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Challenges and opportunities for promoting Dubai as a medical tourism hub

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Medical tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry in a number of developing Asian countries. The phenomenon is not new. In the past, affluent people from Middle Eastern countries travelled abroad for first world quality of medical treatment to the UK or USA. Now wealthy citizens from developed countries are seeking affordable, accessible, quality healthcare with state-of-the-art medical facilities and technology, no waiting periods for surgery and combining it with a holiday at an exotic destination. Dubai has all this to offer to an international medical tourist. This paper will investigate the expansion, challenges and opportunities of promoting Dubai as a medical tourism hub. Dubai is a global cosmopolitan city, a cultural and a business financial center of the Middle East, a popular tourist destination. Dubai can be a regional hub for medical tourism, with the Dubai Health Authority medical tourism strategic plan of promoting medical tourism to the world and attracting 500,000 medical tourists by 2020. This conceptual paper is based on a study of the market situation, business trends and government initiatives for medical tourism in Dubai. The study recommends future development and promotion of Dubai as a regional healthcare and a global medical tourism hub. This research provides a conceptual framework indicating opportunities and threats linked with Dubai as a future medical tourism hub which is a unique contribution to the theory of medical tourism management. The lack of access to the Dubai Government and medical tourists is a limitation of this study. A future study could be conducted from the supply side medical tourism management and the demand side perspective of medical tourists.

Biography

Farooq Haq is an Assistant Professor and completed his PhD from Charles Darwin University in Australia in 2011. His PhD was on marketing spirituality from a tourism perspective. After lecturing for many years in Australia, he is now the Chair of Marketing & Int'l Business at the Canadian University of Dubai. His research interests are in marketing spiritual tourism and medical tourism, Islamic Marketing and marketing of Islamic products and services. He has published various journal articles, conference papers and book chapters in his areas of research.

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