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MEDICAL TOURISM COMPETITION: THE CASE OF TURKEY

Emine KILAVUZ*

Prof. of Department of Economics, Nuh Naci Yazgan University, TURKEY

*Email: ekilavuz@nny.edu.tr

Abstract: Productivity differences between countries lead to trade gain. According to the Heckscher-Ohlin model, differences in *labor skills and physical capital* between countries cause productive differences and then increases competitive power. In recent years, there has been a rapid growth in the medical services market and related international trade in the world. Turkey is one of the countries with high competitiveness in this market and wants to increase the market volume, because Tur has relatively better service quality, well-equipped hospitals, geographical location and large comparative cost advantage. The aim of this paper is to examine Turkey's competitiveness as a popular health care destination in the world. Numerical data and our analysis indicate that Turkey's competitiveness in medical tourism is high.

Keywords: *Medical tourism, Turkey, Comparative advantage.*

Introduction

Trade models try to explain why some countries export certain commodities and others not. The literature on international trade includes various reasons why a country may have an advantage in exporting a commodity/service to another country. In general, most of these reasons can be classified as (1) technological superiority, (2) resource endowments, (3) demand patterns, and (4) commercial policies. Adam Smith's Absolute Advantage points to a country having higher productivity or lower cost in producing a commodity compared to another country. According to Factor-Endowment Theory in economics or Heckscher-Ohlin (HO) Theory, a country has comparative advantage in those commodities that use its abundant and hence cheap production factor intensively. A comparative advantage in a country may change over time due to changes in any of the determinants of comparative advantages such as resource ownership, technology, demand patterns, expertise, business practices and government policies (Gupta, 2009).

International tourism is today one of the most important tradable sector. Tourism flows are also explained by supply-side variables such as international trade flows. The comparative advantage of the exporting countries comes from the supply-side factors such as natural endowments, technology and infrastructure (Zhang and Jensen, 2007). The term comparative advantage in a tourism context refers to supply-side resources, for example, physical resources like scenery, human resources such as knowledge resources and trained staff, natural resources such as mineral springs, thermal waters and wildlife, historical, cultural and heritage resources. When choosing a health and well-being destination, customers highly value a modern, holistic and wide service supply. In addition, society, economy, politics, ecology and technology influence the comparative advantage of the tourism destination. These endowed resources are the core pull factors, and thus the comparative advantage, of a health and well-being destination (Tuominen et al., 2014).

Medical tourism is now popular as a relatively new type of tourism. This sector, which has a high added value and creates employment in many areas, is supported by many governments with investments and incentives (Saleh et al., 2015). On the other hand, international trade in medical services has been growing rapidly over the last few decades. The aim of this paper is to examine Turkey's competitiveness as a popular health care destination in the world. Firstly, we will talk about the importance of the tourism sector and the problem of seasonality. Later, the article will particularly mention the rise and importance of medical tourism in the world and the competitive nature of developing countries. In the third part, Turkey's place in medical tourism and its competitive position are included. A general evaluation is given in the conclusion section.

Importance of Tourism Sector and The Seasonality Problem

As it is known, the tourism economy is an important position for many countries in the world. The tourism industry plays an important role in the formation of GDP, creating new jobs and balancing current account balances. Tourism has a significant influence on many sectors of the

economy (transport and communications, construction, agriculture, consumer goods and others), and contributes to the social and economic development of the country (Darvidou, <http://dspace.tneu.edu.ua/bitstream/316497/16872/1/43-46.pdf>). For this reason it is a key sector with a very high back and forth link and has a positive impact on economic growth.

The direct role of the tourism sector in the economy is generally perceived as being limited to segments such as the hospitality industry (cafes, restaurants), travel agencies and carriers. However, the economic impact of tourism is much more than is known. This sector's needs are supplied from a wide range of sectors such as food and agriculture, industrial products, public services, construction and capital goods (Vellas, 2011).

Beach tourism and natural resources are important in terms of tourism income but have a seasonality problem. It involves the concentration of tourist flows in relatively short periods of the year and has inefficiency and capacity problems. To decrease the problem of seasonality in the tourism sector, tourism activities should be diversified (sun / sea, cultural tourism, diving tourism, health tourism, luxury tourism, marine tourism, urban tourism, congress tourism, gastronomic tourism, sightseeing tourism and spa tourism). Furthermore, diversification of tourism types and markets is crucial for the sustainability of the sector. The country should be attractive to tourists throughout the year and policies should be developed in this regard. In order to have a sustainable tourism sector, health tourism is crucial.

The Increasing Popularity of Health Tourism in the World

One of the consequences of globalization in the world has been an increasing trend in health tourism. Health tourism plays an important role in the development of sustainable tourism by reducing seasonality and diversifying tourism services as a whole. (Mainil et al., 2017). The health care industry, or medical industry, is one of the world's largest industries. The modern health care industry is divided into many sub-sectors and is very important both in terms of revenue and employment for many national economies. These sectors provide different goods and services to treat patients. Health care industry is comprise of different players including hospitals, doctors, nurses, medical device manufactures, diagnostic laboratories, clinical trials, telemedicine, medical tourism, health insurance (Ramirez, 2007; <http://www.technofunc.com/index.php/domain-knowledge-2/healthcare-industry>).

In general, health tourism is a concept that covers medical tourism. Health tourism consists of medical tourism, wellness tourism and spa tourism. Medical and health tourism can be divided into two categories (Baukute, 2012):

-The first is serious medical tourism that consists of treatments of illnesses, cardiac surgery, dental and plastic surgery, fertility, cancer treatments, etc.

-The second category is considered to be less medical and more focused on wellness tourism like spas, alternative therapies, fitness tourism, the use of local medicines, etc.

Medical tourism is becoming a more popular form of health tourism in the current world and the act of travelling to other countries due to medical reasons. Countries are advertising their health services not only in their own countries but also in global markets, and health services are now advertised in a global marketplace. Millions of tourists travel to other countries every day to protect and improve their mental and physical well-being (Millicevic and Jovanovic, 2015). Previously, patients have traveled to other countries, particularly to the developed western countries, to get the best medical treatments. But nowadays, patients prefer not only developed countries but also developing countries

A growing number of patients from developed countries have long traveled to developing countries for high quality medical care at affordable prices. Medical tourists are able to combine treatment and tourism activities at the same time as they prefer countries like India, Hungary, Thailand and Turkey, which have major tourist attractions and modern hospital facilities (Saleh et al., 2015; Piazzola and Zanca, 2011). However, in general, one of the biggest reasons for choosing a foreign country for health care is cost. In addition to the cost and quality of health care, the cultural and entertainment services of countries that provide health services are also important for health care providers (Cernikovaite and Mameniskis, 2015).

In recent years, Asia has become an important and well-known region worldwide in medical tourism. Many Asian countries have a strong competitive edge and recognition in the medical tourism market. Some countries like India, Thailand and Singapore are successfully managing to combine all types of health tourism. India in particular is benefiting from globalization and outsourcing. The Government of India has seriously supported medical tourism since 2002. Nowadays, India is accepted as the center of medical tourism and the most important global center in this area. Adopting western-style medical methods and renewing technology, India is also emphasizing low cost and rapid treatment in its advertisements (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Health, 2012).

Top emerging country destinations include Asia (India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and more recently, The Republic of Korea), South Africa, Latin America (Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Cuba) and the Middle East (especially The United Arab Emirates). European destinations include Hungary, Poland and, more recently, Turkey. While most countries can offer executive check-up, cosmetic surgery or dental treatment, each of them is becoming specialized in specific procedures. For example, Singapore and the Republic of Korea have become popular for advanced cancer treatment, cardiology or spinal operation; Hungary for sophisticated dental treatment; Thailand for cosmetic surgery, etc. (ITC, 2014).

Investing in the healthcare sector is important for improving national income, foreign

exchange revenues, the balance of payments and the service sector. Medical tourism especially has an important place in increasing general tourism revenues (Kumar and Raj, 2015). According to advocates of medical tourism, consumers will be able to get better and cheaper services at high quality due to the increasing competition in world markets in health services (Turner, 2010).

The economic benefits of medical tourism which is over powering all other segments of tourism industry are as follows (<http://www.medicaltourism.com/blog/economic-benefits-of-medical-tourism/>):

- It attracts the top tourists of developed and developing countries. Thus, if medical tourism is considered as a high value added product, its contribution to the country's economy will also be high.
- It increases foreign exchange income.
- It increases direct and indirect employment and creates new business opportunities. Direct employment occurs in jobs such as taxi services, hotels, restaurants, and gift sales. Indirect employment, on the other hand, includes employment due to the production of goods and services that the health tourism sector needs.
- It emphasizes better infrastructure to attract foreign medical tourists to the country as well as raising the standard of living of local people.
- The country's reputation in medical tourism will attract other tourists to the country and then will the development of the country with its multiplier effect.

The development in the medical tourism sector will have a positive effect in some related sectors like the hospital industry, the medical equipment industry and the pharmaceutical industry. The medical tourism sector leads to increase in the number of doctors, nurses and medical technicians. That is why the medical tourism sector is one of the key sectors for economy. Medical tourism has a lot of sub-sectors and plays an important role in the world economy.

It is possible to examine the causes of health tourism under five headings (Hall, 2011):

- **Economic cost dimension;** In general, cross-border health care costs are cheaper than in countries that demand these services.
- **Time cost dimension;** It is possible to reach medical service in a shorter time
- **Commercial behavioral dimension;** It is possible to receive medical services in pleasant surroundings in connection with the holiday.
- **Non-commercial behavioral dimension;** Persons living abroad can return to their countries for medical treatment due to cultural, family and language reasons.
- **The regulative dimension;** Individuals who cannot find the medical service they want in their own country because of legal limitations may go abroad.
- **Non-availability;** Persons who cannot find organs in their own country also tend to go abroad for health care. In developed countries the average life span and the number of the elderly population (older than 60 years) are increasing. Ageing populations in these countries leads to an

increase in demand for the health care. Life expectancy in most countries has increased steadily over the years. Because of the inability of healthcare systems to deal with the increase in health demand and long waiting list, patients want to get medical care in other countries. For patients from developed nations, the primary reason to have medical services in developing countries is the attractively low cost (Sundar, 2012). Demand for healthcare services in developing countries is increasing due to the extreme difference in medical service costs. The three main reasons for the large cost difference in cross-border countries are; 1- low labor cost, 2- low cost medical and medical supplies, and 3- no malpractice cost (Forgione & Smith, 2007).

Technological developments in communication and transportation have increased patient mobility. Patients can get information about medical centers by using internet sources. Globalization is also one of the factors that increase health tourism.

For many developing countries, tourism is already a strong foreign exchange earner and often the most important services export. Regarding both medical and wellness tourism, developing countries have a clear competitive advantage. Health tourism contributes significantly to the economies of many developing countries such as India, Malaysia, Singapore and Turkey.

That is why the countries provide significant support for health tourism and improve health care education. Governments support for medical tourism includes marketing, financial incentives, removal of cross-border movement restrictions for medical professionals, visa facilitation (medical visa-M visa), promotion of some hospitals, hospital accreditation and public-private sector partnership (ITC, 2014). Thus, the competition between tourism destinations is growing in terms of location, health care facilities, expert staff and in pricing.

Medical Tourism in Turkey and Competitive Advantages

Despite the extensive literature on the competitiveness of medical tourism, there is no framework to describe international competitiveness. But we can state important determinants about the competitive position of a destination (Upadhyay, 2011): Location image, climate and environment, attractiveness, historical monuments, scenic beaches, the medical tourism infrastructure, quality of services, hospitality, accessibility, facilities and overall affordability.

Smith and Forgione (2007) argue that both the characteristics of countries (economic and political conditions) and the features of health care intuitions (costs, hospital accreditation, quality of care and doctor education) affect the choice of the health care provider. But no one factor is dominant in decision; all play a crucial role in choosing health care provider and country.

Turkey has always been known for its scenic beauty and cultural history and has a number of competitive advantages like climate, coastline, excellence cuisine, wonderful beaches,

historical and cultural sites. For more than 10 years now, it has stood out as a medical tourism region (<https://www.medicaltourismco.com/medical-tourism-in-turkey/>). Due to its mud baths and natural thermal spa centers, Turkey is known as a popular place by health and wellness tourists. Turkey's 10th Development Plan emphasized the necessity of increasing tourism diversity (health tourism, congress tourism, winter tourism, cruise tourism and culture tourism) and service quality. In this context, the government will provide support especially for the infrastructure necessary for health tourism ([Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Development, 2014](#)). Thus, it was aimed at increasing the ranking of the tourism sector of Turkey by improving the infrastructure.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has started to publish an index that comprehensively analyzes the travel and tourism competitiveness of 136 economies around the world. This index is called The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) and measures set of factors and policies for the sustainable development of the travel and tourism sector. These policies are very important and contribute to the development and competitiveness of a country. The index takes into consideration four types of variables. These variables are follows: Enabling environment (sub index A); T&T policy and enabling conditions (sub index B); Infrastructure (sub index C); Natural and cultural resources (sub index D) (World Economic Forum, 2017a). The aim of the index is to compare and analyze performance in tourism from different countries. Turkey ranks 44th in Travel and Tourism Competitiveness in the 2017 report on 136 economies. Regarding Turkey, this TCI detailed values obtained in 2017 are given in Table 1:

Enabling Environment (4.5/82)	T&T Policy and Enabling Conditions (4.2/75)	Infrastructure (4.3/38)	Natural and Cultural Resources (3.5/26)
Safety and security (4.1/116)	Prioritization of Travel & Tourism (4.3/87)	Air transport infrastructure (4.7/14)	Natural resources (3.0/70)
Health and hygiene (5.4/64)	International Openness (3.9/50)	Ground and port infrastructure (3.5/54)	Cultural resources and business travel (4.1/16)
Human resources and Labor (4.3/94)	Price competitiveness (4.9/70)	Tourist service infrastructure (4.7/42)	
Information and Communication Technology readiness (4.3/72)	Environmental sustainability (3.7/112)		

* Indicators have a value between 1 and 7, and 7 is the best.
Source: [World Economic Forum, 2017b](#)

In terms of health and hygiene, Turkey placed 64th of 139 surveyed countries with a score of 5.4 which was the country's best result in the whole report. Turkey also ranked 70th for price competitiveness with a score 4.9 which was the country's second best result. Price competitiveness is a key factor in the overall tourism competitiveness of a destination. In tourist service infrastructure Turkey is ranked 42nd with a 4.7 score and in air transport infrastructure is ranked 14th with a 4.7 score.

In 2016, the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was US \$29.1bn (4.1% of total GDP) and is forecast to rise by 2.0% in 2017. The total contribution of T&T to GDP was US \$88.0bn (12.5% of total GDP). The industry generated 495.000 jobs directly (2.3% of total employment) and total contribution of T&T to employment was 8.1% of total employment (2,197,500 jobs) (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). As you can see from the figures, tourism is a very important sector for Turkey.

As we mentioned earlier, medical tourism is a relatively new type of tourism that has become more popular nowadays and Turkey has emerged as a popular place to offer global health standards at affordable prices. Today, Turkey is one of the best countries in the world for medical tourism and related treatment services. The main reasons for choosing Turkey as a medical destination are listed below.

- JCI-accredited medical centers and well-equipped hospitals
- High quality of health services and technologies
- Competitive prices
- Hospitality and culture
- Geographical location
- Tourism infrastructure
- Traditional, natural, historical, touristic attractions.

The variables (in which Turkey has high scores) like price competitiveness, health and hygiene, tourist service infrastructure and air transport infrastructure are very important indicators for medical tourism. Turkey is in a central location, only 2-3 hours from major cities in Europe and the Middle East. Another advantage is that Turkey has visa-free access to more than 70 countries and that citizens from more than 110 countries can enter without a visa (Hürriyet Daily News, 13.07.2017; Anatoly Agency, 05.05.2017). Within the goals of Turkey's 2023, the number of health tourists is also increased to 2 million. In order to achieve this goal, tax-free health care zones designed for foreign patients and provide price advantages are considered for foreign patients (Hürriyet Daily News, 11.07.2017).). As a result, Turkey, which has a comparative advantage in terms of the above variables, aims to be the leading country in health tourism.

The number of health tourists coming to Turkey continues to increase rapidly. Medical tourists from many parts of the world, especially neighboring countries prefer Turkey. These countries include Iraq, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Middle East and Arab countries as well as many European countries (Russia, Greece, Greece, Ukraine, England, Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria) (Hürriyet Daily News, 13.07.2017). Many institutions providing medical services in Turkey have qualified medical staff certified by the Turkish Medical Association. They are also members of specialized associations according to their field of expertise. Joint Commission International (JCI) is the standard setting and accrediting body in health care worldwide and its mission is to improve the safety and quality of medical care for the international community. That is why its accreditation is an important quality signal for medical tourists. More than 40 medical facilities in Turkey have been accredited by the JCI and this is the highest accreditation

any country has ever received. The institutions involved in the field of medical tourism in Turkey, serve with trained professionals and the latest technology. Approximately 35% of the doctors working at these institutions were trained in western countries (<https://www.health-tourism.com/turkey-medical-tourism/>).

Many medical centers in Turkey are cooperating with prestigious international medical centers such as Johns Hopkins, Mayo Clinic and Harvard Medical International. With this cooperation, it is aimed to provide opportunities for personnel development, improvements in treatment, and sharing of up-to-date information (<https://patientsbeyondborders.com/turkey>).

Turkey has aimed to be one of the important centers in the field of physical therapy and rehabilitation as much as it is in the field of organ transplantation on a global scale. It has made strides in developing its medical tourism sector by implementing policies that facilitate tourists. The country has also invested in hotels and transportation to boost this sector (Anatoly Agency, 10.05.2017). Turkey ranks fourth in the global list for health tourism and third in terms of revenue from health tourism (<https://yellali.com/news/article/488/turkey-eyes-7-5b-in-healthcare-tourism-next-year>).

Turkey has a comprehensive range of medical services which include;

- Organ transplantation
- Genetic testing
- Neurosurgery
- Eye surgery
- Cardiology
- Heart surgery
- Orthopedics
- Hair transplants
- Plastic surgeries
- Dentistry and Oral surgery

Turkey is home to some of the most advanced eye hospitals in the world and one of world's largest vision clinic networks is headquartered in Istanbul. (<https://drprem.com/medical-tourism/6-eye-treatments-that-are-popular-with-medical-tourists-around-the-world>). The country also has specialists in rhinoplasty (nose jobs), abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) and skin tightening, especially around the eye area. Already Turkish specialists are known world over for advanced hair transplantation techniques, including Direct Hair Implantation (DHI), Follicular Unit Extraction (FUE), Gold and IceGraft. The reason for this is the high quality of operations provided at competitive rates. In Europe, hair transplantation can cost up to 10,000 euros (\$10,971) while in the U.S. it exceeds \$30,000, according to estimates (Anatoly Agency, 10.05.2017).

Data presented in Table 2 indicates the cost comparisons between Turkey and some selected countries. Compared with many other countries, the cost of treatments is relatively low in Turkey. It could be noted that Heart Bypass cost is more than 9 times higher in the USA. A

Heart Valve Replacement surgery would cost the patients \$170,000 in the US and \$39,000 in S.Korea, while it would cost \$17,200 in Turkey. Spinal Fusion is also more than 7 times higher in USA than in Turkey. Similarly the cost of Angioplasty, Hip Replacement, Hip Resurfacing, Knee Replacement, Dental Implant, Breast Implant, Face lift, Cataract Surgery is lower in Turkey than in the USA. This shows the comparative advantages of taking treatment in Turkey. But on the other hand, it is observed from Table 2 that the cost of many treatments in India is less than in the other countries including Turkey. One can save 75% to 95% of healthcare costs, no matter what procedure one undergoes in India (Sundar, 2012). According to Table 2, a heart Bypass surgery would cost \$123,000 in USA and \$13,900 in Turkey while the same surgery would cost the person \$7900 in India. As can be seen from Table 2, the difference in cost between medical treatment in the USA and that in Turkey is between 20-90%.

Table 2: Prices of Surgeries in Selected Countries (\$)

Medical procedure	USA	Costa Rica	Colombia	India	Jordan	S. Korea	Mexico	Israel	Thailand	Malaysia	Poland	Singapore	Turkey
Heart Bypass	123,000	27,000	14,800	7,900	14,400	26,000	27,000	28,000	15,000	12,100	14,000	17,200	13,900
Angioplasty	28,200	13,800	7,100	5,700	5,000	17,700	10,400	7,500	4,200	8,000	5,300	13,400	4,800
Heart Valve Replacement	170,000	30,000	10,450	9,500	14,400	39,900	28,200	28,500	17,200	13,500	19,000	16,900	17,200
Hip Replacement	40,364	13,600	8,400	7,200	8,000	21,000	13,500	36,000	17,000	8,000	5,500	13,900	13,900
Hip Resurfacing	28,000	13,200	10,500	9,700	9,000	19,500	12,500	20,100	13,500	12,500	9,200	16,350	10,100
Knee Replacement	35,000	12,500	7,200	6,600	9,500	17,500	12,900	25,000	14,000	7,700	8,200	16,000	10,400
Spinal Fusion	110,000	15,700	14,500	10,300	10,000	16,900	15,400	33,500	9,500	6,000	6,200	12,800	16,800
Dental Implant	2,500	800	1,200	900	900	1,350	900	1,200	1,720	1,500	925	2,700	1,100
Lap Band	14,000	9,450	8,500	7,300	7,000	10,200	6,500	17,300	11,500	8,150	6,700	9,200	8,600
Gastric Sleeve	16,500	11,500	11,200	6,000	7,500	9,950	8,900	20,000	9,900	8,400	9,400	11,500	12,900
Gastric Bypass	25,000	12,900	12,200	7,000	7,500	10,900	11,500	24,000	16,800	9,900	9,750	13,700	13,800
Hysterectomy	15,400	6,900	2,900	3,200	6,600	10,400	4,500	14,500	3,650	4,200	2,200	10,400	7,000
Breast Implants	6,400	3,500	2,500	3,000	4,000	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,500	3,800	3,900	8,400	4,500
Rhinoplasty	6,500	3,800	4,500	2,400	2,900	3,980	3,800	4,600	3,300	2,200	2,500	2,200	3,100
Face Lift	11,000	4,500	4,000	3,500	3,950	6,000	4,900	6,800	3,950	3,550	4,000	440	6,700
Liposuction	5,500	2,800	2,500	2,800	1,400	2,900	3,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	1,800	2,900	3,000
Tummy Tuck	8,000	5,000	3,500	3,500	4,200	5,000	4,500	10,900	5,300	3,900	3,550	4,650	4,000
Lasik (both eyes)	4,000	2,400	2,400	1,000	4,900	1,700	1,900	3,800	2,310	3,450	1,850	3,800	1,700
Cornea (per eye)	17,500	9,800	N/A	2,800	5,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	3,600	N/A	N/A	9,000	7,000
Cataract surgery (per eye)	3,500	1,700	1,600	1,500	2,400	2,100	2,100	3,700	1,800	3,000	750	3,250	1,600
IVF Treatment	12,400	N/A	5,450	2,500	5,000	7,900	5,000	5,500	4,100	6,900	4,900	14,900	5,200

Source: <http://medicalltourism.com/Forms/price-comparison.asp>

The most important problem in health care is the cost, and the Deloitte (2014) study has shown that one of the biggest reasons for choosing a foreign country for health care is the cost. Turkey is in a very competitive position in terms of the price of health care services compared to the US and Europe. Besides the relatively low costs, due to the use of skilled doctors and advanced technology, Turkey has begun to take first place in the world in medical tourism. Table 3 shows the difference in the cost of medical procedures and saving rates in Turkey and the United Kingdom (<https://www.health-tourism.com/medical-tourism-turkey/>).

Table 3: Medical Procedures in UK and Turkey (\$)			
Procedure	UK Hospitals	Turkey	Average Savings
Coronary Angioplasty	13,000 - 15,000	5,000 - 6,000	60% - 65%
Hip Replacement	13,500 - 14,500	6,500 - 7,500	45% - 50
Prostrate Removal (Prostatectomy)	7,000 - 8,000	5,500 - 6,500	15% - 20%
Knee Replacement	16,000 - 17,000	7,000 - 8,000	50% - 60%
Hemorrhoids Removal	3,000 - 4,000	1,500 - 2,500	45% - 55%
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery			
Procedure	UK Hospitals	Turkey	Average Savings
Face Lift (rhytidectomy)	11,000 - 12,000	3,000 - 4,000	65% - 75%
Breast Augmentation (Mammoplasty)	7,000 - 8,000	3,000 - 4,000	50% - 60%
Breast Reduction	8,000 - 9,000	3,500 - 4,500	50% - 60%
Liposuction (lipoplasty)	5,000 - 6,000	2,000 - 3,000	55% - 65%
Nose Surgery (Rhinoplasty)	5,500 - 6,500	3,000 - 4,000	40% - 45%
Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty)	8,000 - 9,000	3,000 - 4,000	55% - 60%
Eye / Ophthalmology			
Procedure	UK Hospitals	Turkey	Average Savings
LASIK Eye Surgery	1,500 - 2,500	1,000 - 1,500	20% - 25%
Cataract Removal	4,000 - 5,000	1,000 - 2,000	55% - 65%
General and Cosmetic Dentistry			
Procedure	UK Hospitals	Turkey	Average Savings
Root Canal (per canal)	300 - 400	100 - 150	55% - 65%
Tooth Whitening	900 - 1200	400 - 500	50% - 60%
Dental Implants	3,000 - 4,000	900 - 1500	70% - 75%
Gold Crowns	800 - 850	200 - 250	70% - 75%

Source: <https://www.health-tourism.com/medical-tourism-turkey/>

As can be seen from Table 3, the difference in cost between medical treatment in the UK and that in Turkey is between 15-75%. If you are looking for ophthalmology clinics for any type of eye problem then Turkey should be first on your list in terms of low cost and high quality. As for example, a Cataract Removal in the UK will cost you about USD 4,000-5,000 while the same procedure can be performed in Turkey for about USD 1,000-2,000. Patients from countries with very dense health systems are able to receive health care at faster and more affordable prices. In addition to its rapid health care and cost advantages, it is also a distinct advantage that Turkey is located at a 2-3 hour flight distance from many cities in the Middle East and Europe.

Apart from conventional medicines, the nation is a place for Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM). Turkey is the place to go if you are looking for health spas, leech treatment, homeopathy, phytotherapy, detoxification programs or acupuncture (<http://www.medicaltourism.com/blog/turkey-fast-becoming-a-medical-tourism-destination-of-the-world/>).

Turkey's strong points in the field of medical tourism (price advantage, experienced physicians and the speed of getting service) are indeed striking. However Turkey has some deficiencies. There is a lack of knowledge of foreign languages among staff serving medical tourists. Some hospitals have deficiencies in the documents required to be prepared in foreign languages (<https://www.health-tourism.com/medical-tourism-turkey/>). Other weaknesses of Turkey in this area are the inadequacy of marketing activities and the lack of experienced managers and consultants (Görener, 2016). Internet has been shown to be a powerful means for promoting a destination and all its resources. Turkey should pay more attention to promotional and marketing activities and should make good use of internet resources. Health tourism, which is included in strategic plans of many countries, also has an important place in Turkey. To attain a good level physical infrastructure and physician competence both in the public and private sector Turkey has been working to improve a legal framework (<http://dosyasb.saglik.gov.tr/Eklenti/462,saglikturizmiingwebpdf.pdf>).

Conclusion

Globally, healthcare service delivery has become very dynamic and very competitive. This paper seeks to identify the sources of the comparative advantage of medical tourism. According to the neoclassical H-O trade model, factor endowments (capital and labor) of countries determine the comparative advantage. But the tourism sector, especially medical tourism is very complex. The comparative advantage in depends not only factor endowments, but tourism infrastructure, knowledge-economy, transportation costs, a larger variety of surgical services, quality of services, facilities, geographical location, historical monuments and beaches.

Turkey is an increasingly recognized country in medical tourism and is now considered to be one of the top 10 medical tourism destinations in the world. This study showed that main factors of attracting tourist to Turkey: Easily accessible location, high quality medical care and affordable prices. The cost of medical services in Turkey is significantly lower than in advanced

economies in USA and Europe. Besides the relatively low costs, due to the use of skilled doctors and advanced technology, Turkey has begun to take first place in the world in medical tourism.

Turkey ranks 44th on Travel and Tourism Competitiveness 2017 report on 136 economies. In terms of health and hygiene, Turkey placed 64th of 139 surveyed countries with a score of 5.4 which was the country's best result in the whole report. The variables, in which Turkey has a high score, like price competitiveness, health and hygiene, tourist service infrastructure and air transport infrastructure are very important indicators for medical tourism.

Turkey is second in the world with the number of accredited health institutions with 48 JCI accredited hospitals. Transportation to Turkey is very easy and economic. Turkey's many thermal springs offer the ultimate relaxation, spa and medicinal experience. The country is the perfect gateway for tourists searching for psychological and physical well-being. From the tourism aspect, Turkey has a lot of cultural, historical, natural places and beaches.

Turkey has made great strides in developing its medical tourism sector by implementing policies that facilitate tourists. The country's national policies boost healthcare tourism. To attain a good level physical infrastructure and physician competence both in the public and private sector Turkey has been working to improve a legal framework. As a result, Turkey has a comparative advantage in terms of the variables which are mentioned above and aims to be the leading country of the world in health tourism.

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