

**Health Tourism Qualification in Urban income stabilization,  
Case Study: Tehran**

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**Abstract**

Urbanization and urban development have been considered as one of the main phenomena of contemporary age. As the last century was called as industrial revolution, the current century can be called as urban revolution. Urbanization growth in its modern meaning has been originated from industrial countries and changed to a worldwide phenomenon in the second half of twenties century and was intensified more and more. One of the most important challenges which urban planners were faced by was the way of providing urban permanent financial resources. This challenge is more and more increased when the need for public services in cities and financial limitation in municipalities from other side are increasing. In this regard, one of the items seeming to be influential in stabilization of urban income in Tehran is the increase of health tourism capacities. This study has been practical in term of objective and descriptive analysis in term of method. In order to complete the information and better investigate the topic of the research a questionnaire was designed based on hypothesis and distributed among 155 health tourism experts and authorites in Tehran. The results showed that health tourism qualification is influential on stabilization and cooperation of urban incomes in Tehran.

**Key Words: Health Tourism, Urban Income Stabilization, Qualification, Tehran**

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Received: 2019/02/25 Accepted: 2020/04/11

### **Introduction and Problem Definition**

Urbanization and urban development have been considered as one of the main phenomena of contemporary age. As the last century was called as industrial revolution, the current century can be called as urban revolution. Urbanization growth in its modern meaning has been originated from industrial countries and changed to a worldwide phenomenon in the second half of twentieth century and was intensified more and more. Such that from 1955 to 1990 the population of developing countries has increased from 1.89 to 4.13 billion, that is doubled- and a significant share of this increase in developing countries has been happened in their urban areas. Along with the increase of urban population, the number of cities in developing countries has also been increasing significantly.

One of the most important challenges faced by urban planners is how to support the permanent urban income. This challenge is more and more increased when the need for public services in cities and financial limitation in municipalities from other side are increasing. According to the UN definition of human programs urban permanent income is composed of maximum available income in a time period by ensuring the same income in future in situations in which economic system is encountered by resource, human force, production capital and natural capital limitations. In this regard, access to the pattern of permanent financial resources to finance current costs and urban civilization has been considered of the most important factor of urban stabilization which has provided the capitalism possibility in developing infrastructure system of cities (Kazemi, 1396).

In fact, health tourism is a type of tourism which improves, protect and recover the intellectual and physical health of a person for more than 24 hours and less than a year. In this way, a health tourist can utilize the destination medical care services by traveling from his own resident in order to achieve his mental and physical health (Abbasi, 1390).

However, nowadays, many of tourist countries deliver medical tourism services to earn more and more, but the potentiality of a country in medical science and medical care service unlike sport and recreational services is not something to be achieved only by money

spending, construction and building. Having experienced and expert physicians, medical science backland, medical and supervising infrastructures, the existence of standard hospitals and Clinique, high tech and perfect medical equipment as well as medical regulations and supervisions are among important medical infrastructures of a country so that it can arrange to act in health tourism in next step by merging tourism and residence services. It needed to be mentioned that Iran has one thousand years' experience in medical cares and Iranian physicians have always been famous in international scale (Moheb Ali, 1392).

Tehran province as the official capital of the country has the highest welfare, service delivering, medical and hygienic facilities and could have dedicated more income to itself. In recent years, due to growth in scientific development and having the highest medical technologies, the level of medical care services has been raised and many of other countries in this region are seeking for these services. The difference between exchange rate and the low cost of medical and health services in Iran and lower distance to Arabic countries comparing to Europeans, health tourism is considered as a valuable opportunity for Iran to attract this target market. The existence of experienced experts and extensive medical and therapeutic facilities in Tehran and divers nature are regarded as infrastructures that can lead to permanent health tourism income in Tehran by proper management.

According to the investigations, there haven't been any studies on the relation of health tourism and permanent urban income in Iran up to now. In a paper under the topic of presentation of a stabilization pattern of earning system and providing financial resourced of municipalities in Tehran, Mozafari et al (1396) announced that in developing countries such as Iran which have inefficient economic system, weak financial system and are lack of citizen cooperation mechanism in supporting city costs, earning supporting system are generally inclined to unhealthy and unstable earning system. This issue was more apparent after the implementation of municipalities' self-efficiency and was more intensively happened in Tehran comparing to other cities.

In his thesis called analysis and investigation of financial support pattern of municipalities and its effect on urban stability in Mashhad,

Azimi (1393) mentioned that in modern societies considering the expansion of macro cities, the demand for various goods and services has been increased and fulfillment of these needs require itself sufficient and stable financial resources. However, beside assurance and constancy, these earnings do not interfere with permanent urban development. The findings show that in our country a significant share of municipalities earning is provided through the tax and tolls received for land and buildings, that is why it has always been observed that the smallest change and transformation in the price of land and housing has highly influenced on municipalities' earning.

This type of financial support is not only unstable but also has been followed by economic and social side effects and consequences over time. In this regard, achievement of urban permanent development has been encountered by serious challenges. Along with this issue the present study investigates the objectives including "cognition and definition of earning instability in Iran macro cities (case of Mashhad)", "exploration of new resources of permanent earning to replace them with unstable earnings" and "delivering proper pattern to stabilize earning in municipalities and investigating the influence of this pattern on the trend of city permanent development (case of Mashhad). The nature of objectives in this paper is such that make us choose a research methodology composed of descriptive, analytical and comparative types.

Applying library based studies, the analysis of cost-income structure for Mashhad municipalities as well as the analysis of all earning items have been conducted. By interviewing experts and specialists of Mashhad municipality and the experts of secretariat in macro cities, the possible increase of tax share in earning portfolio of Mashhad municipality was investigated. In a study called "the influence of health tourism on Tehran urban development", Zamani (1392) has found that the improvement of health tourism infrastructures in Tehran can contribute to the permanent development in this city.

Torki (1390) in a paper named "investigating the influence of medical tourism on Tehran" has conducted a scientific research. The mentioned study applies adaptive survey method by a population of Tehran and Isfahan using written questionnaire and that his

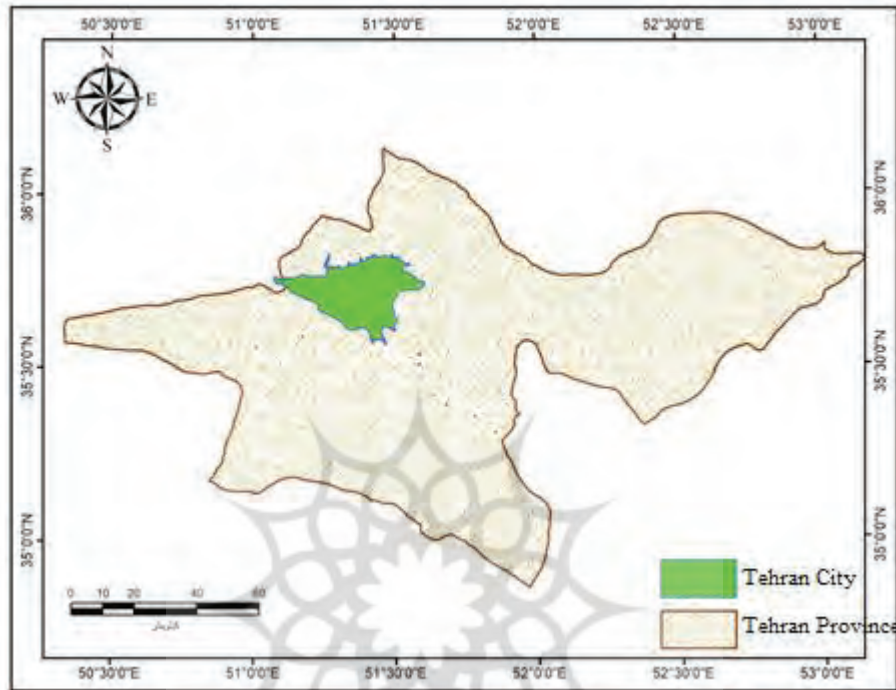
assumptions are confirmed. Considering the above texts, this papers aims to investigate health tourism qualification and its role in stabilization of urban earning in Tehran, meanwhile these questions are answered that how can health tourism influence on stability of Tehran urban earnings and how health tourism qualification can influence on Tehran urban earning cooperation?

**Research methodology**

The present study is applied in term of type and analytical descriptive method. In order to complete the information and better investigate the topic of this research a questionnaire has been provided along with assumptions and distributed among 155 people of health tourism experts and authorities in Tehran.

**Findings**

Tehran is located in 51degree and 2 minutes to 51 degree and 36 minutes of east length and 35 degree and 34 minutes to 35 degree and 50 minutes of northern width and its height from 2000 meter is variable up to 1200 meter in center and 1050 meter in south. Tehran has been located between two valleys of mountain and desert and in the southern slope of Alborz Mountains. From south is extended to Rey Mountains and Bibi Shahrbanoo as well as Shahriar and Varamin plains and in north is surrounded by highlands. The height of some points from ocean surface: Tehran is considered as sustainable areas in term of earthquake (8 to 10 *مرکابی* degree). (There are some faults in Tehran and suburb areas with the radius of 150 Km).



**Map1: Tehran geographical position in Tehran province**

#### Investigating the status of Tehran urban earning stabilization

One of the most important issues encountered by Tehran municipalities is the Budget. Tehran has recently presented a report of cost and earning performance of capital municipality in the first 6 months of the year based on which total cost of Tehran municipality in first half of year is 7 thousands and 262 milliard Tomans which is about 1586 milliard Tooman more than collective earnings. Tehran municipality knows well that it is not anymore possible to sell the contraction because housing market is in depression and that the previous mayor has presold the city and there is nothing remained to be sold. So that Tehran need to think of its earning supports through different ways and increase the permanent earning such as other macro cities (Mirab Zadeh ardekani, 1391).

### **Stabilization strategies of urban earnings in Tehran**

First step, cost reduction: Budget regulation requires two factors including income and Expenses. We cannot only focus on income and do not care about expenses. Sometimes budget can be regulated by correct management of expenses. As mentioned by the mayor, 68 thousands of people are earning from municipality, which of the municipalities in big cities of the world have this quantity of personnel. The width and length of municipality need to be reduced so that Tehran urban management can be more agile and handle the expenses. So, I believe that the first arrangement to be done by municipality to regulate the budget is to manage and reduce the expenses and this process can be started by reduction of human forces. Second Step, Project Management: managing urban projects is one of the other ways for budget regulation. There is no necessity for many of urban projects which are now followed but it seems that some of everlasting and especial contractors follow defined tasks every year and the point is that citizens are unaware of many of these projects or consider many of them as unnecessary ones. In my opinion, urban management must put the projects execution in polling and make decision based on people opinion and needs. Deletion of ambitious projects such as making Sadr Bridge as double floor can be helpful in this way.

The third step: toll payment by government: any citizen need to pay toll based on his earning and services received. No many governmental systems are located in city which needs to pay their establishment toll. Government needs in fact pay the toll for Tehran as a capital city. Imani Jajarmi has provided more descriptions in this regard and stated that: establishment of central government with its too many ministries and organizations will have both benefits and losses for city but it is not reasonable that central government has hundred buildings and thousands staffs in city but not to pay toll to the municipality. The financial relation between government and municipality needs to be clarified and regulated. Not only people are expected to pay toll but government is also expected.

This process has provided proper earning for municipality and the government will understand that it must prevents its extra development. Some jobs are also considered as high earning jobs such

as physicians, big restaurants owners, Megamall owners and ... who needs to pay more tolls. In Lahe, Netherlands, Mac Donald is supposed to arrange for collecting the garbage. This means that municipality has put the burden of garbage collection to their shoulder in places in which extra garbage is highly produced. We shouldn't get money from general people and spend it for high earning ones, in this case the city is free for them. So municipality must clarify its expenses and receive toll appropriate to earning status of citizens. According to him, investigating the issue needs defined plans, honesty, transparency and courage.

The fourth step, Cultural Capacities: another strategy to provide urban permanent income is to use cultural capacities. Considering that the age of big industries and profitable governmental jobs has been finished, new earning fields such as IT need to be highly considered. Successful samples are also available in country including Snap and Digikala. Municipality need to have a plan for this issue and doesn't consider itself as a service delivering system but needs to act as a city manager who has economic policies to govern the city. To do so, municipality needs to help to increase the earning of city business and can provide more income more municipality consequently. Big cities in the world such as London, Paris and Rom have plans for creative cultural industries such as Cinema, Music, Theatre and tourism which are considered as profitable fields.

The fifth step: Foreign Investment: other cities in the world are in competition to absorb investment. Using foreign investment is a good thought but this need to be done carefully and measure its social and environmental consequences and made decision in this regard, in other side, foreign investment needs security and guarantee, these items need to be clarified otherwise they will be remained in form of slogan and words. It needs to be clarified that what are investment opportunities in Tehran and make these opportunities be known in the world through international advertising. It is not possible but by planning and hardworking (Nohegar, 1393).

#### **Provision of municipality's resources**

One of the most important issues encountered by municipalities around the world is provision of enough earning resources and the



cost required for urban services. In this regard, the main municipalities of important cities around the world turn to provide their earning resources through appealing to two earning codes which are:

Internal earning resources: referred to a group of municipality earnings which are directly provided by municipality itself and by receiving the cost of services related to urban residential and business lands which the most important is building permission tolls, rebuilding tax and tolls and other urban tolls.

Foreign earning resources: is referred to a group of municipality earning which are not obtained by urban service delivery by municipality but provided by private investment, active private part cooperation in different urban actions with municipalities for accomplishment of different urban projects, selling cooperative اوراق, governmental subsidies and banking loans. Generally, financial resources of all municipalities around the world can be provided in four following categories:

1. Money earned from urban service selling
2. Governmental subsidiaries and private contributions
3. Banking Loans
4. Urban Tax and Tolls

What is important in these categories is that the role of these four methods of municipality earning is depending on the type of governing system dominant on that country and consequently in its cities. In this regard, in those countries which are governed by socialistic economy and no liberalistic market economy is happened, the earning resources of municipalities are mainly provided through governmental subsidies in different types and forms. Instead, in countries with decentralized government and market economy, a big share of municipality earning resource is provided from local tax and tolls payments and selling of urban services and the earning share of municipalities is limited to governmental credits almost equal to the minimum amount, due to clear governing system and urban unit management in these countries, the share of municipalities from citizen partnership in legal payments is in highest amount. According to this expert, urban economy of earning resource in municipalities of Iran and Tehran as the capital, is mainly depending on the following

resources based on article 29 of municipality financial regulations: (Modir Roosta,1390)

1. Government and governmental organizations subsidies
2. Earning from selling municipality properties and receiving fire insurance and ...
3. Income earned from service delivering by municipality profit making organizations such as asphalt and staining rights, proficiency right and map selling and ... .
4. Municipality permanent earnings which are provided from rebuilding tax and tolls on exhibition establishment, building permission, tax on contraction surplus, immovable exchanges and rebuilding, tax on personal automobile, motorcycle and other vehicle numbering, driving registration, selling and trade permissions and ... .
5. Donative contribution from citizens and private organizations
6. Selling the bonds and collaborative investment projects
7. Receivable earnings in city protective areas

From stability point of view, among Iran municipality earning resources mentioned before, some are stable and others unstable. Of stable earning resources for Iran municipalities, rebuilding, rebuilding tolls of business and residential buildings, tax on land, landed properties an selling urban services can be mentioned and regarding the unstable earnings, contraction selling and building infractions in municipalities can be named. As a sample, Tehran had 18thousands milliard Tomans as budget in 1395 which was earned from public and private tolls, tax and service selling as well as donations and contributions. In the meantime about 30 percent of incomes were provided from tolls, 5 percent from contribution and grants, 10 percent from services and the remaining from others. Scientific Board secretary of iran urban economy has finally suggested the following in line with high stability of municipalities earning in studied countries:

Municipalities, organization and follower companies and total private organizations active in the field of urban services need to be exempted from governmental tax payment.

1. Productive factories and centers establishment and trading of its goods and services to citizens which are acting under the supervision of municipalities without government mediation.
2. Establishment and development of transforming industries including paper and plastic recycling factories and establishment of tourist-recreational complexes such as hotels, parks and sport clubs and the partnership of banks and private sectors.
3. Establishment of citizenship training terms under the supervision of municipalities to develop the culture of urban tax and toll payment and encouraging citizens to more engagement to achieve the urban development.
4. Dedication of a percent of profitable companies income such as insurance organizations to be applied in urban traffic and transportation programs
5. Approval of legal papers to receive toll on urban land values as a fixed percentage of the land value as yearly which lead to the increase of land supply and its price reduction, housing market exploding as well as stability and calmness creation in housing and land market.

#### **Tourism and its role in stabilization of Tehran economy**

In recent years, economic growth of cities was achieved by productive industries. In late twentieth century, productive industries gradually started to lose their value as the main instrument for the growth of cities and service sector was slowly known as the economic driving force of cities. In these situations, tourism was known as a proper option for the cities development because the cities are potentially involved of some attractions such as historical buildings, cultural heritage, events and etc. even the poorest cities can participate in the competition of urban tourism destination due to their historical and cultural heritages. LA (1993) mentions to four influential factors for the development of tourism as a service providing sector in cities as following:

1. Decline in productive industries
2. Need for the establishment of new economic activities and confronting to unemployment
3. Knowing the importance of tourism as a growing industry
4. The role of tourism development in urban areas reconstruction

Nayeri has also added the two following items to the above:

5. Fast globalization
6. Especial position of cities in investments

### **Health tourism and influential elements on stabilization of Tehran earnings**

Lower price: one of the most important factors that lead a patient to choose another country for his medical treatment is in fact the cheaper services. The following table has provided a comparison of the price for some services in different countries:

**Table1: comparison of the price for some services in different countries**

The price in different countries	Title of Medical services	No
USA: \$88,000 Turkey: \$20,500 India: \$9,500	CABG	1
USA: \$15,000 Costa Rica: \$4,400 India: \$3,300	IVF	2
USA: \$14,500 Thailand: \$4,700 India: \$3,500	Facelift	3
USA: \$41,000 Thailand: \$16,000 India: \$9,500	Spinal Fusion	4

Weak treatment insurance: even the best and strongest insurance do not cover different disease such as (beauty surgery, dental service and surgery for eye fracture disease) and as a result along with the increase of medical caring cost, the reason for health tourism is provided.

Search for finding better treatment quality: many of Latin American countries, Asia and Africa suffer of improper treatment quality due to lack of resources and facilities, professional human resources and the weakness of infrastructures. The people of these countries (especially rich ones) choose another country for their treatment.

Easy access to data: by access to internet and other technologies, people can obtain too much information about the treatment of diseases in different countries in term of price and quality and then make decision consciously.

The emergence of ICT: the emergence of ICT to transfer the information of patient (such as patient records, teleradiology) has highly helped medical tourism industry.

The availability of Alternative Medicine: nowadays, many of people look for alternative medicine methods to treat their incurable disease such as cancer and diabetes. Chinese traditional cure or Ayurveda have now found a lot of advocates.

New treatment methods: new treatment methods such as treatment with stem cells have also significantly helped medical tourism such that people travel to leading countries to receive this treatment.

The growth of aviation, hotel services and telecommunication: the growth of these industries has led the world toward global village and has caused people travel easier to different point of the world.

Investigating the assumptions

Qualification of health tourism is influential on the stability of Tehran urban earnings.

The prerequisite to conduct all parametric tests is the normality of statistic distribution of variables. Generally, it can be mentioned that parametric tests are based on mean and standard deviation. Now if society division is not normal, the results cannot be correctly comprehend. To test variables normality, Kolmogorov smirnov Test has been applied which findings have been presented in the following table. As it is observed since the significance level is more than 0.05, so the variable is normal and parametric test has been applied.

**Table2: the results of Kolmogorov smirnov test**

income stability		
155	Quantity	
23.4968	Normal Parameter	Average
4.31153		Standard Deviation
.127	Maximum extent of differences	Absolute
.120		Positive
-.127		Negative
.127	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Values	
.076	Significance level (two domain)	

In the following table, the values of average and standard deviation are observed. As it is seen the stability average of Tehran earning is 23.49 and the standard deviation equals 4.31.

**Table3: One Sample T test**

	N	Average	Standard Deviation	Mean Standard error
Stability status	155	23.4968	4.31153	.34631

According to the results presented in the following table, the measure for standard indexes has been defined as 20 that the average scores obtained from distributed questionnaire is 23.49. Regarding the significant level ( $p < 0.001$ ), this difference is significant and can be concluded that this difference is not accidental and is significant. As the average difference is 3.49, it is clear that the average level obtained is higher than the measure. So the health tourism qualification is influential on stability of Tehran urban income.

**Table4: one sample T-Test**

	Test Measure= 20					
	t	df	Two side significant level	Mean difference	Confidence interval of 95% difference	
					Lower	higher
Stability status	10.097	154	.000	3.49677	2.8126	4.1809

Health tourism qualification is influential on Tehran urban income partnership.

To test the normality of variables, Kolmogorov Smirnov test has been applied which results are provided in the following table. As it is observed since the significant level is higher than 0.05, so the variable is normal and parametric test has been applied.

**Table5: the result of Kolmogorov Smirnov test of the second assumptions**

Income partnership		
155	quantity	
24.4000	Normal Parameters	average
4.22362		Standard Deviation
.126	The maximum limit of differences	Absolute
.101		Positive
-.126		Negative
.126	Kolmogorov Smirnov Value	
0.083	significance level (two domain)	

In the following table, the mean and standard deviation indexes are observed. As it is obvious in the table, the average partnership of Tehran earnings is 24.40 and the resulted standard deviation is 4.22.

**Table6: One sample T-Test**

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean standard error
income partnership	155	24.4000	4.22362	.33925

According to the results presented in the following table, the standard value for standard indexes is defined as 20 which the average resulted scored from distributed questionnaires are 24.40. Considering the significant level ( $p < 0.001$ ), this difference is significant and according to the resulted significant level it can be concluded that this difference is not accidental and is significant. Since the mean difference is 4.40, it is obvious that the resulted mean is higher than measure. So the health tourism qualification is influential on urban earning partnership of Tehran.

**Table7: One sample T-Test**

	Test measure: 20					
	t	df	Two way significant level	Mean difference	Confidence interval of 95% difference	
					lower	higher
partnership	12.970	154	.000	4.40000	3.7298	5.0702

### **Findings**

In this study the health tourism qualification has been investigated. Urbanization and urban development are one of the main phenomena of current age. As the previous century was called industrial revolution, the current age can be considered as urban revolution. Urbanization growth in its modern concept has originated from industrial countries and changed to a worldwide phenomenon in the second half of twentieth century and was more and more intensified. Such that from 1955 to 1990 A.D the population of developing countries was increased from 1.89 to 4.13 milliard, that is has doubled, and a significant share of this increase of developing countries population has been happened in the urban areas. Beside the qualitative growth of urbanization, the quantity of cities in developing countries is also obviously increasing.

Along with the increase of cities and urban population, one of the most important challenges encountered by politicians and urban planners is how to finance urban permanent health and deliver the adequate public services to the citizens. One of the most important challenges which urban planners are facing is the way of supporting permanent financial urban resources. The increase of need for public services from one side and the financial limitations of municipalities from other side, this challenge is increasing more and more. According to the UN definition of organization human programs, urban permanent income is the maximum available income in a time period with ensuring the same earning in future in situation in which economic system is encountered by the limitation of sources, workforce, production and natural capitals.

In this regard, achievement of the pattern for permanent financial resources to support current costs and urban/civil cost are of the most important permanent urban factors which may provide the capitalization possibility in developing infrastructures of cities. The countries which are composed of inefficient economic systems and are based on unofficial economy, weak tax system and lack of citizen cooperation mechanism for providing city costs, the system for municipality income is generally tend to unstable and unhealthy income sources. Also, problems for financial support to construct the



urban infrastructures are considered as other problems for the developing countries including Iran which are mainly due to low productivity and organizational barriers. In fact, investment amount in urban infrastructures has a reverse relation to urban total debt and the debt accumulation lead to urban management tendency toward unstable earnings. According to stabilization theory, urban earnings will be stabilized considering four elements including stabilization, utility, flexibility and cooperation.

Since 1360s in Iran and by decrease in governmental support, the municipalities were supposed to be self-efficient in a multi years plan. Along with self-efficiency policy, the cities were resorted to different methods including new tax and toll, contraction selling and ... to provide their costs and due to this reason they were led to unstable incomes. This issue was more severe in Tehran comparing to other cities and intensified the instability of earning system and financial support of Tehran. In this regard, one items which seems to be effective in stabilization of urban incomes in Tehran is to increase health tourism capacity.

Health tourism is one of the biggest tourism industries resulted from merging two high earning industries including travel and medicine in the world and that our country Iran can be considered as the best destination for medical tourism in the world considering its long term medical backland but this aim is not yet achieved and despite high potentiality of Iran we couldn't have dedicated a big share of this invisible export earning to ourselves. Health tourism is an issue which has dedicated high importance to itself these days and this branch of tourism like other areas in this industry has found a valuable position in countries thinking of tourism development. Health tourism is in fact a branch of tourism based on tourist health support through medical service providing. According to global organization definition of tourism, one of the objectives which can encourage tourist to start traveling is to travel to obtain their health.

What is defined as health tourism is in fact a type of tourism performed to protect, improve and recover the mental and physical health of a person for duration of more than 25 hours or less than one hour. In this regard, a health tourist can use destination medical care services when traveling from his own residence in order to achieve his

mental and physical health. Tehran as the official capital of Iran has the highest welfare, services, medical and hygienic possibilities and has dedicated a high income to it. In recent years due to growth in scientific development and having the most developed medical technologies, the level of medical care services has been highly promoted and many of other neighbor countries are also looking for such a service.

The difference of exchange rate and the low cost of hygienic and medical care services in Iran and lower distance rather than European countries for Arabic countries, this health tourism can be considered as a valuable opportunity for Iran to attract such a target market. The availability of experienced experts and extensive hygienic and medical facilities in Tehran and the diverse nature are infrastructures which can lead to stable earning of health tourism in Tehran by correct management. Regarding the results obtained along with the development of health tourism development and urban earning stabilization in Tehran, the following suggestions are provided:

- All health tourism and medical centers, their follower organizations and companies and total private organizations which are active in this field in Tehran need to be exempted from payment of governmental tax.
- Establishment of medical and health tourism centers by private sector and without government intruding.
- Creation and development of centers depending on health tourism including tourist- medical complexes such as hotels, health parks and sport clubs and by the cooperation of banks and private sectors.

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