diagnostic centers, addiction treatment and rehabilitation, geriatric and hospice physical illnesses and disabilities; alternative medicine centers (hydrotherapy for men and women, traditional and herbal medicine), Zen therapy, relaxation, movement therapy, music therapy, hobby therapy and homeopathy, etc. Centers for medical researchers and technology (assembly of the medical aids, medical books printing and publishing, medical and cosmetic technologies, medical achievements exhibitions, packaging, etc.), non-hotel residential areas such as physicians and staff site, managers and practitioners villas, sites with tourism identities including sports, recreation and entertainment, showcasing and exhibitions for health tourists, cultural and historical heritage, ecotourism, etc., as well as halls, cinemas, theaters, prayer and cultural centers, library, newspapers lounge and communications.

## CONCLUSION

Shiraz has long been considered as one of the country's medical hubs. The first Medical Sources University of Shiraz was established in 1946 through formation of the Higher Education Health Institute. The institute changed into Medical University in 1949. Presence of the prominent Iranian and world scientists made this university as the axis of the country's medical education. Established of health tourism complex in the center of province and providing medical diagnostic services by modern technologies and the latest scientific methods as well as employing the experienced professors and senior physicians have made Shiraz of privileged status in Iran Middle East. The province's capabilities in health tourism are as follows: famous and skilled physicians in all specialty and subspecialty of medicine in the province with capability of training students in various medical and paramedical courses; hospitals and specialty and subspecialty medical centers with advanced devices and equipment in the Holy city of Shiraz; long history of providing health services and difficult surgeries

for the people in the South of the country as well as for residents of the Persian Gulf countries; very high potential of medicine, investment in construction of hospitals and health centers aiming at developing health tourism in the province; specialized transplant centers for: corneal, liver, bone marrow, pancreas, heart and cochlear implant; being the first in medical fields of open spinal cord of fetus in the womb in the Middle East, miniature telescope implant in the eyes of patients, producing three recombination proteins for diagnosis of human tuberculosis type 3, producing blood clothing pad, successful skin graft from the death stroke patient, treatment of certain type of eye distraction strabismus using leg muscle, the first baby born through embryo separation and transfer, etc.

The following strategies have been adopted to promote health tourism in Fars Province: facilitating the processor of issuing visas for the patients and relative; compliance with international standards in the field of health tourism and acquiring the international certificates; formation of supreme council of health tourism headed by the supreme council of health tourism headed by the supreme authority of the province and executive structure as well as specifying the duties of the public departments and agencies and private sectors; strategic planning in health tourism development of the province (e.g., provincial determination to set up health tourism and providing the necessary conditions for achieving this goal).

On the health issues, globalization and free trade, development of the transport, reduction of technology gap between developed and developing countries rate and development of information technology, specially internet as the main factors should be emphasized in the government's macro-planning. Providing electronic visas in the Larestan-Farse international airport and expediting the visas issuing process for the health tourists.

## SUGGESTIONS

Therefore, the following solutions are suggested for the purpose of realization of the goals:

- Advertising at the national and international levels, in order to make known the Fars Provinces medical capabilities
- Providing facilities to the health tourists
- Public support for the health care projects and construction
- Encouraging the private sector to invest in the province
- Establishment of health tourism officers in the province

- Setting up health agencies in the province
- Reduction of tariffs and devoting subsidies to encourage tourists to use medical services of the province

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