



# A Systematic Review of the Factors Affecting the Growth of Medical Tourism in Iran



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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Planning in the field of medical tourism is of particular importance. The main objective of this research was to identify and analyze the factors affecting the growth of medical tourism in Iran. It could be a small step toward promoting entrepreneurship and increasing non-oil revenues in the country.

**Methods:** Studies published in the Persian and English language during the years 2006-2019 in Science Direct, ProQuest, Springer, Medline, Scopus, Ovid, and SID databases were reviewed, and the findings were then compared.

**Results:** A total of 75 articles out of 2631 unique publications were included in this study. Most articles reported studies performed for all patients, including the whole country (Iran) (n=22, 30%), Shiraz only (n=11, 15%), Tehran only (n=11, 15%), Mashhad only (n=6, 8%), Isfahan only (n=5, 6%), and Ardabil only (n=4, 5%).

**Conclusion:** Given the history of Iranian hospitals in attracting foreign patients and the analysis of their status, there are many limitations in achieving a proper standing in the medical tourism industry. Strategies offered by various managers and authorities in tourism can lead to increased attraction of medical tourists to public and private hospitals in Shiraz, relying on the capabilities and potential of Shiraz and its health sectors, including climate and nature, cultural and historical attractions, renowned practitioners, advanced equipment, facilities, and methods, and thereby generating more foreign exchange earnings and employment.

**Keywords:** Medical Tourism, Hospitals, Growth and Development, Iran

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## Introduction

According to the definition of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a tourist refers to a person who travels and stays away from his or her usual environment for more than 24 hours and less than one year for various purposes, including recreation, rest, or business.<sup>1</sup> Another reason for tourists is the search for healthcare that is known as a branch of tourism and has a long history.<sup>2</sup> In its broadest conceptualization, medical tourism refers to “travel with the explicit purpose of obtaining health services abroad”.<sup>3</sup> Medical tourism today is one of the most important indicators of the tourism industry and has many socio-economic benefits. The integration of medical tourism with consumer health guidance programs is potentially a pivot for accelerating the development of medical tourism and economic development.<sup>4,5</sup> Medical tourism has experienced remarkable growth in the last two decades.<sup>6,7</sup> Various studies have suggested that the main reasons for this development are as follows: increasing

waiting lists in advanced countries,<sup>8-11</sup> increasing international exchange rates, the Internet (With the development of the communications network, new companies have been formed as the interface between international patients and the hospital network, which provides basic information to the patients.), the low cost of services in developing countries,<sup>11-14</sup> and modern technologies and equipment that fit into new health services.<sup>15</sup> In Iran's fourth development plan of Article 87, the ground for effective participation in world markets and the transformation of the Islamic Republic of Iran into a center for addressing the health and medical needs of the region has been emphasized. Considering the fact that Iran has neighboring countries that have lower therapeutic and medical standards, with the help of experienced medical staff and competent therapeutic centers, Iran can be one of the best destinations for medical tourists.

It is estimated that the income of every case of medical tourism is three times that of a typical tourist.<sup>16</sup> In 2012, 3.3

million tourists entered the country, and 687 500 people were employed in the industry.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, planning based on the priorities specified in the field of medical tourism are very important. The main objective of this research was to identify and analyze the factors affecting the growth of medical tourism in Iran.

## Methods

### Search Strategy

In this systematic review study, studies published in the Persian and English languages during the years 2006-2019 in the databases of Science Direct, ProQuest, Springer, Medline, Scopus, Ovid, and SID were reviewed, and the findings were then compared. Keywords for the search included tourism, medical tourism, and health tourism, specifically in Iran. The text of the reviewed articles and their results were extracted by the researchers. Finally, the results of the studies were summarized and reported.

### Article Selection

The inclusion criteria for the present study were: 1. use of the keywords designated for the title and abstracts of articles, 2. completed research, 3. research conducted on the subject of Iran, 4. English or Persian language articles, 5. use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and 6. Including factors or programs on the topic of tourism in the field of health. The exclusion criteria included: 1. abstracts

only, 2. studies published in other countries despite having an Iranian author, and 3. studies published in other languages that were unfamiliar to the researchers. Duplicate studies were also excluded. Studies that met the inclusion criteria were coded and compared.

Figure 1 displays the process of the study selection. Overall, the literature search identified 2191 records of databases. After excluding duplicate articles and articles with unrelated topics, 470 records remained. Based on a review of the abstracts, 182 articles remained. A total of 107 articles were excluded due to the lack of stating the factor and development plan. Ultimately, 75 articles were entered into the current study.

## Results

The characteristics of the articles are summarized in Table 1. Most articles were original research studies (n=61, 81%); non-original research articles (n=14, 19%) consisted of reviews (n=7, 9.5%) and case studies (n=7, 9.5%). Most articles reported studies performed on all patients including the whole country (Iran) (n=22, 30%), Shiraz only (n=11, 15%), Tehran only (n=11, 15%), Mashhad only (n=6, 8%), Isfahan only (n=5, 6%), and Ardabil only (n=4, 5%).

Seven papers written between 2008 and 2011, 26 papers written between 2012 and 2014, and 41 articles written between 2015 to 2018 indicated that more attention has been paid to medical tourism in Iran in recent years. Eighteen articles cited cost factor and 11 articles cited medical equipment

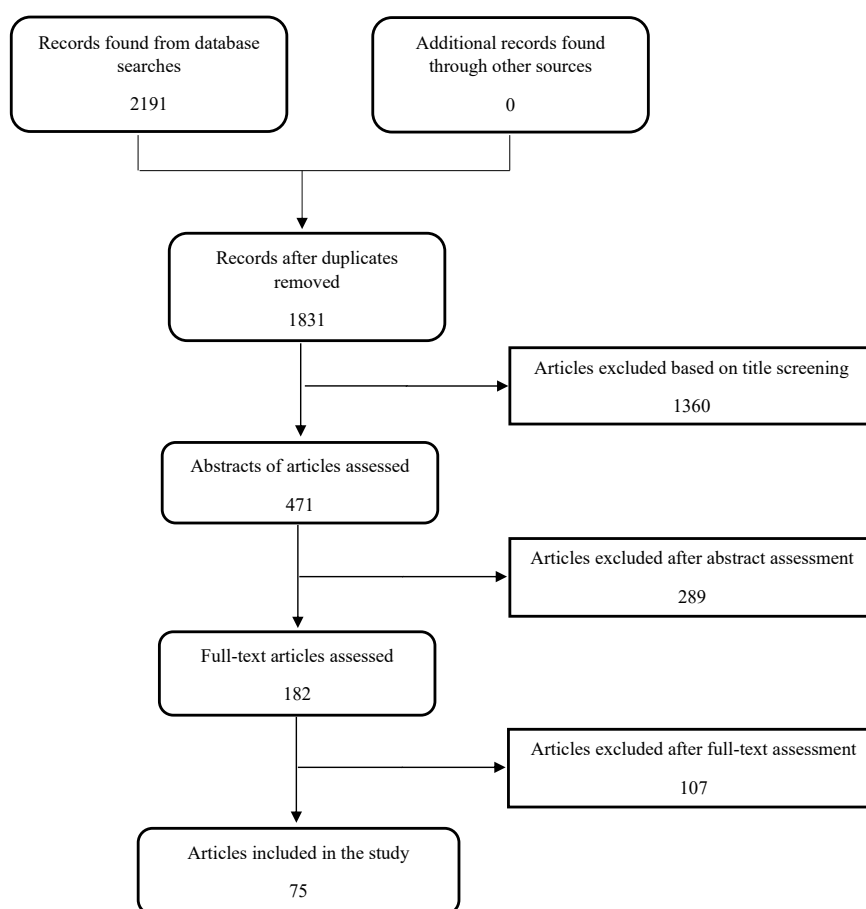


Figure 1. Flow Chart of the Article Selection Process.

**Table 1.** Details of Articles Included in the Review

Author	Year	Type of Research	Place of research	The Most Important Factors, Suggestions, and Programs for the Development of Medical Tourism in Iran		
				Factors	Suggestions	Programs
Kazemi et al <sup>18</sup>	2008	Descriptive-survey	Whole country (Iran)	The proper functions of responsible organizations; the special geographical location of Iran, being as an Islamic country	-	-
Zia Sheikholeslami et al <sup>19</sup>	2010	Descriptive	Rafsanjan	-	-	Enhance the English language among medical staff; increase investment; establish medical tourism clinics in the vicinity of hot springs.
Tourani et al <sup>20</sup>	2010	Cross-sectional survey	Whole country (Iran)	-	-	The government should encourage and support the private sector to act in all areas of this industry from participating in policy-making and strategic planning to marketing and introducing Iran's health services to target countries, act as medical tourism facilitators, and provide health and medical services.
Jafary et al <sup>21</sup>	2011	Review	Whole country (Iran)	-	-	The presence of accredited foreign media and reporting on the capabilities of the country's medical community; providing the facilities, equipment, and services needed by this group of tourists.
Moghimehfar et al <sup>22</sup>	2011	Descriptive-survey	Isfahan	Legal, moral, and religious restrictions	Providing an appropriate environment where infertile couples' religious beliefs are respected and considered during the treatment of infertility through ART	-
Khodayari et al <sup>23</sup>	2011	Cross-sectional survey	Tehran	Access to and continuity of treatment, patient evaluation, anesthesia and drug management, patient and family rights, patient care, and patient education	-	-
Nasiripour et al <sup>24</sup>	2011	Cross-sectional survey	Tehran	Medical equipment, information and communication technology, more competitive pricing of medical services than other countries, and clearing the cost of foreign patients' requests.	-	-
Sadr Momtaz et al <sup>25</sup>	2011	Cross-sectional survey	Tehran	-	Public infrastructure development strategy; Human resources development strategy; Information and Marketing System Development Strategy; Product Development Strategy	-
Izadi et al <sup>26</sup>	2012	Descriptive review	Whole country (Iran)	Expert physicians, up-to-date medical technology, natural healing regions to attract health tourists	Comprehensive planning and operational requirements of field units and provide leadership	-
Ferdosi et al <sup>27</sup>	2012	Review and qualitative	-	-	-	Conducting accurate and comprehensive research in Iran

Table 1. Continued

Author	Year	Type of Research	Place of research	The Most Important Factors, Suggestions, and Programs for the Development of Medical Tourism in Iran		
				Factors	Suggestions	Programs
Jabbari et al <sup>28</sup>	2012	Qualitative Cross-sectional survey	Whole country (Iran)	-	Public-Private Partnerships; Effective Advertising; Infrastructure Development; International Accreditation of Health Care Institutions; Human Resource Development	-
Zia Sheikholeslami et al <sup>29</sup>	2012	Cross-sectional survey	Qom	Ability to cure complex diseases; high quality and low cost; skilled human resources	-	-
Jabbari et al <sup>30</sup>	2012	Qualitative	Isfahan	Demand capability; environmental capability; manpower capability; infrastructure capability; cross-sector collaboration	-	Competitive and Differential Status; Promotional Strategies
Tabibi et al <sup>31</sup>	2012	Cross-sectional survey	Tehran	Information and attraction mechanisms for medical tourists, including media advertising, brochures, guides, television programs, electronic methods, and tourism organizations	-	-
Shaarbafchizadeh et al <sup>32</sup>	2012	Qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	Telemedicine services; electronic funding network; patient rights laws	Proper telecommunication infrastructure; cross-sector collaboration	-
Izadi et al <sup>33</sup>	2012	Review, qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	Expert physicians; technology; natural treatment areas	-	Coordination of organizations responsible for medical tourism and planning
Delgoshaei et al <sup>34</sup>	2012	Review, qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	Basic infrastructure and treatment	Government support; international service centers; integrated marketing	Medical Tourism Development Program; Inter-sectorial collaboration; coordination at the macro- and operational level
Arabshahi korizi et al <sup>35</sup>	2013	Qualitative	Whole country (Iran)			
Hadizadeh Moghadam et al <sup>36</sup>	2013	Cross-sectional survey	Tehran	Cost of treatment; waiting time; diversification; medical equipment; sociological factors; quality of service; political and security conditions; ease of travel; tourist attractions	-	-
Zare Mehrjerdi et al <sup>37</sup>	2013		Whole country (Iran)	-	Creating infrastructure; equipping airports; repairing transportation systems; psychological and social security for tourists; advertising and information	Medical Tourism Master Plan
Keshavarz et al <sup>38</sup>	2013	Cross-sectional survey	Isfahan	Cost of services; proper and consistent advertising	Develop the infrastructure needed to provide welfare; cultural, social, and political factors	-
Jabbari et al <sup>39</sup>	2013	Qualitative	Isfahan	-	Design of Medical Tourism Stakeholders Network	Formation of Provincial Council for Medical Tourism; defining the role and duties of each beneficiary
Hajinejad et al <sup>40</sup>	2013	Qualitative	Shiraz	Medical and service employment; modern advertising	Bilateral agreements; Insurance industry support for tourism satisfaction and attraction; Coordination among trustee organizations; Information Technology; Private Sector Capital	-

Table 1. Continued

Author	Year	Type of Research	Place of research	The Most Important Factors, Suggestions, and Programs for the Development of Medical Tourism in Iran		
				Factors	Suggestions	Programs
Rokni et al <sup>41</sup>	2013	Cross-sectional survey	Shiraz	-	Cooperation with countries in the region; Religious and cultural proximity; Effective advertising; Periodic evaluations	-
Mahdavi et al <sup>42</sup>	2013	Review qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	-	Branding; coordination between stakeholders; provision of coherent services	-
Jabbari et al <sup>43</sup>	2013	Cross-sectional survey	Shiraz	-	Effective advertising; Infrastructure development; Quality management systems	Medical tourism strategic plan
Tabatabaeei nasab et al <sup>44</sup>	2014	Descriptive-survey	Yazd	Experienced medical staff; environmental status; cost	-	Increasing marketing for medical tourism
Mesbahi et al <sup>45</sup>	2014	Qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	-	Using web information systems to introduce service providers; building a relationship between service provider and customer	-
Goodarzi et al <sup>46</sup>	2014	Qualitative	Shiraz	Price of treatment and tourist services; quality of treatment and tourist services; treatment and tourist facilities; capabilities and equipment; ICT and culture	-	The high quality of treatment and tourist services; applying capabilities and modern equipment compatible with universal standards in treatment and tourist domain; applying ICT in advertising and marketing; promoting the culture of accepting tourism
Noori Hekmat et al <sup>47</sup>	2014	Cross-sectional survey	Isfahan	Medical equipment and web site; having a translator; adequate and well-equipped hospital beds	-	-
Goodarzi et al <sup>48</sup>	2014	Cross-sectional survey	Shiraz	Price transparency of health services; quality of health services; facilities; ICT	-	-
Goodarzi et al <sup>49</sup>	2014	Cross-sectional survey	Shiraz	Quality of service; culture; facilities; price; ICT	-	-
Mir et al <sup>50</sup>	2014	Cross-sectional survey	Zahedan	High-quality new equipment; recreational and tourist attractions; specialized manpower; patient welfare facilities	-	-
Ayoubian et al <sup>51</sup>	2014	Cross-sectional survey	Tehran	Quality and cost of service	Media advertisements; descriptions of equipment and manpower capabilities	Coherent policymaking
Taj Zadeh namen et al <sup>52</sup>	2015	Descriptive-survey	Tehran	Validity of information; characteristics of treatment centers; website specifications; transparency in information; advertising policies	-	-
Safaeepur et al <sup>53</sup>	2015	Cross-sectional survey	Whole country (Iran)	-	Variety of specialized services, public and private sector coordination	Strategies to reduce costs and increase quality in comparison with countries in the region, Coherent decision-making and service delivery system
Hosseini et al <sup>54</sup>	2016	Descriptive-survey	Tehran	Therapeutic care and facilities; clarity of medical costs	-	-
Karami et al <sup>55</sup>	2016	Descriptive-survey	Mashhad	Advanced medical facilities and equipment; the skill and expertise of medical staff; religious beliefs and opinions	-	-

Table 1. Continued

Author	Year	Type of Research	Place of research	The Most Important Factors, Suggestions, and Programs for the Development of Medical Tourism in Iran		
				Factors	Suggestions	Programs
Lajevardi et al <sup>56</sup>	2016	Descriptive-survey	Whole country (Iran)	Motivational factor; destination image	-	-
Mahmoudifar et al <sup>57</sup>	2016	Descriptive-analytical	West Azerbaijan	Public infrastructure; general conditions to attract tourists; legal terms; political conditions; economic conditions; cultural conditions	Attention to elements such as the appropriate conditions to attract medical tourism based on political, legal, and regional economic development.	-
Bishami et al <sup>58</sup>	2016	Descriptive-survey	Tabriz	Famous doctors, equipment and facilities, cost	Creating an extensive network of marketing	Enhance the English language among medical staff
Nemati et al <sup>59</sup>	2016	Survey	Ardabil	Barriers to information systems and marketing; infrastructural barriers; barriers to product development and quality of service; administration's attitude barriers; barriers of manpower; socio-cultural barriers; economic barriers	-	Use of domestic and foreign media to promote medical tourism capabilities; Attracting investment and initiatives to develop and increase the capacity of hospitals
Ranjnoosh et al <sup>60</sup>	2016	Descriptive-survey	Whole country (Iran)	-	Development of medical centers based on international standards; Improving Human Resource Communication Skills; Implementation of integrated and systematic management of service delivery	-
Mirbolouk et al <sup>61</sup>	2016	Descriptive-survey	Guilan	Perceived medical quality; perceived service quality; perceived reputation; religion	Improving medical infrastructure; increasing medical and tourism quality; providing correct and comprehensive facilities for patients and their companions	-
Samadbeik et al <sup>62</sup>	2016	Qualitative	Shiraz	-	-	Designing proper medical tourism websites for hospitals
Taghi Zadeh Yazdi et al <sup>63</sup>	2016	Content analysis	-	Medical tourism facilitation websites; contents introducing medical options; introducing website facilities; introducing medical tourism; introducing website; patient and audience comments	-	-
Badiei et al <sup>64</sup>	2016	Qualitative	Golestan	-	Increasing private participation; establishing hospitals and clinics	Public sector participation; support from the private sector
Hamidzadeh et al <sup>65</sup>	2016	Case study	Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz	The success of surgery; correct diagnosis and prescription; right to visit and medication costs; visa; residence; hospital and surgery costs; visitation; operating room equipment; amenities	-	-
Nikraftar et al <sup>66</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	Shiraz	Regulation	Providing services and human resources	Policies needed to improve quality; adherence to international standards
Hajinejad et al <sup>67</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional qualitative	Mashhad	Different infrastructure and specialties	Establishing bilateral relations between the countries of the region	Supporting the NGO sector; investment
Mosavi-negad et al <sup>68</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional	Tehran	Diverse specialties; up-to-date equipment; minimum waiting times; human and physical resources	Massive investment	-

Table 1. Continued

Author	Year	Type of Research	Place of research	The Most Important Factors, Suggestions, and Programs for the Development of Medical Tourism in Iran		
				Factors	Suggestions	Programs
Taghvaei et al <sup>69</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional qualitative	Shiraz	-	Increasing the quality and variety of health services; electronic and non-electronic advertising; cooperation with the Islamic countries in the region; obtaining international approvals; foreign language training	-
Azizi et al <sup>70</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	Yazd	Costs; advertising; laws; medical needs; human resources	-	-
Maleki et al <sup>71</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	Mashhad	Information; electronic acceptance; financial exchange system; foreign languages in hospital support; complete health tourism packages; visa; inland transportation	-	-
Maboodi et al <sup>72</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	Whole country (Iran)	Cost of medical services; quality; human resources; medical equipment	-	-
Anabestani et al <sup>73</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	Mashhad	Quality of health services; information; interagency coordination	Construction of medical tourism services companies	-
Nemati et al <sup>59</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	Ardabil	Quality of service; human resources	-	Information and marketing systems; policymaking and legislation; infrastructure
Mahmoudifar et al <sup>74</sup>	2016	Cross-sectional survey	West Azerbaijan	-	Coordination of effective organizations	Decision-making and planning departments
Rezaee et al <sup>75</sup>	2016	Qualitative survey	Whole country (Iran)	Quality of service; highly specialized services; cost; proper equipment	-	A comprehensive and coherent program of medical tourism
Faridi masuleh <sup>76</sup>	2017	Qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	-	Supporting private investment	-
Jabbari et al <sup>77</sup>	2017	Cross-sectional	Shiraz	-	-	More advertising of hospitals' quality of services
Abouhashem Abadi et al <sup>78</sup>	2017	Descriptive; exploratory	Yazd	-	Construction of medical tourism companies or encouragement of private sector investment; Preparation of various programs; Addressing issues related to medical tourism; Developing medical tourism service standards by specialized firms providing tourism services; creating an extensive network of marketing and sales	Training staff related to foreign patients by international approvals
Azimi et al <sup>79</sup>	2017	Cross-sectional	Mashhad	-	It is suggested that advertising practices be revised and novel methods adopted to appeal to a greater range of potential tourists.	Senior executives of hospitals are recommended to account for the safety, comfort, and well-being of patients as basic requirements of marketing.
Haji Ahmadi et al <sup>80</sup>	2017	Qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	Marketing of medical tourism; having a relative competitive advantage	Service and welfare factors; advertising factors; physical factors; political and geographical factors; human factors.	-

Table 1. Continued

Author	Year	Type of Research	Place of research	The Most Important Factors, Suggestions, and Programs for the Development of Medical Tourism in Iran		
				Factors	Suggestions	Programs
Azimi et al <sup>81</sup>	2017	Descriptive	Mashhad	Services; place; promotion; price; people; process; facilities	It is necessary to pay further attention to the adoption of appropriate strategies to recruit skilled people, provide services based on international standards, and change processes in hospitals.	Promote competition; adopting new advertising media such as websites and mass media; special attention paid to the revision of fee.
RahimiZarchi et al <sup>82</sup>	2017	Qualitative	Shiraz	Cost; advertisements; good weather and nature; cultural and historical attractions; famous doctors; equipment and facilities; advanced and up-to-date therapies	-	-
Naami et al <sup>83</sup>	2017	Review	Tehran	-	-	There were no transparency programs or suitable physical areas; Tehran University Medical Science needs comprehensive planning; supportive infrastructure for foreign patients; correction of the transportation system; improved marketing
Najafi et al <sup>84</sup>	2017	Review	Whole country (Iran)	Medical costs; quality of medical services; service coverage; medical staff; Health system infrastructure, accommodations; travel arrangements; marketing; tourist attractions; economic situation of countries; social background of countries; security; managers' commitment	-	-
Danial et al <sup>85</sup>	2017	Review and qualitative	Whole country (Iran)	The importance of training in medical tourism	Provision of equipment and necessary training, including an introduction to medical tourism and the medical tourist; the medical histories of medical tourists; the association of staff with medical tourism	-
Najafi Nasab et al <sup>86</sup>	2018	Survey	Whole country (Iran)	Policies; advertising and marketing; the capacities of medical and healthcare services; costs; destination characteristics	-	The Ministry of Health and Medical Education, the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, and the Medical Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should make appropriate policies to stimulate the entry of foreign medical tourists to the country.
Momeni et al <sup>87</sup>	2018	Qualitative	East Azerbaijan	Marketing; international issues; culture; transfer; brokerage; management and policy problems	Provision of the necessary context for the participation and investment of the private sector in the field of medical tourism.	-
Sadeh et al <sup>88</sup>	2018	Descriptive-survey	-	Physical environment and convenience; pharmaceutical services; treatment services from the medical team; technical care competencies; costs; hospitality services	-	-
Asgarnezhad Nouri et al <sup>89</sup>	2018	Descriptive and correlational	Ardabil	Enjoyment; costs; risk effects	-	Provision of standard services; building appropriate infrastructure for medical tourists to create a positive image
Ebrahimi et al <sup>90</sup>	2018	Descriptive-survey	Tehran	-	-	Providing a regular and well-designed program for medical tourists to know and plan properly
Hoseinpour et al <sup>91</sup>	2018	Descriptive-analytical	Ardebil	Country status; condition of hospitals; medical team; mineral spas	The authorities in the field of health and tourism help more in the development of this industry by providing the necessary substructures of this sector and execution of macro politics.	-



as influencing factors in attracting medical tourism. Most articles cite advertising, marketing, and updated medical procedures as planning for these factors.

## Discussion

The present study attempted to find a set of strategies and programs for the development of medical tourism in hospitals affiliated with the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. Based on the present findings, important factors such as policymaking, coherent planning, and informing about capabilities and capacities through appropriate information channels will play an important role in the development of medical tourism. In general, information plays an important role in attracting medical tourists. Hospitals and medical centers, insurance companies, tours, intermediaries, and settlement centers play important roles in providing information. In other words, there should be a network of communication between various institutions in medical tourism, and the information and marketing method should be coordinated based on the cooperation of these institutions. The proper information process attracts tourists. Azimi et al<sup>81</sup> and Alizadehsani<sup>92</sup> pointed to the role of advertising and information on the development of medical tourism in their research and suggested that countries must develop a regular system of marketing and information activities to be successful in tourism. In studies conducted by Rokni et al,<sup>41</sup> Jabbari et al,<sup>43</sup> Goodarzi et al,<sup>46</sup> Ayoubian et al,<sup>51</sup> and Taghi Zadeh Namen et al,<sup>52</sup> effective advertising was reported as one of the important factors in attracting medical tourists.

Viladrich and Baron-Faust's<sup>93</sup> research in Argentina showed that internet marketing has made the country a hub of cosmetic surgeries. In studies conducted by Momeni et al.<sup>87</sup> Najafi Nasab et al<sup>86</sup> and Haji Ahmadi et al<sup>80</sup> marketing was mentioned as one of the effective factors in attracting medical tourists. Yang<sup>94</sup> also conducted a study on the factors influencing medical tourism marketing from the perspective of practitioners in this field, including tourism agencies and medical institutions in Taiwan, which showed that among the 15 factors studied, branding was the first priority; factors regarding medical facilities and the quality of medical services were also top priorities.

Zuhri et al<sup>95</sup> concluded that the perceived quality of medical services and their perceptual value, trust, mental image, and competitiveness can directly influence the choice of destination and tourists' loyalty.

In addition to these factors, there are the physical and infrastructural factors in research that are undeniable necessities for medical tourism. The quality of a country's infrastructure is one of the most important factors contributing to the development of medical tourism. In studies conducted by Sadr Momtaz et al,<sup>25</sup> Mahmoudifar et al,<sup>74</sup> Naami et al,<sup>83</sup> Najafi et al,<sup>84</sup> and Asgarnezhad Nouri et al,<sup>89</sup> infrastructure is mentioned as one of the factors effective in attracting medical tourists.

In studies conducted by Sadeh et al,<sup>88</sup> Najafi Nasab et al,<sup>86</sup> and Bishami et al,<sup>58</sup> cost is one of the effective factors in attracting medical tourists.

## Review Highlights

### What Is Already Known?

In Iran, little attention is paid to medical tourism. Identification and planning factors based on the priorities specified in the field of medical tourism are very important.

### What This Study Adds?

Strategies offered by various managers and authorities in tourism can lead to the increased attraction of medical tourists to public and private hospitals in Shiraz, relying on the capabilities and potential of Shiraz, and thereby generating more foreign exchange earnings and employment.

## Conclusion

Today, medical tourism in the world is a developing industry with a significant turnover. Iran has the potential to make the most of this opportunity. Strategies offered by various managers and authorities in tourism can lead to increased attraction of medical tourists to public and private hospitals in Shiraz, relying on capabilities and potential of Shiraz and its health sectors, including climate and nature, cultural and historical attractions, renowned practitioners, advanced equipment, facilities, and methods. Thereby, more foreign exchange earnings and employment will be generated.

## Authors' Contributions

MG: Conceptualization, writing, reviewing, and editing the manuscript; supervision. AMKHA: Conceptualization, writing the original draft of the article, writing, reviewing, and editing the manuscript; supervision. SM: Writing, reviewing, and editing the manuscript. MG: Writing, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

## Conflict of Interest Disclosures

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

## Ethical Approval

Not applicable.

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