

The Phenomenal of Dental Tourism: The Case Study of Hungary

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Abstract

Medical tourism plays an important role in the tourism industry as in 2018 there were 14 million medical tourists. Hungary is a prime destination for medical tourism, especially for dental tourism, which takes 30% of the supply from all the treatments in Hungary. The aim of this thesis is to find out why foreign patients are traveling to Hungary for dental care and to what extent Hungarian dentists benefit from this phenomenon. In order to find answers to the research questions, both secondary and primary research were conducted. This thesis intends to support the Hungarian dentist's research-based decision making and the further discussion of the topic helps the reinforcement of the strategical choice, whether targeting local or foreign patients is more beneficial for their business. Furthermore, suggestions to the clinics on the maintenance of attractiveness of the main dental tourism destination – Hungary - are presented. In this research a qualitative research was applied, where in-depth interviews were conducted with Hungarian doctors besides foreign patients. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with dentists, who work in a clinic in Budapest and one Skype interview with a doctor, who works in Győr. Foreign patients from Austria, Germany and the US were interviewed via e-mail.

The results show that there are many reasons for foreign patients to come to Hungary to receive dental care, as well as for dentists choosing to focus on dental tourism. For patients, the main motivation factors are low cost, less waiting time, up-to-date technology, quality treatment and care. Both secondary and primary research show that Hungary is known as the capital city of Europe for dental care. Furthermore, profit seemed the most important motivating factor for doctors treating foreign patients, followed by diversity, experience, education and the purchase of modern equipment. In order for Hungary and thus the clinics to remain the primary destination for dental tourists, this paper recommends changes to existing services provided, such as having co-operations with foreign clinics, to evaluate whether including a small lab at their medical center would be appropriate. Increasing the level of transparency among employees is highly recommended as this would lead to knowledge sharing on the time frame of treatments as well as on the planned length of the client's stay. This will lead to a deduction of additional costs and to the number of after-care treatments.