

Medical tourism in Colombia: A documentary analysis of the components of economic, social and environmental sustainability

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Abstract

Analyzing the components of sustainability from the economic, social and environmental spheres in the framework of the value network of medical tourism, establishes strategic importance to take advantage of the economy that surrounds the tourist destinations in the different regions of Colombia. For the case of study, the regions will be analyzed: central formed by the cities of Bogotá and Medellín, eastern conformed by the city of Bucaramanga and pacific by the city of Cali.

Based on the methodology developed by Gereffi (1999) in the global value chain approach, Gattorna (2009), and Hald, (2010) in a dynamic supply chain approach, the characteristics of the different value networks and their interaction with the different stakeholders that will be compared.

Keywords

Medical tourism, global value chain, value networks, sustainability, dynamic supply chain

Introduction

Medical tourism is one of the fastest-growing tourism initiatives. This performance is observed in Asian countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, India and the Philippines (Turner, 2011; Hyder, Rydback, Bong, Osarenkhoe, 2019). In Latin American countries, the development of medical tourism is observed in Mexico, according to the study conducted by Garman et al. (2016). Medical tourism is a manifestation of globalization (Hopkins et al, 2010), which involves elements to be considered in order to avoid uncertainty and risk in the provision of the service.

Medical tourism includes not only the medical intervention of the patient, but also a series of services related to recovery, post-surgery, rest and recreation, transportation of the patient to the places included in the service (airport, hotel, hospital, tourist sites, etc.), therefore, the importance in the value network generated in each of the providers of these services. Considering the variety of operators of the value network, the importance of service quality and reliability, the handling of complex situations in the medical intervention and in the subsequent recovery, is fundamental. The control of these factors and third-party operators (travel agencies, insurance companies, government entities) where complications can arise is of vital importance to appropriate monitoring and control (Hyder et al. 2019).

The objective of this document is to carry out an exploratory review of medical tourism, its interactions with operators considered in a value network and compare it with the specific case in Colombia. In emerging countries, medical tourism has an interesting potential for development, generating research inputs for Colombia.

Statement of the case

Medical tourism is a development opportunity focused on providing wellness through the provision of a service that integrates medical treatment and a service of recovery and recreation. Hopkins, et al., (2010) states that medical tourism has rapidly emerged as a manifestation of the global commercialization of health care. It also defines medical tourism as cross-border health care, motivated by low costs, short waiting times, and because the services provided are not available in their countries of origin. These health care activities are closely related to tourism activities that make it easier for patients from abroad to interact in new cultural settings and other tourism services while in a pre- and post-operative process or medical intervention (Hopkins, et al., 2010).

In medical tourism, we can observe the participation of different operators who provide various services related not only to health care but also to other elements of preparation before the medical intervention, medical care, rest and well-being for the patient's recovery. Establishing a characterization of these stakeholders and their participation within the value network is very important to monitor service quality and government control.

In Colombia, medical tourism is growing, due to the credibility and trust that a group of hospitals and medical professionals have acquired. In cities such as Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Medellín, and Cali, market opportunities have been observed and their hospitals have been certified with the highest quality standards to ensure the trust and credibility of institutions and professionals. These factors confirm the importance of the credibility and trust of the operators that are around the value network of medical tourism; Hyder, et al., (2019) deepens its investigations in the behavior of the trust networks and the information medium (Word-of-mouth) that grants the credibility of the professionals and the institutions that provide the medical service and the pre- and post-operative care.

Based on the relevance of the development of medical tourism as a competitive advantage in developing countries, the aim is to analyze the sustainability of medical tourism in Colombia based on the characterization of the value network in the cities of Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Medellín, and Cali. Based on the identification of the operators of the value network (stakeholders) it is intended to establish their importance and interaction between them and the impact on the sustainability of medical tourism. On the other hand, the revision of the regulations that regulate medical tourism in Colombia in comparison with other leading countries in that market.

Methodology

For the development of the project, an exploratory and analytical methodology is established. The first phase of secondary research will be the review of the literature on medical tourism and networks of logistical value.

The second phase with the application of qualitative and quantitative surveying instruments in a non-probability sample for convenience to hospitals and medical professionals in the cities of Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Medellín, and Cali.

The third phase related to the analysis of the medical tourism value network, based on the characterization of the network, from the analysis of the theoretical references and the exploratory results that were developed (Figure 1).

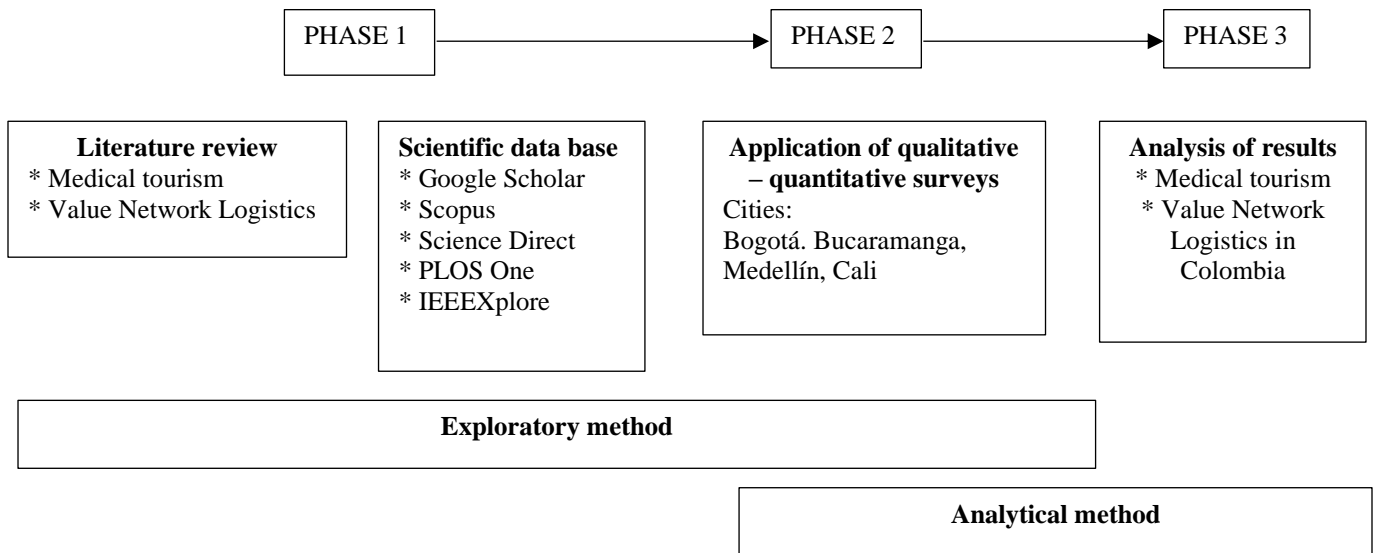


Figure 1. Description of methodology

The expected results

Establishing the characterization of the network of the logistical value of medical tourism in Colombia and knowing the stakeholders that participate in the network, are the expected results in the research.

The impact that the activities developed by stakeholders in each of the processes related to medical tourism, will help determine opportunities for improvement to strengthen credibility and confidence in the target market.

The review and comparison of journal articles related to medical tourism and value networks, will establish new research initiatives, the analysis of the impact of stakeholders on credibility and trust in the provision of services, the behavior of the tourism market in cities may be replicated in other regions of Colombia.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/07359683.2019.1618008>

Biographies

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William E. Mosquera-Laverde is an Assistant professor Researcher, Business Administration Program, graduated as Chemical Engineer from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, in 1993; Specialist in Higher Education, Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia - UNAD, in 2010 and full Masters in Environmental Management at Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota in 2014. Professor and researcher of Environmental Management at Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia. He has taught courses in Environmental Management, Operations Research, Quality Management, and Finance. He has worked with the Entrepreneurship Center at Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia and sustainability management in vulnerable communities and as a consultant to industrial companies since 1995.