


Scenario Planning of Health Tourism in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Post-Corona Era

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Abstract

Purpose: The significant effects of the corona infectious disease require fundamental changes in various fields such as the health tourism industry, which are more and more important in the post-corona era. Health tourism is one of the most important types of tourism in our country. Now, it should be checked what the status of this important industry will be in the post-corona era. Therefore, the main goal of the current research is to analyze the health tourism situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the post-corona era, which takes a futuristic view.

Method: The method of the current research is mixed that investigates the issue using a sequential exploratory approach. In this research, two methods of "scope review and scenario planning" have been used, respectively.

Findings: According to the findings of the first phase, 6 components and 55 main indicators were extracted from among 58 qualified researches, and 25 main indicators were considered as the drivers of this field in the review through the expert panel process. In the second phase, using the quantitative method of scenario planning, four main scenarios were developed under the headings of the development and expansion of health tourism, the scenario of creating opportunities and solving the challenges ahead, the conservative scenario and maintaining the status quo, the scenario of dependence and avoiding possible threats.

Conclusion: From the results of the current research, we can point out the role of each of the scenarios in different situations, which can create sustainable health tourism in the country in the best and most favorable possible state.


Keywords: Health Tourism, Scenario Planning, Post-Corona, Mixed Method.

Cite this article: Madani, Javad. Mahmoudi, Ahmad. Soltani, Mostafa. (2023), Scenario Planning of Health Tourism in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Post-Corona Era

Research Article, Volume8, NO.2 fall & winter 2023, 31-62

DOI: 10.30479/JFS.2023.18178.1452

Received on: 21 August, 2022 Accepted on: 13 September, 2023

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Publisher: Imam Khomeini International University

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Introduction

For several decades, the tourism and hospitality industry has been sensitive to and affected by external and internal factors, such as uncertainty, challenges, crises and pandemics. An unexpected crisis (for example, natural, financial and health) can threaten tourism demand and damage the performance of companies and organizations related to tourism and hospitality. The most important of them may be epidemics and outbreaks of diseases that play an important role in social and economic changes. Compared to other industries, tourism and hospitality are especially vulnerable to disasters and crises, and the tourism sector is one of the sectors that is easily affected by crises, disasters and disasters such as epidemics. The tourism industry has traditionally been very sensitive to socio-economic, political and environmental risks, yet it is also a very resilient industry. Therefore, many countries providing health tourism adopted preventive and restorative measures. such as limited admission of tourists at specific times; Smartening processes related to health tourism, etc. It is clear that the corona virus has significantly changed the tourism sector, from the demand side, where users are changing, either by their own decision or due to health conditions that force them to do so, their preferences in travel tastes. , and also on the supply side, try to show that their destinations are safe in terms of health in addition to being attractive and unique. In our country, which is one of the most important health tourism destinations in the Middle East region, there were also challenges. For example, the mandatory lockdown in some days and months of the year caused a lot of the capacity of the health field to be allocated to the corona treatment sector, or that many of the capacities in question remain unknown and unexamined, and the main priority; to overcome the crisis of the corona epidemic. By reviewing similar works, it can be seen that few researches have been proposed in this field. In more general terms, the lack of studies in the literature related to the analysis of health tourism in the post-corona era and the creation of a theoretical gap in this regard is one of the main necessities of this research. This gap and lack of theoretical foundations or related research causes many fruitful cases in this field to remain neglected and not investigated. In this research, while solving these gaps, it is tried to investigate and analyze the future of this type of tourism. On the other hand, due to the attractiveness and favorable conditions and the good condition of the medical field of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has advantages such as experienced medical staff and low treatment costs; It has caused the attention of many tourists and patients from all over the world to be directed towards this direction. However, the current statistics show that the Islamic Republic of Iran has a very small share of the global income of tourism and, in particular, of health tourism. Due to the novelty of the current world trend in the corona and post-corona era and the lack of accurate prediction of the condition of this disease in the future, it is not possible to make a definitive and comprehensive opinion regarding the situation and how it will occur, and the relevant scenarios need to be discussed and investigated. Therefore, the main goal of the current research is to analyze the health tourism situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the post-corona era, which is done with a future perspective.

Methodology

This research is of an applied type and in terms of the purpose and nature of the data, it is considered "mixed". The approach used in it is sequentially exploratory in such a way that first qualitative information and then quantitative data are collected and analyzed. In the first phase, the qualitative method of domain review was used, and in the second phase, the quantitative method of scenario planning was used. In the first stage, using the approach of document and library analysis, researches were identified from scientific databases such as Scencedirect, Emerald, Proquest, Web of Science, Springer, Sage, and Google Scholar. It should be noted that these articles have been searched and reviewed only in the subject area of health tourism and its related types, and the selection of indicators was done using a panel of experts. In the second phase, scenarios -possible futures- were developed using the quantitative method of scenario planning. The domain review method is a search-oriented strategy for examining data and information related to a topic that have been raised in a specific topic area. In this method, the primary search includes published literature, internet sources, various documents, etc., which creates a systematic research platform. This method is very much similar to systematic review, meta-analysis and prism, whose main purpose is to solve the existing gap in the field of knowledge. Due to the unknown nature of the corona disease situation in the future and the emergence of different conditions in the post-corona era, it is necessary to investigate its different states or conditions. For this purpose, we will first extract the components and indicators related to this field using the qualitative domain review method and then use the panel of experts to examine the key components for scenario planning. In the second phase, the quantitative method of scenario planning has been used. This method has three main techniques, which are: (1) modified probabilistic trends, (2) perceptual logic and (3) the French approach to the future. Perceptual logic has been used in this research. In this method, two main uncertainties are determined and the scenario space is drawn in the form of a matrix consisting of the two main axes of the aforementioned uncertainties, and a quadruple space is drawn in the form of a 2x2 matrix for planning scenarios. The participants of this research are 9 experts in the fields of tourism, health tourism, health policy and future research, and because they do not have the same level of activity and expertise, snowball sampling was used to identify them.

Findings

First phase: Qualitative method of domain review

In the first phase, using the domain review technique, the main components and indicators in this field were identified, which was done through the five main steps of Denier and Tranfield's approach, which are: structuring the question, determining the scope of the study, selecting and reviewing articles., data analysis, conclusion. First step: documentary and library analysis method In this step, first of all, a review of the existing theoretical foundations in this field was done, and by identifying key words in this field, related and aligned research; were identified and reviewed. The number of investigated researches were 114 sources in the form of scientific articles from scientific databases. Because scencedirect, Emerald, Proquest, Web of science, springer, Sage and Google scholar were identified.

Second step: extraction of related components and indicators

After checking the key words and the conceptual and central relationship of these researches, finally 58 original researches were identified and reviewed in line with the topic. At this stage, 6 components and 55 main indicators were extracted by examining text by text.

Third step: Expert panel technique

In this step, 6 selected experts, using their knowledge and expertise, examined and selected the main and key indicators, and finally, 25 indicators were approved. These people, due to their academic and sometimes executive expertise in this subject area; They identified the main and key indicators of this field.

The second phase: the quantitative method of scenario writing

The fourth step: cross-impact analysis technique

In this step, the main and key components and indicators are classified and as seen in the previous part, 25 indicators were identified as the main and key indicators in this area, in the framework of the matrix of cross-effects to the variables, based on influence and influence with numbers in range from zero to three points. In this criterion, "zero" means no effect, "one" means weak effect, "two" means moderate effect, "three" means high effect (Asan and Asan, 2007: 627-644); And after scoring, they are entered in the form of a cross matrix to obtain the influence and effectiveness of factors, key and effective drivers. The tool used in this section is a questionnaire that was sent electronically to the respondents. In the following, MicMac software was used to calculate the matrix of cross-effects analysis. Considering that 25 indicators have been approved by the experts, the dimensions of the matrix in MicMac software are 25x25 and the number of repetitions has been considered twice. After the valuation of the experts from 0 to 3, the summation of the valuations was done, the filling degree of the matrix is 86.3%, which indicates the high and somewhat scattered influence of the indicators or factors with each other. Among the 625 relationships that can be evaluated in this matrix, 73 relationships are zero; 218 The relationship of their number is one; 204 The relationship of their number two; And 130 relationships were three in number.

Fifth step: Questionnaire tool

In this step, the uncertainties and different states of the propellants are determined. According to the opinions of the experts and the sum of the scores, it can be seen that at the end we reach two uncertainties, the best and most comprehensive axes of uncertainty for each of the two drivers "health and treatment component" and "process and technological component" in the scenario matrix in consideration were taken.

Discussion and Review

Sixth step: developing scenarios and analyzing them

In the methodology part, it was mentioned that by determining the two main variables, the four-cell matrix of the scenarios with two main axes will be formed from the two heads of certainty and uncertainties obtained. This matrix is 2 by 2 and displays the relevant scenarios based on each of the conditions and situations.

In the following, each of the four obtained scenarios will be briefly explained.

Scenario 1: Development and expansion of health tourism.

This scenario arises from the intersection of the variables "optimal state of health and treatment of the country" and "optimal state of processes and technology of the

country" which is named as "development and expansion of health tourism". This scenario, which is considered as an excellent or favorable situation, refers to the most favorable state of health tourism in Iran. In this context, by taking advantage of the main capacities of the country, health tourism can be comprehensively supported in order to achieve "sustainability" and be fruitful for the country. "The favorable state of the country's health and treatment" and "the favorable state of the country's processes and technology" promise this important category that the facilities, infrastructures and processes related to this area can be effective in the development and expansion of health tourism in the country. This concept can evoke sustainable tourism, which most countries are trying to achieve according to the existing conditions and facilities.

Scenario 2: The scenario of creating opportunities and solving the upcoming challenges.

This scenario is the intersection of the variables of "optimal state of health and treatment of the country" and "unfavorable state of processes and technology of the country" which is named as the scenario of "creating opportunities and solving the challenges ahead". In this scenario, the health and medical condition of the country is favorable, but the existing processes and technologies are in a poor condition. For this purpose, by using the potentials and identifying the existing opportunities; He minimized the upcoming challenges and made the most of the upcoming opportunities. This scenario considers that by creating capacity or by using effective mechanisms, while solving the existing challenges, it can make optimal use of the obtained opportunities so that this type of tourism becomes effective in the country.

Scenario 3: Conservative scenario and maintaining the status quo.

This scenario arises from the intersection of the variables "optimal state of processes and technology of the country" and "unfavorable state of health and treatment of the country", which is named as "conservative scenario and maintaining the status quo". This scenario comes up when the country's processes and technology are in good condition and the country's healthcare conditions are not good. In this situation, one should proceed with a conservative or cautious approach and maintain the existing situation and in some cases reach the desired situation. In fact, due to the fact that the existing processes and technology in the country are in a favorable condition, but the health and medical conditions of the country are at the other end of the spectrum; That is, it is in an unfavorable situation; Therefore, while maintaining the existing situation, it is necessary to use more conservative approaches so that the unfavorable and unfavorable situation tends towards the favorable situation.

Scenario 4: Scenario of dependence and escape from possible threats.

This scenario arises from the intersection of the variables "unfavorable state of processes and technology of the country" and "unfavorable state of health and treatment of the country", which is named as "scenario of dependency and avoidance of possible threats". This situation is considered as the most unfavorable situation, which should be fundamentally changed in all the bases and infrastructures related to health tourism and a new trend should be created in order to improve it. In this situation, while using the capacities of some departments, possible threats should be avoided.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the only threat we face. There are other global crises, such as climate change, that affect people's livelihoods and threaten the chances of survival for many. The dynamics of the Corona epidemic have shown how various effects such as social, economic, health and environmental categories are intertwined and necessary measures have become necessary. This epidemic is still present in every corner of the world and its impact on the health tourism industry is huge. Many people travel and medical tourism by injecting vaccines and various treatments. And this work will continue until the end of the dangers of this virus. Therefore, different countries implement different measures. Health tourism is one of the areas that many countries depend on the income from it. And considering the unclear situation of this virus in the future, they need to take effective measures in the post-corona era. The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its experienced medical staff and many opportunities in the field of health and treatment in the world, can play a significant role in the development and promotion of this type of tourism, which four different scenarios were envisioned in this research.

It should be noted that health tourism not only has a great impact on the country's tourism industry, but also causes significant changes in the economy and job creation in various sectors. This industry is considered as a multi-dimensional and multi-directional industry, which with basic and fundamental support, can be the beginning of a way for the progress and development of the country in accordance with the upstream documents and general policies of the system. In the post-corona era, it is possible to achieve sustainable health tourism by taking advantage of the unrecognized potentials and opportunities in the country, which is one of the most important and fundamental actions of countries. In this research, four scenarios were proposed, which were categorized from the most optimistic to the most pessimistic.

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