

Medical tourism Case of aesthetic surgery: is a compulsory orientation and a good solution for Tunisia tourism?

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Abstract: *The present paper attempts to know if medical tourism above all aesthetic surgery presents a good solution to save the Tunisian tourism sector imbalance by green revolution and corona virus and absorb the unemployment of both doctors and workers in tourism sector or not. Firstly, by analyzing the place of tourism in Tunisian economic strategy of development. Then via the determination of limits of mass tourism in Tunisia. Finally through the analysis of different solutions given by medical tourism especially cosmetic surgery. According to our analysis, green revolution and COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented economic, social and financial crisis in Tunisia for tourism sector which is suffer before of various difficulty. The medical tourism can be considered a good solution for Tunisian tourism and orient it towards to sustainable tourism. But some issues attached by tourism raised require urgent short-term solutions, while others require a more long-term or structural change.*

Keywords: *tourism, medical tourism, esthetic tourism, COVID 19, crisis.*

I. Introduction

Tunisia is located at the junction of the eastern basin and the western basin of the Mediterranean at the northern tip of Africa. Tunisia enjoys a pleasant climate for a good period of the year. This geographical position, which made Tunisia a crossroads of civilizations in the past, makes it today a hub for Medical Tourism as well as for aesthetic tourism. In fact, green revolution, corona virus, have drastically reduced tourists in Tunisia. The pandemic context would have served as a good indicator and gas pedal of the development of sustainable tourism instead of the mass tourism of the preCOVID 19. Firstly, we will present the structure of tourism in Tunisia. In a second part, we will present medical tourism and its advantages to Tunisia economy. In a third part, we will present the results of medical cosmetic surgery tourism in reducing employment and in development of sustainable tourism

II. Tourism in Tunisia: Brief history and structure

II-1-Brief history of Tunisia tourism

Tourism in Tunisia is one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy and origin of foreign exchange for the country. Tourism has a ripple effect on other economic sectors, such as transport also communications, crafts, commerce and construction. In Tunisia, the exploitation of the sun and the shores, for nearly 6 decades, has generated a spectacular development of the mass seaside hotel industry. Tunisia's strategic geographical position in the south of the Mediterranean basin, with 1,300

kilometers of largely sandy coasts, a warm Mediterranean climate in summer and mild in winter, a very rich civilizational heritage, in addition, a very low cost of transport. All these characteristics make this country one of the main destinations for European tourists in Africa and the Arab world. In 2010, tourism contributed 7% to the GDP, generated between 18 and 20% of foreign exchange covered 56% of the trade deficit and provided 400,000 jobs. The political instability that followed the 2011 revolution have drastically reduced tourist numbers in the country. These political and security crises have been caught up in its recovery by the COVID-19. In fact, the pandemic context would have served as an indicator and gas pedal of the development of a "sustainable tourism" in place of the mass tourism of the preCOVID.

II-2-Tourism structure in Tunisia

Tourism is an old activity, which in the 20th century took on a global dimension. It now constitutes a fundamental economic sector in many developed countries as well as in developing countries such as Tunisia, which make it an essential factor in their development. Today tourism represents the first service industry in the world. No one can ignore nowadays, the capital role that tourism can play as a driving sector of economic and social development in Tunisia. This sector is the main source of job creation. Since the 1970s, the tourism system in Tunisia has produced mass seaside tourism, concentrated in coastal towns. The tourist infrastructure mainly seaside is often equated with the hotel industry. This monoactivity, being favored by a certain sectoral policy, was responsible for the current tourist crisis with all its dimensions economic, social and environmental. The political instability that followed the 2011 revolution and corona virus have drastically reduced the number of tourists in the country. The priority of Tunisian tourism stakeholders today is therefore to restart this sector. At the same time, awareness of environmental issues has emerged in recent years to promote the development of a new type of more sustainable tourism. The prospect of developing sustainable and responsible tourism must be part of a value chain and contribute to the reduction of social and territorial disparities through an inclusive approach. To this end, the pandemic would have served as an indicator and accelerator of a rapidly changing business. Everything is in favor of "soft tourism" instead of pre-COVID mass tourism. Tunisia like many countries has been affected by this paradigm shift. Sustainable tourism involves the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage while respecting local communities and their interests as well as those of visitors and future generations. Thus, under the effect of the pandemic, the health dimension incorporates this concept of alternative tourism. In addition, the overhaul of tourism and its system should thus be part of a long-term, global and integrated approach, which mobilizes all the actors of the territories-destinations concerned. The actors of the tourism sector in Tunisia have a duty to take an interest in the implementation of a sustainable development strategy. However, the aim of the sustainable development strategy is to promote positive effects and limit negative effects, especially in ecological and social terms. Even if the concept of sustainable development arose from debates related to ecological requirements, the sustainability of economic growth is not limited to these. "Sustainable" tourism growth is based on the implementation of a quality policy rather than that of quantitative growth. Its mode of development imposes a different behavior on the suppliers and their visitors

III. Medical tourism

III-1- Definition of medical tourism

Medical tourism is defined as a medical trip for a patient whose purpose is to seek treatment in a third country at lower costs than those in his country of origin. This branch of tourism has developed thanks to agencies specializing in the medical field but also thanks to hospitals and the

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entire medical profession in the host countries. Among the main destinations known for their medical quality services and their unbeatable prices, we find Tunisia and Thailand, known for its cosmetic surgeons. Tunisia which therefore remains the most coveted destination and leader in the cosmetic surgery sector. Medical tourism is no longer seen only as a simple hospitalization. The liberation of the individual from the legislative framework raises many questions ethical and deontological. Questions raised about the development of medical tourism in the world and in emerging countries specially Tunisia, its aspects ethics as well as the role of marketing in its promotion, identify the problem and issues related to medical tourism. Certain Maghreb countries such as Tunisia have a particularly rich infrastructure and relevant skills-health. However, the major geopolitical changes underway are not without relaunch global competition. However, by building on these strengths and targeting a local market, medical tourism could serve as a lever for development, leading to the country's commercial boom but also to an update level of hospital infrastructure. The existence and growth of medical tourism in Tunisia cannot be do without the support of State, motivated by the income generated by the flow of patients. The sector has become attractive, to such an extent that it has led some countries to initiate considerable policies in favor of this strategic axis. The globalization of the healthcare market contributes to the creation of poles intended to receive international tourist-patients.

Waiting times for different surgical procedures, in number of days

	Hip prosthesis	Knee prosthesis	Bypass surgery	Coronary angioplasty
Australia	163	201	44	
Denmark	112	112		
Finland	206	274	42	30
Norway	133	160	46	53
Netherlands	96	85		18
Spain	123	148	39	51
UK	244	281	213	80

Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The OECD Health Project. Towards more efficient health systems, 2004

Surgical options in major medical tourism countries

Intervention	Amount of coverage by American insurers	COST OF THE OPERATION IN THE UNITED STATES	COST OF THE OPERATION IN INDIA	COST OF THE OPERATION IN THAILAND	COST OF THE OPERATION IN SINGAPORE
Bridging coronary	54 741 \$ à 79 070 \$	122 424 \$ à 176 835 \$	10 000 \$	12 000 \$	20 000 \$
Heart valve replacement (simple)	71401 \$ à 103136 \$	159 326 \$ à 230 138 \$	9 500 \$	10 500 \$	13 000 \$
Replacement knee	17 627 \$ à 25 462 \$	40 640 \$ à 58 702 \$	8 500 \$	10 000 \$	13000 \$

Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The OECD Health Project. Towards more efficient health systems, 2004

III-2- Definition of aesthetic tourism

Aesthetic tourism is a segment of medical tourism. The patient's objective is to benefit from plastic and aesthetic surgery care in a country different from the country where one resides. As in Brazil, highly coveted by American patients, aesthetic tourism in Tunisia corresponds to the branch of medical tourism most requested by European patients. Since the early 2000s, the country has become one of the major destinations for aesthetic tourism in the world. Tunisia is at the head of the line of countries offering plastic surgery procedures under high security and at unbeatable prices.

III-3- Cost of aesthetic tourism in Tunisia

The main factor that explains this phenomenal increase in medical tourism is the cost of interventions. Indeed, if we take the example of cosmetic surgery in Tunisia, It should be noted that the total cost of an intervention is sometimes up to 60% cheaper than the cost of the simple operation in Europe. When we talk about total cost, it therefore includes: The plane ticket, Accommodation at the clinic, Accommodation at the hotel for the convalescence period, All costs of the surgery and related costs, The fees of the surgeon, The fees of the anesthetist, The fees of a general practitioner sometimes necessary for postoperative follow-up, but above all the personalized supervision of the patient throughout the stay.

IV. The need for a transformation from seasonal tourism to medical sustainable tourism

Medical tourism can be a real asset for Tunisia. This sector can contribute to the integration of Tunisia into the world economy. This phenomenon also has significant repercussions, especially in terms of economic development and spatial enhancement. In this way, we can propose the creation of "medicity", these medical complexes which combine cutting-edge medicine and competitive prices, in an environment composed of modern hospitals but also hotel complexes, apartments or even private companies. Tunisia is well placed in terms of medical tourism thanks to highly qualified and specialized medical and surgical teams. In addition, in terms of cost, Tunisia remains competitive: staff are less expensive and social charges lower, not to mention that the exchange rate fully favors health tourists. Of course, Tunisia has invested in clinics that respond to the care offered. Nevertheless, the development of a program to upgrade the sector is essential in order to accredit health institutions to international standards. As a result, Tunisia will be well placed to become a privileged destination in terms of health tourism

Tunisia is located at the junction of the eastern basin and the western basin of the Mediterranean at the northern tip of Africa. Tunisia enjoys a pleasant climate for a good period of the year. This geographical position, which made Tunisia a crossroads of civilizations in the past, makes it today a hub for investment as well as for trade and commerce with other nations of Europe, Africa. and the Middle East. Health is well developed in Tunisia both in the public sector and in the private sector, especially in greater Tunis.

Health tourism is a booming activity in Tunisia. The origins of this development is individual initiatives such as clinic, doctors, etc. However, the institutional initiatives is less structured.

In this way, we propose some solutions to develop the sector of medical tourism in order to strategically position of Tunisia as a regional leader:

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- The creation of a structure specializing in the promotion of exports and investments for the health sector also the encouragement of investment in the sector.
- The development of a plan for the creation of a medical city and health zones which host health and medical projects intended for export.
- The encouragement of elderly tourists to stay living for a long periods in Tunisia, in tourist centers or in residences built for this aim for example tourist health villages.
- The development of a program to improve the sector in the aim to accredit health institutions to international standards. In this way, this will allow foreign patients French, English, Italians,..to be covered by their health insurance fund.
- The organization of a partnerships between the public and private health sectors, in order to boosting exports the quality of medical services.
- The realization of a strategic study on the sector in order to decide on a national strategy and to specialize in the offer of care.
- The establishment of partnership relationship with different hotels in the aim to export various medical and activities to them, directly serving tourists.
- The encouragement of development of the creation of proximity centers in neighboring countries (Libya, Algeria, Mauritania, etc.) in the aim to attract patients from these countries for heavy care in Tunisia.
- The establishment of "health packages" ,beauty treatments, check-ups, with tourist tour operators and offer them to their customers. In this way, tour operators should be the main partners in the dissemination and development of information of medical tourism services established by Tunisia

V. Conclusion

This paper was dedicated a theoretical study to know if medical tourism above all aesthetic presents a good solution to solve the problems of Tunisian tourism sector imbalance by green revolution after 2011 and corona virus after 2020 and absorb the unemployment of both doctors and workers in tourism sector or not. The results clearly show that green revolution and COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented economic, social and financial crisis in Tunisia for tourism sector which is suffer before of various difficulty. The medical tourism can be considered a good solution for Tunisian tourism and orient it towards to sustainable tourism. But some issues attached by tourism raised require urgent short-term solutions such as politic stability and infrastructures, while others require a more long-term or structural change.

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