

HEALTH TOURISM, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND QUALITY OF LIFE: THE ROLE OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research is to clarify the role of specialty hospitals in improving patients' health and their quality of life. The study is focused on establishing how patients perceive the influence of the services of a specialty hospital for medical rehabilitation on their physical quality of life and life satisfaction. Further, the goal is to establish if there is a connection between the patients' perception of physical quality of life and their satisfaction with the hospital services, and to establish whether the satisfaction of patients influences their loyalty to the hospital.

Methodology – The paper is based on the survey of a sample of patients who used health services of a specialty hospital for medical rehabilitation that contributes to the Croatian health tourism market. The WHOQOL-BREF quality of life assessment was used in the research. Four hypotheses were tested by implementing partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

Findings – Results of the research conducted show that staying in a specialty hospital for medical rehabilitation significantly improves the physical quality of life of patients which is reflected in life satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Research has also confirmed that the patients' satisfaction has a positive impact on their loyalty to the hospital, a precondition to successful business performance on the health tourism market.

Contribution – This paper fills the gap in the literature where the topic of health tourism in the particular context of specialty hospitals is discussed. In a practical sense, the contribution of this paper is evident in proving the connection between the perception of the influence of health services on the improvement of health and satisfaction with hospital services, and their influence on the patients' satisfaction and loyalty to the hospital.

Keywords Health tourism, quality of life, life satisfaction, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, specialty hospital

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