



INVESTIGATION OF THE STUDIES PUBLISHED ON WOS BETWEEN 2013-2017 IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH TOURISM WORLDWIDE

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Abstract: The aim of this study, is to examine studies searched on WOS in the field of health tourism worldwide in the last five years in terms of different variables. The study's universe is made up of the WOS databases from 2013 to 2017 and includes studies with the words "health tourism", "medical tourism", "thermal tourism", "disabled tourism", "elderly tourism" and "spa-wellness". Only "research articles" were examined. In total 212 articles were identified, of which 160 were reached and examined according to criteria determined by the researchers. In the studies, which is reached as full text, "Medical Tourism" was the most commonly used keyword. It was determined that the studies were mostly published in 2015 (45) and English (149) was the commonly preferred language of the studies. It has been found that the studies conducted are mostly written by two authors (43) and the authors of all 160 studies mostly work in departments related to Health, Business Administration and Geography. Studies in the field of health tourism were made mostly in Malaysia (18), Korea (16) and Canada (13), respectively. In the studies examined, focus group interview / deep interview / interview technique (40) was used as a research method.

Keywords: *Research articles, Health tourism, Web of Science.*

*Bu çalışma, 8. Uluslararası Sağlık Turizm Kongresinde sunulan sözlü bildirinin genişletilmiş halidir.

Literature Review

Being a concept of Western origin, the word “tourism” was transferred into our language from French (tourisme). The word “tourism” is defined by Turkish Language Institution (TDK) as “a journey taken for resting, entertaining, sightseeing, familiarization etc. purposes, and the whole of economic, cultural and technical precautions and activities carried out for attracting tourists to a country or a region” (URL1). Also, the word “tourist”, which was transferred to our language from French, is defined by TDK as “a person who takes a journey for the purposes of resting, entertaining, sightseeing, familiarization etc. purposes, a traveler, voyager, sightseer” (URL2).

Tourism sector is a significant economic activity for the countries with its dynamic and ever-growing structure, and tourists are seen as an important source of revenue (Güneş and Dülger, 2017). According to the data of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), whereas the number of international tourists was 25 million people in 1950, this number increased to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1 billion 235 million in 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). *According to the recent UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, number of international tourists reached 1,322 million, with an increase of 7% in 2017. It is expected that this increase will continue at a rate of 4 % - 5% in 2018 (URL 3).* Similarly, international tourism revenues at global scale increased from 2 billion USD in 1950 to 104 billion USD in 1980, to 495 billion USD in 2000, and to 1.220 billion USD in 2016 (UNWTO, 2017).

The development of tourism sector in the world as well as in Turkey changed the reasons for which people travel, and accordingly numerous types of tourism that are different from one another have emerged. In recent years, one of the factor that motivate people for travel is health (Şahin and Tuzlukaya, 2017). When we look at the old times, we can see the first examples of medical tourism as people living in tribes that are close to each other in terms of distance interacted among themselves for treatment purposes, since the means of communication were not developed (Tontuş, 2017a). Today, factors such as development of technology in all fields, diversification of health services, rapidly aging population and the transportation between countries becoming easier caused people to travel not only for sightseeing purposes, but also for health motivations. As a result of people traveling for protecting and improving their health, for treatment or getting rehabilitation, the concept of “Medical tourism” has recently become one of the highlighted concepts frequently quoted in global agenda (Aydın, 2012; Dinçer and Serdaroğlu, 2017)

There are different definitions in the literature for the concept of medical tourism. Among these, Özsari and Karatana (2013) defined medical tourism as “any type of travel activity carried out for the primary objective of improving or protecting health, or finding a solution to a health problem.” Bayin (2015) on the other hand studied this as “a type of tourism that takes place when tourists purchase services for treatment or therapeutic purposes from other countries of the world due to being cheaper and of high quality compared to their homelands, or being prohibited in their own countries”. The concept of “Medical tourism” is briefly explained as the visits paid by individuals to a country other than the one they live in, for the purposes of receiving protective, therapeutic, rehabilitating and health improving services” (Tontuş,

2017b). Within the framework of these definitions, the concept of medical tourism could be considered as the travelling of people by accommodating at a place other than where they live for health purposes (Tengilimoğlu, 2017; Aydın, 2012).

Not only the travels carried out by people internationally, but also those that take place between the cities are also evaluated under this scope. People travel for such purposes as being healthier, feeling themselves better, improve their life qualities, receive higher quality health services at a reasonable price and avoiding long waiting periods while procuring health services. There is no limitation on the type of health service in these travels made for such purposes. While people may be travelling for cancer treatment, they could also travel for an eye surgery and get health service. Besides, medical tourism make it possible for people to enjoy a holiday while being treated. The concept of medical tourism becomes important also as regards to being spread to a time period of twelve months in addition to seasonal coastal tourism (Dinçer and Serdaroğlu, 2017; Özsarı and Karatana, 2013; Tontuş, 2017b). Services offered in medical tourism are studied under four main headings. These are (Tontuş, 2017b) Elderly Care Services, Services towards Improving Health, Rehabilitation Services, Treatment Oriented Services. In this context, types of medical tourism could be studied as follows.

Medical tourism is totally a medical definition and covers a trans boundary movement for “treatment purposes”. In other words, medical tourism, from the perspective of the service provider, is the total of services provided for improving the deteriorated health of an individual. Besides, according to international patient classification of the Ministry of Health, a “Medical Tourist” is defined as a person who travels from the place of domicile to another place for acquiring health (Tontuş, 2017b).

While being classified under medical tourism, the concept of thermal tourism arises from the use of waters which contain melted minerals for the purposes of resting, freshening, treatment etc. (Tontuş, 2017b). Thermal tourism relates to a movement towards facilities located for using geothermal waters, which contain various minerals with a temperature of higher than 20 degrees, for the purposes of resting and freshening (URL 5). According to the definition by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; it is a type of tourism comprising use of thermal waters for entertainment and recreational purposes in addition to cure (treatment) applications performed by merging methods of various types such as thermo-mineral water bath, inhalation, mud bath and supportive treatments such as climate cure, physical treatment, rehabilitation, exercise, psychotherapy and diet (URL4).

The term SPA comprises the first letters of the Latin term “Salus Per Aquam”, which means “wellness/ health coming with water”. The term SPA means the health that comes from using the water for treatment purposes since the beginning of 19th century. The term wellness means the freshness in mental and body health. Included under the scope of Wellness Tourism are all types of massages, skin care, mud bath, moss treatments and thalasso therapy (Tontuş, 2017b). Although the classical understanding of holiday affiliated to the trio of sea, sand and water still constitutes the fundamental service area of the tourism sector, a modern and healthy concept of vacation characterized by SPA and Wellness is growing.

Elderly and Disabled Tourism: The old age and disabled tourism covers the travel by patients aged 65 and over in countries where health services are expensive, to countries where costs are lower, for the purposes of treatment, care and healthy life (BAKA, 2013).

Whereas there are no single countries that are preferred according to the level of development in terms of medical tourism, developing countries are among the preferred countries, and even these countries are preferred for medical tourism since health services could be provided for less prices. When the reasons for preference of the countries are examined, the countries are classified as follows: Jordan, Iran, Malaysia, Brazil for their geographical and political positions; Singapore, Thailand, Greek Cyprus, Costa Rica due to this revenue being their primary revenue; Germany, USA, South Korea as the quality of health services and technological equipment in these countries are better; Hungary (Thermal Tourism), Spain (Elderly Tourism), India (Medical Tourism) due to their policies historically putting the emphasis on tourism and medical tourism; and Jordan, India, Malaysia, Brazil and Malta as these use the advantage of physicians who are educated abroad, as well as foreign capital inflow to these countries. Countries such as Turkey, Malaysia, Israel, which host several advantages within their bodies, are included in the classification from the points of geographical position, being tourism countries, advanced technology in health, provision of quality health services, economic prices etc. Another important point is that not only a certain segment of the population benefits from travels made for health purposes; these address not only to the rapidly increasing elderly population, but also to the general population who want to get treated or benefit from the innovations brought by the medical technology. The target audience of medical tourism comprises people whose health has deteriorated, as well as those who are sensitive towards protecting their health (Dinçer and Serdaroglu,2017; Aydın, 2012; Tontuş, 2017b).

The fact that medical tourism became widespread and more important in recent years motivated the academic studies in this field. However, one of the most important indicators to measure the scientific and technological development of countries is the number of publications quoted in international scientific citation indexes such as SCI, SSCI, AHCI. According to the common international recognition, the level of a country's contribution to global science production is determined by the number of articles particularly in these indexes as well as references to them, though other criteria could also apply. Citation indexes are intensely used as a criteria in assessing the scientists and disciplines, in addition to demonstrating the scientific performance of countries. This study deals with the researches published in WOS in the last five years (2013 – 2017) in the field of Medical tourism, which is a concept that is gradually attracting interest every day, from the point of different variables. It is envisaged that the study will constitute an important source of information in examining the studies in recent years in the field of medical tourism, identifying the new developments and trends, carrying out content analysis of the researches and setting method for the future studies.

Method

In this study, it is aimed at examining the studies published on the Web of Science (WOS) in the last five years (2013 – 2017) in the field of medical tourism from the perspective of difference variables. The universe of the research comprises the studies which were carried out

between 2013 – 2017 under the scope of WOS database, with titles containing the keywords “health tourism”, “medical tourism”, “thermal tourism”, “disabled tourism”, “elderly tourism” and “spa-wellness”. The keywords were selected based on the types of medical tourism as grouped by the Ministry of Health. In the study, publications whose research type is not a “research article” were excluded from the scope.

Articles used in the study were acquired from WOS database in February 2018. As a result of the analysis conducted, it was found out that there were a total of 212 articles authored in the last five years in the field of medical tourism in WOS database. 160 of these articles were accessed, and the articles were studied from the point of such criteria as the year of the study, number of persons who performed the study, method of the study, country in which the study is conducted, keywords, and in which sections the authors contributed in medical tourism.

Since the full text of two articles were not accessed under the scope of the study, only the abstracts of the articles were analyzed. The fact that the information in the abstract part was insufficient lead to leaving some criteria aimed to be studied empty. Besides, the fact that no access could be provided over IP (internet protocol) of Cumhuriyet University to 52 out of 212 articles in total constituted the limitations of the research.

Findings

In the study, researches published on the WOS in the last five years (2013 – 2017) in the field of medical tourism between 2013 – 2017, were examined from the point of different variables. It was determined that there were a total of 212 articles written in the last five years in the field of medical tourism. 160 of these were reached and studied.

Table 1 : Distribution of Articles by Years

Year of Publication	N	%
2013	16	10,0
2014	15	9,4
2015	45	28,1
2016	42	26,3
2017	42	26,2
TOTAL	160	100,0

Table 1 shows the distribution of articles by years. When the articles under the research scope are examined over years, it was found that the maximum number of studies in the field of medical tourism was published in 2015 (45).

Table 2: Distribution of Articles by Languages Used

Language Used	N	%
English	149	93,1
Spanish	6	3,8
Portuguese	2	1,3
Other (Italian, Polish, Lithuanian)	3	1,8
TOTAL	160	100,0

Table 2 shows the distribution of articles by languages used. When we look at the language used in the articles studied, we see that the highest number of articles in the five years in medical tourism were in English (149), follows by Spanish (6) and Portuguese (2). Other articles include one for each of Lithuanian, Italian and Polish languages.

Table 3: Distribution of Articles By Number of Authors

Number of Persons Who Conducted the Study	N	%
1 author	34	21,2
2 authors	43	26,9
3 authors	28	17,5
4 authors	27	16,9
5 authors	14	8,8
6 and above	14	8,7
TOTAL	160	100,0

Table 3 shows the distribution of articles by the number of authors. When the articles studied are evaluated according to the number of authors, it could be seen that there were 43 articles with 2 authors, followed by 34 with 1 authors and 28 with 3 authors. Out of 14 publications with a number of authors of 6 and above, one is written by 39 authors. (Schnabel et al., 2016).

Table 4: Distribution of Articles by Keywords

Keywords	N	%
Medical tourism	146	63,2
Health tourism	65	28,1
Thermal tourism	12	5,2
Other (Disabled tourism, Elderly tourism, Spa-wellness tourism, Spa-wellness, Wellness tourism)	8	3,5
TOTAL	231	100,0

Table 4 shows the distribution of articles by keywords. It could be seen that the highest number of keywords in the last five years was 146 for “medical tourism”, which is followed by “health tourism” with 65, and “thermal tourism” with 12.

In the studied conducted, it was found that the authors were mainly working in the departments related to Health, Management, Administration and Geography. Departments that have the highest contribution following these departments are Tourism, Communication and Economy.

Studies in the field of medical tourism were mostly carried out in Malaysia (18), Korea (16) and Canada (13). As the research method, focal group interview/ in-depth interview/ interview techniques (40) were used the most.

Discussion, Conclusion And Recommendations

The concept of medical tourism is an alternative type of tourism which has been rapidly developing in recent years. The changing environmental conditions and human needs mean more than the sole definition of tourism as “a travel made for resting, entertaining, sightseeing,

familiarization". In this study, it was aimed at examining the studies published on the (WOS) in the last five years (2013 – 2017) in the field of medical tourism from the perspective of difference variables. In line with this aim, 160 articles written in the last five years in the field of medical tourism in WOS database were evaluated by identifying certain criteria.

When the distribution of researches over years was studied, it could be seen that the highest number was 45 in 2015. It could be seen that, compared to the previous year which was 2014 (15), the researches in medical tourism increased by three, that around 81% of the articles studied (80.6%) were authored in the last three years, and the interest paid towards medical tourism became more important in the last years. Parallel to our findings, in the study conducted by Özdemir Deniz and Evcı Kiraz (2018) on researches published in medical tourism in Google Academics and TUBITAK databases between 2014 – 2017, it was found that the highest number of publications was in the last three years. Also the most cited article is made by Crush and Chikanda in 2015. In this study, has been investigated South African health tourism statistics. When examined in terms of the language used in the articles studied, the results indicate that 93.1% of them were in English. The study by Temizkan et al. (2015) which researched the articles with medical tourism subject published between 1991 – 2014 on the journals in ISI Web of Knowledge database and academic journals in Turkish, found that the studies were published mainly in Turkish, which is different from our findings. What should be highlighted is that most of the studies conducted have two authors (43) and the 78.8% of all of the articles in the study were multi-authored. The fact that articles have several authors is a frequently encountered phenomenon in scientific world. In case of articles written by multiple authors, authors having different viewpoints come together and evaluate the situation from different aspects. The fact that an article had 39 authors (Schnabel et al. 2016), is a very extraordinary example despite the fact that it was a broad study carried out in six different states in the USA. Temizkan et al. (2015) showed in their study that publications with single author was at higher number, which is different from our findings. The studies were access using the key word "medical tourism" (146) as the most, and this number corresponds to around 63% out of total number of articles. It was found that the authors were mainly working in the departments related to Health, Management, Administration and Geography. In the study by Temizkan et al. (2018), it was determined that the fields of authors were related mostly to medicine, tourism and geography, which was partially similar to our finding. Studies in the field of medical tourism were mostly carried out in Malaysia (18), Korea (16) and Canada (13). As the research method, Focal Group Interview/ In-depth Interview/ Interview techniques (40) were used the most.

Deeper information could be presented in the future studies as other studies in the field of medical tourism are covered and analyzed in terms of various variables.

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