RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN MEDICAL TOURISM INDUSTRY IN POINT OF VIEW OF MEDICAL TOURISM POLICY MAKERS OF SHIRAZ IN 2017

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Abstract

Objectives: Medical tourism refers to traveling to places where the individual could use medical services. Therefore, such a travel requires various activities in any of which the individual health is considered. Main samples of these types of travels include healthcare, beauty of organs, passing convalescence and rehabilitation, using hydrotherapy springs and good climate regions. The general objective of this study is to analyze the relation between digital marketing and medical tourism in point of view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers.

Methods: This study is applied in respect of objective and in respect of collecting descriptive information it is of correlation studies type in which data collection was performed through library and field method. The statistical population of this study includes all strategic personnel and managers of Shiraz Medical Sciences University which is equal to 97. Regarding Cochran table for low number societies, the sample number was considered equal to the population. For collecting data, for the role of digital marketing in medical tourism industry from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers, scholar made questionnaire was used. This questionnaire includes 40 questions. The questionnaires were regulated based on 5-value Likert scale. Reliability and validity of this questionnaire was confirmed. For statistical techniques used for analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire, various statistical methods have been used. In the research descriptive section, descriptive statistical methods, relative frequency distribution and its percent diagrams have been used and in the inferential statistics analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been used for investigating data normality and then Pearson correlation factor and route analysis have been used

Results: The study results showed that there is a relation between digital marketing and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Also, there is a relation between factors relating to product or service, advertising, place, individuals, evidences and physical facilities and price and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers.

Conclusion: Study concludes that, educating usage of modern marketing methods and mixing them should be one of operational objectives of healthcare organization and this should be considered in educational planning.

Keywords: Digital marketing, health policy making, medical tourism, Shiraz.

INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism in various countries is considered the key force of the country economic growth and progress and by providing strategic opportunities, besides local prosperity causes employment and creating income and reducing poverty[1,2,3]. Due to significant of tourism and the role it plays in the progress of cultural, social and economic development[4]. At present, tourism industry has designated the place second great industry of the world. Considering the considerable location of tourism industry, this industry should have a strong and congruent to setting marketing. The stronger and more suitable the marketing management system, they will be more successful. Tourism marketing is an interactional process between providers and consumers (tourists) during which tourism goods and services which are special to this industry are exchanged[5]. In other words, tourism marketing is a new topic which points to identifying and predicting requirements of

tourists and providing facilities for supplying needs and informing them and creating revisit motive in them[5]. Here, one of aspects which could be the origin of many evolutions for sustainable development of tourism industry is the exact identification of current status through tourism marketing. Intangibility, instability, heterogeneity, inseparability and non-possession are considered among important features of this service industry that reveal the necessity of using a combined model of marketing for tourism[6-12]. Seven foundations model of mixed marketing is a noteworthy topic in tourism industry that could be used in tourism industry for identifying the current status and reaching the optimal status.

Necessity and significance of the considered issue study is that medical sciences system plays a significant role in today societies. Since the organizations are the location of aggregation of many human and financial economic assets, they have a great potential for many works and efficiency and effectiveness of employees could help the organization[8]. At present era people more than any other time use internet for searching information relating to travel, travel planning and purchasing travel services. Greenspan in a study has reported that tow third of internet users use online consultations for planning their travels[9]. Tourism information available in internet networks raise the awareness of tourists and leads to better planning and more optimal usage of people time and money. So, internet has turned a dominant media for searching information relating to tourism and this information search plays an important role in decision making process of tourists. In fact, this reality in today world that internet has turned to a channel for selling and marketing tourism industry has been accepted and we should confirm that one of the greatest differences of internet and modern media with traditional media is the possibility of providing informing possibility and providing services concurrently by this media, while the traditional media merely undertook the responsibility of informing[10]. Castaneda and Rodriguez showed that more people are satisfied with the information obtained from internet and this satisfaction includes both dimensions of satisfaction including satisfaction from the selected destination and satisfaction with the information obtained about the respective destination[11]. Advantages of tourism industry using internet includes cases such as global access, reducing costs, ease of updating information, more capability in conveying information to target addressees, creating the possibility of selecting respective product by the customers and so on. Modern media by facilitating active access to information have turned to an effective key in tourism industry and internet websites have turned to a suitable tool providing services[13]. Also, internet and modern media give this possibility to customers to compare information in a special field. When using internet, customers are able to cover all travel options, residential services and transportation, travel packages and so on and this type of information naturally helps tourists to plan for complex travels like long travels. Today, we could claim that internet has turned to the

most important channel of providing tourism services which has led to deep changes in interaction with customers[14]. Another aspect of internet network and modern media which has recently found popularity among people is weblogs and micro-weblogs that have created the possibility of updating writings, sharing pictures and even video files and the possibility of sending comment by viewers which have turned them to one of attractive phenomena for marketers which could also be used in tourism industry marketing[15]. Information technology and communication by creating wide possibility of searching information which is considered an important section of purchase decision making process, as internet achievement, not only has reduced risks but has raised the travels quality. In this regard, electronic marketing with the meaning of using digital and internet technologies such as electronic pots and websites have been created for selling tourism goods and services[16]. So that this type of marketing has been treated as a valuable lever for helping traditional marketing and regarding the nature of medical tourism in this field could be utilized as a suitable instrument[17]. This study investigates the relation between digital marketing and medical tourism from viewpoint of medical tourism policy makers and since no study has been performed under this title, so this study is distinguishable.

METHODS

This study is applied in respect of objective and in respect of collecting descriptive information it is of correlation studies type in which data collection was performed through library and field method. The statistical population of this study includes all strategic personnel and managers of Shiraz Medical Sciences University which is equal to 97. Regarding Cochran table for low number societies, the sample number was considered equal to the population. For collecting data, for the role of digital marketing in medical tourism industry from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers, scholar made questionnaire was used. This questionnaire includes 40 questions.

The questionnaires were regulated based on 5-value Likert scale. Reliability and validity of this questionnaire was confirmed. For statistical techniques used for analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire, various statistical methods have been used. In the research descriptive section, descriptive statistical methods, relative frequency distribution and its percent diagrams have been used. And in the inferential statistics analysis, Kolmogorov- Smirnov test has been used for investigating data normality and then Pearson correlation factor and route analysis have been used[18].

RESULTS

For using parametric tests for investigating the study hypothesis, the hypothesis ofvariables normality was declared using Kolmogorov- Smirnov method (by observing Table 1 and investigating significance of all subscales greater than 0.05). As it is observed in Table

2, regarding correlation factor and significance level, there is a positive significant relation between all the study variables.

As it is shown in Table 1, the intensity of impact of modern marketing variable in the medical tourism industry is 0.80. Fitness indicators is one of the most important stages of modeling structural equations and this criterion shows that if the model shown by data confirms the research measurement model or not, the model indicator has been shown in Table 3.

Table 1: The results of variables normality test.

| Sig	Z	Variable
0.268	0.421	Modern marketing
0.97	1.101	Medical tourism
0.109	0.398	Factors relating to product or service
0.097	0.108	Factors relating to advertisement
0.132	1.369	Factors relating to place
0.205	0.362	Factors relating to individuals
0.102	1.265	Factors relating to the process of providing services
0.241	.0652	Factors relating to physical evidences and facilities
0.143	1.324	Factors relating to price
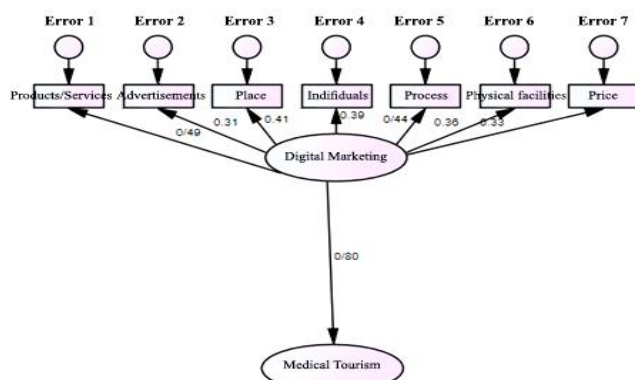
Figure 1: Digital marketing and error.

DISCUSSION

This study seeks to answer these hypotheses that:

First hypothesis: there is a relation between digital marketing and medical tourism from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding the correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0.810). There is a significant positive relation between digital marketing and status from viewpoint if Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Therefore, based on the significance level, the study hypothesis is confirmed. This finding is consistent with the following studies: Hadson *et al*., Katler *et al*., Inskeep *et al*., Tsangand Chen *et al*., Esfahani *et al*[19,20,21]. Gholipour *et al*., in his study under the title of prioritizing factors effective on mixed marketing of hoteling industry by ranking method concluded that the price factor among other factors of hotel marketing has

the highest priority in supplying customers' satisfaction[22]. After price, respectively individuals, process, promotion, product, physical evidences and efficiency are in the next priorities. Kazemi *et al*., in his study under the title of investigating organizational citizens perception in Chabahar tourism development, stated that since tourism marketing in any country or a part of its depends on the buyers interests and perceptions, Zahedani citizens motive for traveling Chabahar is respectively cultural, commercial, physical activities, achieving peace, naturalism, luxuries and emotional[7]. Tsai *et al*., in their study under the title of the relation between advertisement and cultural tourist attraction in Iran stated that utilizing effective tools and factors in advertisement is among factors which could improve and develop the state tourism industry[28]. Using survey research method, they concluded that in view of cultural tourists the most important advertising tool for attracting cultural tourist respectively include: marketing, internet, book and articles about tourism attractions[25,26,27].

Second hypothesis: there is a relation between factors relating to product or service with medical tourism in view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding the correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0.733), there is a significant and positive relation between factors relating to service or product and medial tourism. Therefore, based on the significance level, the study hypothesis is confirmed. Ghadiri Masoum *et al*., in their study evaluated and prioritized the factors influential on rural tourism marketing by P7 mixed model in Mazandaran province and concluded that indicators of advertisement, people and product in impacting rural tourism are more significant[28,29,30]. Barghi *et al*., in their study evaluated and ranked the indicators effective on rural tourism marketing using P7 mixed model in cities of Amol, Babol, Babolsar and Sari and concluded that components of advertisement, product and people have high priority in tourism marketing[7]. Farzin and Nadalipour *et al*., in their study under the title of factors effective on competitive advantage of tourism destinations in Iran regarding Chabahar city concluded that 5 factors of planning, destination policy, destination management, axial attractions, support resources and reinforcing factors are effective on tourism destinations[24, 31,32,33].

Third hypothesis: there is a relation between factors relating to advertising and medical tourism from point of view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0.830), there is a significant and positive relation between factors relating to advertisement and medical tourism in view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Therefore, based on the significance level, the research hypothesis is confirmed. Papoli *et al*., in their study using previous literature, investigated tourism marketing philosophies and their application method in management of tourism marketing during various periods[9]. Uzama *et al*. in his study under the title of Japan tourism marketing using survey methods concluded that tourism development includes attention to development dimensions in all individual levels,

guiding the assets, directing technology progress and structural and institutional change which is consistent with present and future needs of tourists[31, 34,35,36].

Fourth hypothesis: there is a relation between factors relating to place and medical tourism from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding the correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0.612), there is a significant and positive relation between factors relating to place and medical tourism from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Therefore, based on significance level, the study hypothesis is confirmed. Williams *et al.*, in their study under the title of hospital tourism marketing, envision, feeling and amusement concluded that the status of historical places, ancient works; residential facilities and creating marketing offices and informing are among effective factors in development of tourism industry[33]. Woodside and Sakai in their study under the title of evaluating performance of governmental

tourism marketing plans provided 4 proposals for plans evaluation:

1. Continuous and formal training of plans evaluation,
2. Investigating both aspects of activities and plans,
3. Using multiple theories based on various paradigms for investigating performance of tourism marketing plans.
4. Changing the governmental marketing strategies form from one-sided to relational and participatory marketing.

Tsai *et al.*, in their study under the title of place attachment and tourism marketing in Singapore international tourists using questionnaire concluded that the affinity of various places especially in respect of emotional features, cognitive motives, psychological growth and group awareness have a considerable impact on tourism marketing[28].

Table 2: The results of Pearson correlation test.

Significance level *(p)*	Pearson correlation factor *(r)*	Statistical indicator and variable
0.001 *	810*0/*	There is a relation between digital marketing and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001*	773*0/*	There is a relation between factors relating to advertisement and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001*	830*0/*	Between factors relating to place and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001 *	612*0/*	Between factors relating to individuals and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001 *	713*0/*	Between factors relating to physical evidences and facilities and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001 *	770*0/*	Between factors relating to process and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001 *	823*0/*	Between factors relating to physical facilities and evidences and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers
0.001 *	703*0/*	Between factors relating to price and medical tourism from viewpoint of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers

Table 3: The content and research model general fitness indicators.

Acceptable fitness	Primary model	Abbreviation	Name of indicator	Indicators categorizing
Greater than 5%	20.12	X^2	Qui-square covered level	Absolute indicators of fitness
GFI> 90%	0.92	GFI	Goodness of fit indicator	
AGFI>90%	0.91	AGFI	Modified goodness of fit indicator	
Higher than 50%	0.90	PNFI	Normalized economic fitness indicator	Economic indicators of fitness
RMSEA<10%	0.060	RMSEA	Estimation error root square	
Between 1 -3	1.42	CMIN/df	Normalized qui-square to freedom degree	

Fifth hypothesis: there is a relation between factors relating to individuals and medical tourism from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0713), there is a significant and positive relation between factors relating to individuals and medical tourism. Therefore, based on significance level, the hypothesis is confirmed[37].

Sixth hypothesis: there is a relation between factors relating to process and medical tourism from view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0.730), there is a significant and positive relation

between factors relating to process and medical tourism. Therefore, based on significance level, the study hypothesis is confirmed.

Seventh hypothesis: there is a relation between physical evidences and facilities and medical tourism from view point of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding the correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=0.823), there is a significant and positive relation between physical evidences and facilities and medical tourism. Therefore, based on the significance level, the hypothesis is confirmed. Papoli *et al.*, in their study using previous literature, investigated tourism

marketing philosophies and their application method in management of tourism marketing during various periods[9]. They posed various tourism marketing philosophies with order of marketing with origin of product, sale, customer and society. Eighth hypothesis: there is a relation between factors relating to price and medical tourism in view of Shiraz medical tourism policy makers. Regarding the correlation factor and significance level (p=0.001, r=703) there is a significant and positive relation between factors relating to price and medical tourism. Therefore, based on the significance level, the hypothesis is confirmed. Gholipour *et al.* in their study under the title of prioritizing factors effective on mixed marketing of hostelling industry by ranking method concluded that the price factor among other factors of hotel marketing has the highest priority in supplying customers' satisfaction[35]. After price, respectively individuals, process, promotion, product, physical evidences and efficiency are in the next priorities. Tsai *et al.* in their study under the title of the relation between advertisement and cultural tourist attraction in Iran stated that utilizing effective tools and factors in advertisement is among factors which could improve and develop the state tourism industry[28].

CONCLUSION

Using survey research method, it can be concluded that in view of cultural tourists the most important advertising tool for attracting cultural tourist respectively include: marketing, internet, book and articles about tourism attractions.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Yazdanpanah A: leadership and oversight of the design and implementation of the research activity. **Parsaei A:** data collection, writing: preparing the first draft. **Jeihooni AK:** visualization and research. The final manuscript was read and approved by all authors.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets generated during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest associated with this work.

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