



## **An Expanded Marketing Mix Perspective on Medical Tourism**

Sinem KABAK\* Ekrem SEVİM\*\*

\* Master's degree, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Institute of Health Sciences, Health Management, ORCID Number: 0000-0002-0223-5028, sinemmkabakk@gmail.com

\*\* Associate Professor, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Faculty of Health Science, Health Management, ORCID Number: 0000-0003-0697-5899, esevim@banu.edu.tr

Received: 15.02.2024

Accepted: 26.03.2024

Review Article

### **Abstract**

Medical tourism is a mobility of people traveling from one place to another for medical treatment. Healthcare organizations want to determine the wishes and expectations of medical tourists and produce products accordingly. The most important issue here is how to achieve this. Moreover, what are the demands and expectations of consumers and how they change in constantly changing environmental conditions. Marketing activities carried out in this context have an important role in the success of organizations. Since medical tourism marketing is a branch of the service sector, it also has characteristics related to the marketing of services. The aim of this study is to find an answer to the question of how the extended marketing mix elements bring a perspective to medical tourism. In this context, the medical tourism literature has been examined through a comprehensive review method. In this study, "Product", "Price" and "People" are considered as critical elements in medical tourism marketing strategies. It is important to address the concept of medical tourism with the elements of the extended marketing mix in this way in order to understand all elements in

*Corresponding author: Sinem KABAK, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Institute of Health Sciences, Health Management, e-mail: sinemmkabakk@gmail.com*

*Cite This Paper:*

*Kabak, S., Sevim, E. (2024). An expanded marketing mix perspective on medical tourism. International Journal Of Health Management And Tourism, 9(1): 86-105.*

the best way. In this way, the application of the 7Ps can lead to strategic marketing insights for both healthcare providers and national healthcare services.

**Keywords:** Medical Tourism, Extended Marketing Mix, 7P Application, Marketing Strategy in Health Services, International Patient.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism, which is a branch of the service sector, has become a sector that grows day by day worldwide and has significant economic returns. This transformation has brought about diversification in tourism types and touristic products (Güzel, 2010). Individuals' preference for thermal resources for vacation, regular exercise, meditation methods, and the search for healthy nutrition are indicators of the effort to be healthy. This situation has been effective in the emergence of the concept of health tourism within the tourism industry (Connell, 2006; Şahbaz et al., 2012). Within health tourism, the concept of medical tourism has emerged as a field in which medical treatments are more prominent in addition to thermal and SPA wellness tourism and advanced age and disabled tourism. Moreover, medical tourism is the main reason why the concept of health tourism is so popular today. Medical tourism is a type of health tourism that covers areas such as medical treatments, surgical interventions, cosmetic procedures, oral and dental health and has the potential to make significant contributions to the national economy by providing four-season tourist flow to countries. The reasons that lead individuals to medical tourism include high prices in their home countries, legal restrictions on some types of treatment, long waiting times, treatments that are not covered by insurance, and the existence of some types of treatment that cannot be performed (Sevim & Sevim, 2019).

Although medical tourism is an area dominated by some Asian countries, in the current century many countries are making efforts to enter this market (Connell, 2006). This is due to the positive effects of medical tourism on national economies. Today, factors such as the development of the free market economy and the ease of travel have paved the way for medical tourism investments (Arı, 2017). Medical tourism attracts the attention of many countries due to its large market share in most countries, positive economic returns and being a type of tourism that can be realized in all seasons (Denizli, 2022).

Many countries want to host medical tourists mostly for economic reasons. As a natural result of the competition created by this desire, countries develop marketing strategies in the field

of medical tourism. However, there are significant challenges in developing marketing strategies for medical tourism. The most important of these challenges is to understand and satisfy the demands and expectations of consumers. Planned strategies should be geared towards this. Moreover, consumer demands and expectations are constantly changing. This situation also affects the strategies to be developed. In this study, various elements of the medical tourism service, which is expressed as a product within the scope of these strategies, come to the fore. These are core and extended service elements, such as the type and quality of the service. Another element is, undoubtedly, price. In medical tourism, offering a qualified product at a competitive price will increase demand. Promotion is another important element for the service to be recognized and desired by medical tourists. The delivery of medical tourism services to people and the process related to this can be expressed as one of the most important facilitating factors. People are one of the most important elements in the production and delivery of medical tourism services. Because the human element is on the side that both produces and consumes the service. Physical evidence of service delivery is important in terms of increasing the value of the service produced and, moreover, constituting the part that is most easily seen by consumers. In this study, the expanded marketing mix elements are examined from the perspective of medical tourism, and the questions of what each marketing mix element means in medical tourism and which strategies can be addressed in this context are addressed. In addition to the existence of studies on medical tourism marketing, it is important in terms of providing a new perspective by addressing the elements of the extended marketing mix separately in this context.

## **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1.1. Medical Tourism Concept**

Medical tourism is a process in which procedures within the scope of medical treatment and rehabilitation services are applied to individuals who need health services for any reason (Sevim & Sevim, 2019). In general terms, medical tourism can be defined as individuals travelling to a country other than their own country to receive medical treatment services and receiving the treatment they need.

Although the most demanded treatment types within the scope of medical tourism vary according to regions and countries; oral and dental health, cosmetic surgery, orthopedic surgery, in vitro fertilisation, obesity, organ and cell transplantation, cardiovascular surgery (Ataman et al.,

2017; Horowitz & Rosensweig, 2007).

The primary purpose of individuals while performing medical tourism is to receive treatment. In addition to this, it is also known that individuals who engage in medical tourism activities participate in other tourism activities to relax and utilise their leisure time (Caballero-Danell & Mugomba, 2007; Şahbaz et al., 2012).

## 1.2. Factors Supporting Medical Tourism

It is important for medical tourism marketing to know the factors that direct individuals who engage in medical tourism activities to these trips. These factors are not only effective in the emergence of medical tourism mobility, but are also very important within the scope of "determining consumer wants and needs", which is the starting point of marketing. The main reasons that lead individuals to medical tourism can be listed as follows (Ağaoğlu et al., 2019; Connell, 2006; Horowitz & Rosensweig, 2007; TÜSİAD, 2019; Yeoh et al., 2013).

- Individuals with high financial means in underdeveloped or developing countries who want to receive certain types of treatment that they cannot find in their own countries by travelling to developed countries
- In some countries, some treatment options are not or cannot be applied due to legal, cultural and ethical understandings
- Problems experienced in country health systems are an important factor for medical tourism preference. Individuals have difficulty in accessing services due to problems arising from the health system, such as inability to find an appointment, long waiting lists or treatments excluded by insurances.
- Although it varies according to countries, high health service treatment costs, which is a factor that we encounter mostly in developed countries
- Individuals' search for better quality service is also an important reason for medical travelling.

Individuals seek healthcare services in another country for the reasons mentioned above. In general, differences in cost, quality and service delivery conditions between countries can be counted among the most important supporters of medical tourism being so popular all over the world. While individuals seek medical tourism for these supporting reasons, there are many alternative countries and medical facilities in front of individuals in this search. It is important to know the reasons that are effective in individuals' preference for medical tourism (Sevim & Sevim,

2019).

### 1.3. Reasons for Choosing Medical Tourism

There are some reasons that are effective in individuals' preference for medical tourism. These reasons can be categorised as push and pull factors. There are some push factors that enable individuals to go to another country to receive health services as a result of not being satisfied with the health services available in their own country (Sevim, 2019). Gan and Frederick (2011) discussed these push factors as follows.

- Causes related to globalisation;
  - ✓ Ease of access to information provided by the Internet
  - ✓ Increased transport facilities
  - ✓ Decrease in transport and communication costs
- Causes related to organisational factors;
  - ✓ Incentivising employers
  - ✓ Incentivising insurance companies
  - ✓ Some facilitating arrangements

In addition to the push factors that are effective in medical tourism preference, there are also attractive factors. Countries implement many facilitating and attractive practices to stand out in medical tourism. These practices appear as consumer-oriented or country-specific activities and are considered as attractive factors in medical tourism (Sevim, 2019). Gan and Frederick (2011) discuss the attractive factors as follows.

- Consumer-specific;
  - ✓ Cost Savings
- Administrative and bureaucratic transaction costs
- Labour and training costs
- Costs related to malpractice insurance or litigation fees
- Low drug costs
- Participation of financial intermediaries
  - ✓ Low waiting lists
  - ✓ Provision of feasible treatments
  - ✓ Confidentiality and privacy
  - ✓ Personalised health service delivery

- Country-specific;
  - ✓ Social and cultural compatibility
  - ✓ Some political reasons
  - ✓ Bioethical regulations
  - ✓ International accreditation and reputation
  - ✓ High quality health service
  - ✓ Advanced medical technology and equipment

Medical tourism, which is a sub-type of health tourism, one of the alternative tourism types, has important contributions to the economies of countries. One of the most important of these contributions is undoubtedly its contribution to closing the foreign trade deficit. Many countries prepare strategies and provide incentives for this field in order to benefit from the advantages offered by medical tourism (Sevim, 2019). It is important for both countries and health institutions to understand and implement medical tourism marketing well in order to increase their share in this sector. For this reason, in the rest of the study, the concept of medical tourism will be discussed with the elements of the "extended marketing mix", which is a subject of the marketing concept.

#### **1.4. Medical Tourism Marketing**

Marketing is the process of identifying the wants and needs of individuals or groups and creating a value for the product, presenting and exchanging this value (Kotler, 1991). Although marketing in health services is handled within this scope, it also includes various differences due to its nature. These differences are differences related to the service sector and differences related to health services. Until the 1980s, the integration of marketing into health services was criticized. In addition to the ongoing criticisms, the concept of marketing in healthcare services has found its place with a better understanding of the marketing concept and the developments in the healthcare sector (Thomas, 2008). Moreover, it is possible to talk about different dynamics in medical tourism. These are differences in international patient mobility. International patient mobility combines the two extremes of tourism and the medical sector. While this situation necessitates a good marketing strategy in medical tourism, it also brings various challenges. Organizations that want to overcome these challenges and stand out in medical tourism should pay due attention to the marketing concept. Moreover, they should strive to make it sustainable in the long term. This study is important in terms of addressing the marketing mix elements separately in terms of medical tourism.

### 1.5. Extended Marketing Mix

In modern marketing, the criterion mostly used is "marketing mix". This concept is thought to have first emerged in Borden's "The Concept of The Marketing Mix", and the person who conceptualised this model was McCarthy (Berry, 1990). In the 1960s, McCarthy stated that modern marketing should be built on the 4Ps (product, price, promotion and distribution) (Motley, 2002).



**Figure 1. Marketing Mix**

However, the structure of services as a product is different from physical goods. The reason for this is that the service can be an abstract product such as health, education, etc. that fulfils the wishes and needs of individuals, or it can be a supporting concept (warranty, maintenance-repair, etc.) offered in connection with a concrete product (Öndoğan, 2010). Due to this structure of the service concept, it is necessary to consider it together with abstract and some concrete factors. For this reason, it is thought that analysing the service sector with 4P marketing mix elements may be insufficient. As a result, the marketing mix, which consists of four components, has developed with the addition of new elements and the service marketing mix, also known as the 7P (product, price, promotion, place, physical evidences, people and process), has emerged (Das, 2017; Pomeroy et al., 2011; Yılmaz, 2022; Zarchi et al., 2013).



**Figure 2. Extended Marketing Mix**

Since medical tourism is a type of service sector, it offers the opportunity to make more accurate inferences when analysed with the service marketing mix. In this direction, in the rest of the study, the concept of medical tourism will be discussed with service marketing mix elements.

## **1.6. Medical Tourism in the Scope of Service Marketing Mix Elements**

### **1.6.1. Product in Medical Tourism**

Within the concept of medical tourism, the product is simply medical treatments and services (Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011; S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). The prominent applications within these treatments are; infertility, stem cell, dentistry, cosmetic surgery, neurology, orthopaedics, weight loss surgery (Medical Tourism, 2023).

Within medical tourism, the product is shaped in accordance with the niche market. For example, medical products such as rhinoplasty, hysterectomy, cataract surgery or heart bypass surgery are shaped according to the niche market. These products are defined as core products and constitute the main part of the service-related product. In addition, expanded products that complement the core product in medical tourism include factors such as accommodation, destination management, general tourism activities and transport (Ari, 2017).

If the concept of product in medical tourism is considered from a broader perspective, it is

realized that medical tourists from developed countries have a higher level of knowledge and awareness and are more demanding in direct proportion to this situation. Health services produced using the latest technology medical devices for all products will give confidence to medical tourists (Ari, 2017; Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011). The quality and trust of the service to be provided to medical tourists will draw a successful profile in the long term and attract more and more regular tourists to the country. This situation will bring a natural success in medical tourism by contributing to the country's economy. Based on this context, the product in medical tourism is a very important factor that can be a determinant of destination choice.

One of the driving forces behind the growth of the medical tourism market is reliable accreditation (S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020; Patientents Beyond Borders, 2023). In the study conducted by Zarei and Maleki (2019), medical tourism studies conducted between 2000-2017 were analysed and it was stated that satisfaction and quality perceived by medical tourists are among the important factors to attract more medical tourists to the country. In this context, having a reliable accreditation is a very prestigious and reliable document in the health sector. Accreditation certificates demonstrate the quality of healthcare services in the international arena and guarantee the service standards offered.

**Table 1. Number of Accredited Health Institutions by Country**

No	Country	Number of Accredited Health Institutions
1	Saudi Arabia	111
2	Brazil	69
3	Thailand	61
4	China	46
5	India	43
6	Turkey	34
7	Japan	30

Source: Joint Commission International, 2023

In medical tourism, not only medical treatments, which are defined as the core product and are the main reason for the person to go to the health institution, but also all the elements that increase the value of the core service, which are defined as extended services, such as staff communication, easy car parking, spacious and hygienic patient and waiting rooms, and good planning of process management are important.

### 1.6.2. Price in Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is a type of tourism with a high positive economic return due to its structure. Economic return can be shown among the most important reasons why medical tourism is encouraged by countries. The price of the service to be provided in the developing competitive environment is important in terms of preferability. One of the determining factors in medical tourism preference is the prices of the products. There are some factors that increase the cost of products and reflect them on prices. These factors include high import taxes on medical devices and equipment. These taxes are naturally reflected on service delivery prices (Ari, 2017; Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011). Tax reductions in imports for services carried out within the scope of medical tourism will encourage health enterprises that want to have a share in the market and will ensure the development of the country's economy (Ari, 2017).

Price is very important for the marketability of the product. For this reason, by providing services at an affordable price, both customer satisfaction and the value of the product are obtained with the pricing strategy that the target audience can pay (Herrick, 2007; S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). Today, medical tourism is described in some sources as a concept that continues to exist with the slogan "*first world care at third world prices*" (Connell, 2016).

In the common form of medical tourism, the mobility of developed country citizens travelling to developing countries to receive affordable services is remarkable (Horowitz & Rosensweig, 2007). In this case, the main reason why people prefer medical tourism is the price differences between countries. In addition, price differences in medical tourism should be at a level that will affect people to change countries and go to another country (Turner, 2007; Yılmaz, 2022). It is known that medical tourists consider transport and accommodation fees after treatment fees (Bookman & Bookman, 2007). Considering all these reasons, it can be thought that treatment prices are actually the most determining feature for medical tourists. It is important for medical tourists to carry out tourism activities that the quality treatment to be received by individuals and the facilities such as accommodation and transportation of the country to be visited are affordable. With the help of developing technology, medical tourists can compare the price differences between countries more easily and make a choice accordingly. For this reason, it is important for countries to implement the right price strategy and market it in terms of the preferability of medical tourism.

**Table 2. Treatment Cost Comparison**

Procedures	USA	Costa Rica	India	Korea	Mexico	Thailand	Malaysia
Heart Bypass	\$144,000	\$25,000	\$5,200	\$28,900	\$27,000	\$15,121	\$11,430
Angioplasty	\$57,000	\$13,000	\$3,300	\$15,200	\$12,500	\$3,788	\$5,430
Heart Valve Replacement	\$170,000	\$30,000	\$5,500	\$43,500	\$18,000	\$21,212	\$10,580
Hip replacement	\$50,000	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$14,120	\$13,000	\$7,879	\$7,500
Hip Resurfacing	\$50,000	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$15,600	\$15,000	\$15,152	\$12,350
Knee replacement	\$50,000	\$11,500	\$6,200	\$19,800	\$12,000	\$12,297	\$7,000
Spinal Fusion	\$100,000	\$11,500	\$6,500	\$15,400	\$12,000	\$9,091	\$6,000
Dental implant	\$2,800	\$900	\$1,000	\$4,200	\$1,800	\$3,636	\$345
Knee band	\$30,000	\$8,500	\$3000	None	\$6,500	\$11,515	None
Breast Implants	\$10,000	\$3,800.	\$3,500	\$12,500	\$3,500	\$2,727	None
Rhinoplasty	\$8,000	\$4,500	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$3,500	\$3,901	\$1,293
Face lift	\$15,000	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$15,300	\$4,900	\$3,697	\$3,440
Hysterectomy	\$15,000	\$5,700	\$2,500	\$11,000	\$5,800	\$2,727	\$5,250
Stomach Tube	\$28,700	\$10,500	\$5,000	None	\$9,995	\$13,636	None
Stomach bypass	\$32,972	\$12,500	\$5,000	None	\$10,950	\$16,667	\$9,450
Liposuction	\$9,000	\$3,900	\$2,800	None	\$2,800	\$2,303	\$2,299
Tummy tuck	\$9,750	\$5,300	\$3,000	None	\$4,025	5,000	None
Lasik (both eyes)	\$4,400	\$1,800	\$500	\$6,000	\$1,995	1,818	\$477
Cornea (both eyes)	None	\$4,200	None	\$7,000	None	\$1,800	None
Retina	None	\$4,500	\$850	\$10,200	\$3,500	\$4,242	\$3,000
IVF Treatment	None	\$2,800	\$3,250	\$2,180	\$3,950	\$9,091	\$3,819

Source: Medical Tourism In India, 2023

When the issue of price in medical tourism is considered, not only price differences but also exchange rate differences are another important factor. The appreciation or depreciation of the country currency in any of the countries to be visited in medical tourism can create a comparative price advantage or disadvantage. In this case, positive or negative changes are effective in the country selection of medical tourists (İçöz, 2009).

### 1.6.3. Place in Medical Tourism

The concept of place refers to the provision of goods or services at the right time and place with appropriate quality. Since medical tourism is the name given to the travelling of international patients to another country to receive medical treatment, the concept of place gains importance in this relocation decision (Bookman & Bookman, 2007). Within the health sector, we can position the concept of place as accessibility and availability (Tengilimoğlu, 2000). The concept of place within medical tourism is the ability of hospitals or clinics that provide health services to deliver

health services to patients and their relatives (S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). The reflection of this situation in the scope of medical tourism is the physical access to the health institution and the availability of the health institution in order to receive the requested treatment.

If people receive service by experience, it will create a greater sense of trust and enable them to make clearer decisions at the point of preference based on experience. Opening clinics in targeted countries is important for the controlled operation of the distribution channel. Because it offers potential medical tourists the opportunity to meet the service quality of the health institution that provides service (Arı, 2017). In this way, medical tourists avoid long and tiring travels. It is also known that medical tourists mostly prefer close or neighbouring countries (Sevim & Sevim, 2019). Paying attention to this criterion is an important factor in the selection of target countries where clinics will be opened. In short, all kinds of distribution factors that will facilitate the access of tourists in medical tourism and ensure their preference are important.

#### **1.6.4. Promotion in Medical Tourism**

Promotion within medical tourism is mostly realised through participation in seminars, conferences and fairs. Participation in such events provides an important opportunity for organisations operating in medical tourism to promote their products and services. Similarly, media, travel, magazine and book authors are among the methods that can be used to create recognition and a positive image abroad (Arı, 2017; Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011).

Advertising in the health sector is not considered appropriate in most countries. This situation has been taken under control for reasons of protecting the health of individuals and the public. For these reasons, promotion activities in the health sector are mostly used for informative purposes. In addition, the purpose of promotion activities in health services is not to gain patients or to direct the patient to a consumption that he/she does not need. It directs patients in need of treatment to treatment (Sevim & Gdk, 2020).

Ethics is an important element in the advertising sector. The concept of ethics in advertising should be included with a perspective that takes into account all the elements that take place in the process related to the advertisement and that make up the advertisement (Aktuđlu, 2006). Thanks to these ethical rules in the advertisement, it is prevented to give misleading information to consumers, shaking confidence, exploiting their lack of experience and knowledge. At the same time, an advantage obtained from unfair competition against competitors is not provided. In this context, considering the sensitive nature of health, information or promotions in the health sector

should be carried out by taking into account ethical values for both patients and other health institutions (Gürdin, 2017).

Promotion activities within medical tourism are provided through channels such as participating in international trade fairs with government support, preparing short promotional films, participating in seminars, conferences and exhibitions, advertising in travel magazines and specially prepared brochures (S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). In addition, the fact that corporate newspapers and magazines, which are presented in electronic media, make arrangements to include the opinions and experiences of people who have previously received services for health tourists who want to come to the country is another important element in terms of promotion activities (Ari, 2017). This will provide easier information flow to patients who want to receive service, eliminate their concerns and give a sense of trust.

In medical tourism, it is important to choose the most appropriate methods that will lead to the determined targets while promotional activities are carried out. Social media, congresses and fairs are among the methods frequently preferred by countries such as India, Thailand and Malaysia. For example, the Tourism Board of Thailand publishes content that emphasises the country's strengths in the field of medical tourism on its website (Tontuş, 2018).

Promotion through word-of-mouth or word-of-mouth is a very important instrument in health services. Planning activities carried out by prioritising this method within the scope of promotion activities are important. Word-of-mouth marketing is shown as the most trusted way of promotion in the advertising-promotion types trust index report (Nielsen, 2015). Especially in the health sector, where there are restrictions on advertising, the concept of word-of-mouth marketing is a very important tool for medical tourism. Moreover, in this context, good promotion of the health services to be provided to important people for the target countries is a facilitating factor in terms of reaching the determined targets.

#### **1.6.5. People in Medical Tourism**

In a developing and changing world, the presence of expert teams that keep up with modern developments and follow them closely contributes greatly to the marketing of medical tourism. At the same time, since it is a type of service sector, medical tourism is a sector where manpower is predominant. The services offered within the scope of medical tourism are provided by a wide range of human resources including doctors, nurses, health technicians, patient carers, cleaning staff, labourers, counsellors, managers and all other health workers (Gümüş, 2018).

The human factor constitutes the main determinant of the quality of the service within the service marketing mix elements. Because the human factor, which is the element that affects every stage of service delivery, is the most important component involved in both the delivery and consumption of the service. For service sectors, the human factor consists of internal customers (employees) and external customers (service recipients) (Telli et al., 2022). Working with well-educated and internationally renowned doctors to provide quality service to tourists who have come for treatment will give confidence to medical tourists who have come for service (Ari, 2017; Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011). In addition, it is important to have employees who speak a foreign language well in order to provide a better quality service to tourists who have come for treatment (S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). In short, the quality of the human element consisting of healthcare professionals in medical tourism is an important factor as it will increase the preferability of medical tourism. Having well-educated human resources with high language and communication skills that keep up with the modern developments in the world is another factor that provides an advantage to be preferable in the medical tourism market where the competitive environment is dominant (S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020).

#### **1.6.6. Physical Evidences in Medical Tourism**

Physical evidences constitute one of the most important elements of the service sector. Especially health service consumers form their first thoughts about services with physical evidence. It is seen that many physical elements such as the architectural structure, decor, design, light, heat, hygiene, comfort, etc. of the hospital have an impact on the behaviour of patients' relatives and employees (V. Temizkan & Akbaba, 2018). In medical tourism, the main factor that directs individuals to this travel is the medical treatments that constitute the core service. In addition, extended services that increase the visibility and value of these services are also very important. In this context, physical evidences that attract the attention of patients more easily, such as spacious and clean spaces, stylish and modern environments, easy car parking and orientation come to the fore. Moreover, the satisfaction provided here also affects the degree of satisfaction with the core service. Because factors such as information asymmetry specific to health services direct patients' attention to the extended service rather than the core service.

Satisfaction perceived by medical tourists has been shown to be among the most important factors that increase attractiveness along with service quality (Zarei & Maleki, 2019). Health services provided using state-of-the-art medical devices are considered as a reassuring factor for

medical tourists (Arı, 2017; Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011).

### 1.6.7. Process in Medical Tourism

The process in health services is directly proportional to the services to be provided by hospitals and the size of the hospital. The process, which is divided into two different groups as outpatients and inpatients, works differently for both groups (Rahman, 2016). In terms of the organisations providing health services, the process starts with the patient's arrival at the hospital by making an appointment and ends with check-out and payment procedures. There is more than one process between these two stages. Negative situations may occur such as the fact that health institutions provide services to too many patients, as well as long waiting times due to the limited number of health workers. This situation causes a psychologically negative perspective for patients who are already in poor health. Health institutions need to make efforts and provide coordination in order to pass these processes easily and in the best way (Gümüş, 2018).

The presence of accredited health institutions provides an advantage in terms of processes so that medical tourists who want to receive services do not experience a negative situation related to waiting times (S. P. Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). Within the scope of the concept of medical tourism, the process is the availability of consistent quality service when individuals need it. The medical tourism process, which starts with the patient's decision to be treated abroad, is a long process that continues until the patient returns home and even includes the period when follow-up procedures continue. The opinions of medical tourists about both the country and the quality of the service they receive are shaped by the complete success of the process. A negativity in one of these processes may affect the whole process and cause a negative perception (Yılmaz, 2022). Ensuring coordination in all processes is a situation that increases the satisfaction of medical health tourists and provides trust for the institution (Arı, 2017; Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2011).

## 2. CONCLUSION

Medical tourists are individuals travelling from one place to another for medical treatment. Medical tourism is all the services provided to tourists travelling for treatment. Medical tourism offers significant advantages both on the presentation side (countries and organisations) and on the service procurement side. While it provides significant economic contributions in the short and long term for service-providing countries, it also offers an important area of gain for organisations. In terms of service recipients, it provides individuals with the opportunity to access health services

that are not available in their own countries, short waiting times, better quality services and more affordable prices. At the same time, it is noteworthy as an additional benefit that it provides a touristic trip opportunity, at least for individuals who do not make this trip for a serious medical care. For these reasons, it is a highly preferable sector for both countries and individuals. Many countries and health institutions have realised this situation and invested in medical tourism. Considering this importance of medical tourism, in this study, medical tourism has been analysed one by one with the elements of service marketing mix.

As a result, in this study, medical tourism has been handled within the scope of service marketing mix elements. Marketing has always been a subject that has been handled more carefully for health tourism. It is thought that addressing the concept of medical tourism within the framework of service marketing mix elements will contribute to the studies to be carried out in the literature in the future.

Medical tourism is an important alternative tourism type that is independent from the sea, sand and sun triad and provides significant foreign currency inflow with the advantage of four-season service provision. This income is generated not only by health institutions, but also in many different supporting areas such as accommodation, travel, food and beverage. The emergence of new and better quality products with the support of medical tourism is an important advantage for the local people. Marketing the medical services offered at affordable prices is very important in terms of preference, image and brand positioning. In medical tourism, different pricing for the same treatment may cause confusion and insecurity for medical tourists. Today's technology can offer individuals the opportunity to compare the prices of the country they will visit very easily. The decisions of individuals in the choice of country and facility are shaped accordingly. Advanced technology makes its impact felt not only on price but also on the concept of promotion. Since the general structure of the health sector is not suitable for advertising, word-of-mouth marketing is important. Medical tourists can share their experiences in digital environments and provide opportunities for word-of-mouth marketing in the international arena. In this way, medical tourists can get information about the processes more easily. One of the important issues in medical tourism is place. For medical tourists, factors such as intermediary organisations, short waiting times, advanced technology and ease of access are important for being preferable. At this point of preferability, perhaps one of the most important elements in medical tourism is human. In medical tourism, people are both on the service delivery side and at the same time on the service receiving

side. Since the human factor is the element that performs service delivery, it is also the determinant of the quality of the service. Another important issue is physical evidences. Since the output of the health sector is intangible, it is difficult for individuals to predict it in advance. For this reason, tourists are looking for more concrete concepts to make the decision to purchase the service. Not only purchasing, they also look for concrete concepts in order to be satisfied with the service they receive. They evaluate the place where they receive service according to criteria such as appropriate interior design, appropriate colouring, comfort and extra service facilities, smell, temperature and hygiene, which can provide a pre-service impression. One of the important issues in medical tourism is process. The process covers a long period from the patient's arrival for treatment to his/her return home, even including the treatment follow-up period. Within the scope of the process, accommodation, medical treatment and patient controls, continuation of treatment, getting information, tourism and recreational activities, cultural activities, nutrition, spending quality time, access to personal needs, comfort, service, etc. There are all activities that can be detailed. When considering medical tourism marketing, it is necessary to consider all processes in their entirety. Because the mishap that will occur only in one part of the process may affect the whole medical tourism process in terms of medical tourists and leave a bad impression. For this reason, it is critical to manage the process well, which is one of the determinants of the quality of the service to be received.

In order to realise, maintain and develop the concept of medical tourism in a healthier way, it is recommended to expand the services within the scope of medical tourism, to measure the expectations of the people receiving medical tourism services from medical tourism and their satisfaction levels with the services they receive, to evaluate all steps of the process and to organise it at an optimal level.

## REFERENCES

- Ağaoğlu, F. O., Karagöz, N., & Zabun, S. (2019). Sağlık Turizmi Uygulamaları ve Türkiye'ye Getirilerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme. Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, 20(2), 428-450.
- Aktuğlu, I. K. (2006). Tüketicinin Bilgilendirilmesi Sürecinde Reklam Etiği. Küresel İletişim Dergisi, (2), 1-20.

- Arı, H. (2017). Pazarlama Perspektifinden Medikal Turizm ve Türkiye'nin Medikal Turizmdeki Yeri. *Sağlık Yönetimi Dergisi*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Ataman, H., Esen, M. F., & Vatan, A. (2017). Medikal Turizm Kapsamında Sunulan Sağlık Hizmetlerinde Kalite ve Hasta Güvenliği. *Uluslararası Sağlık Yönetimi ve Stratejileri Araştırma Dergisi*, 3(1), 28-44.
- Berry, D. (1990). "Marketing Mix for the '90s adds an S and 2Cs to 4Ps", *Marketing News*, 24(6), pp.10.
- Bookman, M. Z., & Bookman, K. R. (2007). *Medical Tourism in Developing Countries*. Palgrave McMillan. New York.
- Connell, J. (2006). Medical tourism: Sea, Sun, Sand and Surgery. *Tourism Management*, 27 (6) 1093–1100.
- Connell, J. (2016). Reducing the scale? From global images to border crossings in medical tourism. *Global Networks*, 16(4), 531-550.
- Das, R. (2017). Medical Marketing in Promoting Medical Tourism in India. *ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Retail Management*, 8(3), 1-10.
- Denizli, F. (2022). Medikal Turizm Kapsamındaki Sağlık Çalışanlarının Memnuniyet ve Örgütsel Bağlılık Düzeyleri: Kayseri Örneği. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (51), 165-186.
- Gan, L. L., & Frederick, J. R. (2011). Medical Tourism Facilitators: Patterns Of Service Differentiation, *Journal Of Vacation Marketing*, 17(3), 165-183.
- Gümüş, R. (2018). Pazarlama Faaliyetlerinin Sağlık Sektörüne Uygulanması: Bir Literatür İncelemesi. *Bulletin of Economic Theory and Analysis*, 3(4), 217-235.
- Gürdin, B. (2017). Sağlık Hizmetleri Sektöründe Reklam Yasağı: Uygulama Örnekleri. *Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, 9(2), 17-30.
- Güzel, Ö. (2010). Turistik Ürün Çeşitlendirmesi Kapsamında Yeni Bir Dinamik: İnanç Turizmi. *Vizyoner Dergisi*, 2(2), 87-100.
- Herrick, D. (2007). *Medical Tourism: Global Competition In Health Care*. National Center for Policy Analysis.
- Horowitz, M. D., & Rosensweig, J. (2007). *Medical Tourism: Globalization of the Healthcare Marketplace*, *Medscape General Medicine*, 9(4): 33-42.

- İçöz, O. (2009). Sağlık Turizmi Kapsamında Medikal (Tıbbi) Turizm Ve Türkiye'nin Olanakları. *Journal Of Yasar University*, 4(14).
- Joint Commission International. (2023). Erişim Tarihi: 12.04.2023  
<http://tr.jointcommissioninternational.org/entr/jci-accredited-organizations/>
- Kotler, P. (1991). *Marketing Management*. Prentice-Hall.
- Medical Tourism In India. (2023). Erişim Tarihi: 18.04.2023 Erişim Adresi:  
<https://www.indiaprofile.com/medical-tourism/cost-comparison.html>
- Medical Tourism. (2023). Erişim Tarihi: 18.04.2023. Erişim Adresi:  
<https://www.medicaltourism.com/compare-prices>
- Motley, L., Biff. (2002). "Worth Reviewing The Four P's", *ABA Bank Marketing*, 34(3), pp:48.
- Caballero-Danell, S., & Mugomba, C. (2007). Medical Tourism, and its Entrepreneurial Opportunities- A Conceptual Framework for Entry into the Industry. *Tourism and Hospitality Management Master Thesis No. 2006:9*. Erişim Adresi:  
<https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/4671>
- Nielsen. (2015). *Global Trust in Advertising Report, September 2015*, Erişim Adresi:  
<https://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/nielsen/global/apac/docs/reports/2015/nielsen-global-trust-in-advertising-report-september-2015.pdf>.
- Öndoğan, E. N. (2010). Restoran Pazarlamasında Kullanılan Temel Pazarlama Karması Elemanları. *Ege Stratejik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 1(1).
- Patientents Beyond Borders. (2023). Erişim Tarihi: 17.04.2023 Erişim Adresi:  
<https://www.patientsbeyondborders.com/media>
- Pomering, A., Noble, G., & Johnson, L. W. (2011). Conceptualising a Contemporary Marketing Mix for Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(8), 953-969.
- Rahman, A. (2016). Hizmet Pazarlama Karmasının Medikal Turizme Uyarlanması: Antalya Örneği. (Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Turizm İşletmeciliği ve Otelcilik Ana Bilim Dalı). Erişim Adresi:  
<http://dspace.akdeniz.edu.tr/handle/123456789/3125>
- Rerkrujipimol, J., & Assenov, I. (2011). Marketing Strategies for Promoting Medical Tourism in Thailand. *J Tour Hosp CulArts*, 3(2), 95-105.
- Sevim, E., & Sevim, E. (2019). Medikal Turizm Tercihini Etkileyen Faktörlerin İncelenmesi: Türkiye Örneği. *Hacettepe Sağlık İdaresi Dergisi*, 22(3), 633-652.

- Sevim, E. (2019). Medikal Turizm ve Stratejik Analiz. 1 bs., Nobel Yayıncılık, Ankara.
- Sevim, E., & Gdk, . (2020). Kamu Saęlık Hizmetleri Yneticilerinin Saęlık Hizmetlerinde Pazarlamaya Bakıř Aıların Deęerlendirilmesi: İstanbul rneęi. JAREN, 6(1), 148-156.
- řahbaz, R. P., Akdu, U., & Akdu, S. (2012). Trkiye’de Medikal Turizm Uygulamaları; İstanbul ve Ankara rneęi. Balıkesir niversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstits Dergisi, 15 (27), 267-296.
- Telli, S. G., Iřıkay, T., & Demir, C. (2022). Pazarlama Ynetiminde İnsan Faktr: İsel Pazarlama ve İ Mřteriler. Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler ve Eęitim Dergisi, 4(6), 75-96.
- Temizkan, S. P., & Temizkan, R. (2020). Dnyada ve Trkiye’de Medikal Turizm Kapsamında Plastik ve Estetik Cerrahi Uygulamaların Hizmet Pazarlaması Karması Perspektifinde Deęerlendirilmesi. Journal of Gastronomy Hospitality and Travel, 3(2), 284-298.
- Temizkan, V., & Akbaba, E. (2018). Saęlık Kurumlarında řiddete Karřı Bir zm nerisi: Saęlık Hizmetleri Pazarlaması. Uluslararası Bankacılık Ekonomi ve Ynetim Arařtırmaları Dergisi, 1(1), 1-16.
- Tengilimoęlu, D. (2000). Saęlık Hizmetlerinde Pazarlama Karması Elemanları ve zellikleri. Ankara niversitesi SBF Dergisi, 55(1).
- Thomas, R. K. (2008). Health services marketing: A practitioner's guide. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Tontuř, H. . (2018). Saęlık Turizmi Tanıtımı ve Saęlık Hizmetlerinin Pazarlanması İlkeleri zerine Deęerlendirme. Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Tourism, 3(1), 67-88.
- Turner, L. (2007). First World Health Care at Third World Prices’: Globalization, Bioethics and Medical Tourism. BioSocieties, 2(3), 303-325.
- TSİAD. (2019). Eriřim Adresi: <https://tusiad.org/tr/saglik-cg/item/4844-turkiye-icin-yeni-bir-firsat-penceresi-tip-turizmi-gorus-belgesi>.
- Yeoh, E., Othman, K., & Ahmad, H. (2013). Understanding Medical Tourists: Word-Of-Mouth And Viral Marketing As Potent Marketing Tools. Tourism Management, 34, 196-201.
- Yılmaz, V. (2022). Medikal Turizmin Pazarlama Karması Unsurları Aısından Bir Analizi. Vizyoner Dergisi, 13(35).
- Zarchi, R. M., Jabbari, A., Rahimi, S. H., Shafaghat, T., & Abbasi, S. (2013). Preparation and Designing a Checklist for Health Care Marketing Mix, with Medical Tourism Approach. International Journal of Travel Medicine and Global Health, 1(3), 103-108.

Zarei, A., & Maleki, F. (2019). Asya Medikal Pazarlaması, Asya Medikal Turizm Gelişimini Etkileyen Faktörlerin Gözden Geçirilmesi. Konaklama ve Turizmde Kalite Güvencesi Dergisi, 20 (1), 1-15.