



DIRECT MARKETING IN THE ROMANIAN HEALTHCARE MARKET

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Abstract: *Romania, is one of the most appreciated European countries for health tourism. Fields such as dental services or esthetical surgeries are options for Italian, Spanish, England, American, and German citizens and for Romanian citizens who worked in these countries. The statistical analysis of the medical Romanian market compared to the international regards marketing procedure accepted by companies to motivate International and European tourists to come to Romania for medical treatment. This study on based on descriptive marketing research to present the bond between digitalization, direct marketing actions, educational companies programs and growth of Romanian medical tourism, and entrepreneurial marketing perspectives concerning the global sustainable development index, in the context that Brasov will host Healthcare HUB in Eastern Europe.*

Keywords: Romanian tourism market, direct marketing, digitalization, medical tourism.

1. Introduction

Romania is a country with the beautiful charm of the natural environment. From the beginning of history and the contemporary period, Romania was considered a tourism destination for the benefits of thermal waters, mountain air, and spa resorts. One of the National Programs is to create Romania as a destination for health tourism.¹

The award of special attention to health in terms of natural facilities has made Romania a destination with a reputation preferred by international tourists. This opportunity grows into a government program, based on a public-private partnership with an innovative approach, to health tourism development, reducing the VAT rate for tourism services from 9% to 5%, for

¹ OECD, adapted from the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, 2020



divisions that apply to accommodation within the hotel sector and hotels with similar functions (restaurants, divertissement, sports activities, amusement, recreational parks, catering).

Another measure of the Government in 2018 to increase national tourism and tackle seasonality was a travel voucher scheme for employees. Maxim value is an equivalent of 300 EUR per employee, valid for an overnight stay in affiliate accommodation certified by the ministry and extra services such as spa or wellness treatment, restaurant, accommodation, transport, and entertainment.

Along with traditional food, history, architecture, national port, Romanian folk music, customs, and traditions, wellness tourism, and SPA services, few medical treatments attract European and international tourists today. The demand for tourism is constantly growing, and companies are responding to this demand and earning a profit. Health tourism experienced a decrease during the pandemic period. Changes in travel and tourism, made the tourism demand return to quotas recorded before of pandemic period, becoming an ai-complex variety of services.²

Why Romania can be a health tourism destination?³ Because Romania is a country where you get very simple by plane, given the timetable of the companies for the major European capitals linking them to Bucharest, Sibiu or Constanta. An opportunity for the central area, namely Brasov and Prahova Valley, is the operation of flights from Ghimbav Brasov Airport, starting in June 2023. Another option for Europeans and internationals is to get high-quality services at a much lower cost than they would have paid in their home country. Dental treatments as a segmental health service are not supported and settled by the state health insurance system at the national level.⁴

Big Spa Romanian cities are Lacul Sarat Braila, Felix, Borsec, Eforie Nord, Calimanesti, Sovata, Herculane, Mangalia, Neptun, Slanic Moldova, Vatra Dornei, Tusnad.⁵ The rating of these names is due to the quality of tourism and medical services in general. In addition, transport services, mass transportation, security, and safety make up services related to the end-consumer tourist product. This study describes the engagement of participants in health tourism in terms of supply and demand. It also describes Romania's opportunities to practice health tourism and the benefits of consumers choosing Romania as a health tourism destination.

² Jelev, V., "Romanian Tourism Marketing Researches (November 30, 2016), Annals of Spiru Haret University, Issue 3, 2016", on <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2878020>

³ <https://www.flymedi.com/blog/best-destinations-for-dental-treatment-abroad>

⁴ <https://www.romaniaexperience.com/medical-tourism-in-romania/>

⁵ <https://romaniatourism.com/spas.html>



2. Coordinates of Romanian health tourism

Tourism is a dynamic business of complex services supplied in various markets. Enterprises are interested in consumer desires, expectations, the preferences that define or classify them, and trends. This interest transforms into tourism marketing strategies based on actual data and market research.

Natural, architectural, and cultural factors are decisional forces for many tourist trips. All of them are analyzed when a resident prefers health procedures in a different country than his home country.

The architectural features of eco-lodges present destination cultural values, preserve wellness resources, and enhance the connection between nature and people. The travel decision depends on the tourist's perceptions.

2.1. Resident demand for health tourism

The choice of Romanian customers for health depends on financial, and social, educational factors. It also depends on the type of services that are looking for medical, wellness, and SPA. Romanian citizens are interested in medical treatments, choosing foreign services such as neurological and cancer surgeries and wellness services. Romanians become tourists because they didn't find services around their preferences, needs, and correct costs at home. After the medical recommendation, the first goal is to obtain information about the diagnosis, and places where this diagnostic is a priority for professional reviews about the human force of the medical unit and reviews about the quality of procedures. There are a lot of questions in the patient's head. The way to know about this is to ask about online information and to analyze website content, testimonials, and social media platforms. At home, in front of the computer, or by phone, the customers have time for individual research for all options. Now, depending on the intelligence of the marketing department to display its information online and direct send this information to potential clients. Romanians are interested in medical services from Germany €40.13 million, Italy €21.54 million, Spain €17.16 million, France €16.39 million, and Austria €13.14 million.⁶

⁶ [Raport-de-activitate-CNAS-2022.pdf](https://cnas.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Raport-de-activitate-CNAS-2022.pdf), <https://cnas.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Raport-de-activitate-CNAS-2022.pdf>

Tabel 38. Situația plăților efectuate pe fiecare stat membru UE/SEE/Confederația Elvețiană/Regatul Unit al Marii Britanii și Irlandei de Nord:

STAT MEMBRU	VALUTĂ	Total Plată 2022		
		NR FORM	SUMA ÎN VALUTĂ	LEI
AUSTRIA	EUR	15.086	13.418.911,51	67.070.890,74
BELGIA	EUR	10.079	4.002.616,35	20.027.424,54
CIPRU	EUR	29	152.382,99	763.232,62
ESTONIA	EUR	14	694,93	3.481,00
FINLANDA	EUR	99	41.789,31	209.264,73
FRANTA	EUR	4.880	16.392.083,36	82.080.906,19
GERMANIA	EUR	29.781	40.134.507,44	200.797.813,16
GRECIA	EUR	163	321.905,26	1.612.570,88
ITALIA	EUR	10.678	21.538.461,28	107.840.605,99
IRLANDA	EUR	88	194.959,01	975.700,50
LETONIA	EUR	0	0,00	0,00
STAT MEMBRU	VALUTĂ	Total Plată 2022		
		NR FORM	STAT MEMBRU	VALUTA
LITUANIA	EUR	89	3.345,85	16.744,44
LUXEMBURG	EUR	336	716.147,50	3.584.875,29
MALTA	EUR	10	2.259,99	11.282,85
TĂRILE DE JOS	EUR	635	1.499.211,00	7.499.048,82
PORTUGALIA	EUR	274	49.105,15	245.629,63
SLOVACIA	EUR	325	235.731,30	1.178.454,67
SLOVENIA	EUR	47	62.729,53	314.284,95
SPANIA	EUR	12.752	17.157.519,80	85.546.684,87
Total general euro	EUR		115.924.361,56	

Fig. 1. Sums paid by CNAS in 2022 for health treatments in the EU. Source: CNAS report activity in 2022

Romanians desire more accessible and higher-quality medical care, which complementary health insurance could provide. They are the options people pick year after year, and the insurance policy, as it is in most European countries, could be a viable option in this case. In reality, voluntary health insurance with benefits provides sustainable health participation for every Romanian.⁷ In this case, Romanians pay 40% more for private health insurance policies. Today we are invited to see how to increase the importance of travel for health interests as an expression of healthcare globalization.⁸ Innovative technologies, devices, and treatment procedures growing up with the trend of globalization and digitalization

2.2. International demand for Romanian health tourism

The high cost of treatment procedures, the long waiting list for Italians, Germans, Britain citizens, the optimal time flight schedule to Bucharest, and Brasov, the top quality services, and high and modern technologies are opportunities for the Romanian tourism market for

⁷ "UNSAAR-IRES survey: 2 out of 3 Romanians would pay more for better medical services, at <https://www.xprimm.com/UNSAAR-IRES-survey-2-out-of-3-Romanians-would-pay-more-for-better-medical-services-articol-2,10,25-17653.htm>"

⁸ Badulescu, A., Ardelean, S., Teusdea, A., "Could Romania be a Player on the global medical tourism market ?, May 2019, Conference: European Integration-New Challenges (EINCO 2019)", Oradea

inbound. Preferred medical sectors are dental disease, esthetical disease, and fertility treatment. (Fig. 2. Health care Romanian units in 2020, by Statista⁹).

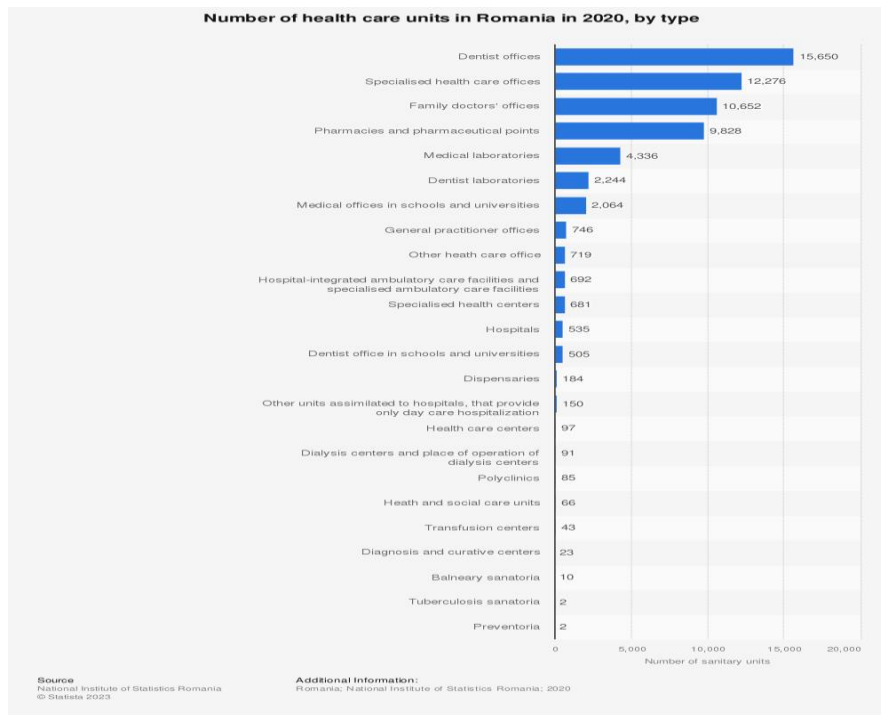


Fig.2. Health care Romanian units. Source: Statista

European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies publish a report in 2022 about dental tourism in Europe and trends, challenges, provision, and coverage of dental health care in 31 countries from Europe. In this report, this organization mentions Romania and Croatia, countries having the potential for dental tourism, and Budapest as the European dental tourism capital.¹⁰

EU countries are affected today by the aging of the population. This population is interested in possibilities to filling a better tomorrow than today. One of the solutions is wellness and SPA services. A third part of European thermal water is in Romania. The best places are Sovata Bath, Tushnad Bath, Praid, Turda, and Herculane. The newest SPA green center is Therme Bucharest, 10 minutes away from the city, a well-being concept of modern lifestyle, with a botanical garden with over 800,000 plants. All these places are complex services that follow for clients' relaxation, prevention health, food, entertainment, and strengths for work. It's an opportunity

⁹ "Number of health care units in Romania in 2020, by type at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1139381/romania-health-care-units-by-type/>"

¹⁰ "Oral health care in Europe: Financing, access and provision Health Systems in Transition, Vol. 24 No. 2, June 2022", <https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int/publications/i/oral-health-care-in-europe-financing-access-and-provision>



for them to use green energy and promote the sustainability of the environment according to globalization trends. "We need to replace the industrial mind with the ecological mind" (Wes Jackson). Tourists' perceptions are not just about the wellness services, but join a result of the complex services: the human factor, loyalty, and modern and qualified techniques used in relationships with customers before and after the consumption of tourist products or services. A sustainability supply for wellness tourism is a marketing strategy based on discounts and qualified services. And this strategy is visible as a goal in the activity of wellness centers into seasonability and work-down period, events organized by local authorities, sending newsletters, video banners, last minutes offers by e-mail, or distributing video content by influencers on social media platforms.

In one of the research made by the Global Wellness Institute about wellness tourist initiatives, around 97 respondents, results show the preference of respondents interested to reserve online, more than 50%, and just 14.4% reserve with a travel agent.

More travellers prefer to book direct via website

Q6: How do travellers book wellness trips?

	INTERNATIONAL TRIP	DOMESTIC TRIP
Direct with brand via website	26.8%	44.7%
Online through general OTA	39.2%	34.0%
Online via wellness travel website	18.6%	12.8%
Travel agent	14.4%	5%
Don't book in advance	1.0%	3.2%

Fig.3. Global Wellness Institute Research, "Wellness Tourism Initiative, 2020,

Romanian survey results, The Insider's Guide to understanding wellness travelers".¹¹

¹¹ "Overview: Understanding wellness and leisure travel, 2020, Global Wellness Insitute"

According to the Romanian Spa Tourism Employers' Organization (OPTBR), in 2019, before the Pandemic period, the expenditure in Romanian wellness resorts of 1.8 million tourists grew to €288 million.¹²

The number of tourists in Romania is growing year by year. Their scope is different: education, culture, heritage, business, leisure, wellness, medical. In 2022, 11.3 million tourists registered by accommodation units visited Romania for diverse interests, including health tourism options.¹³

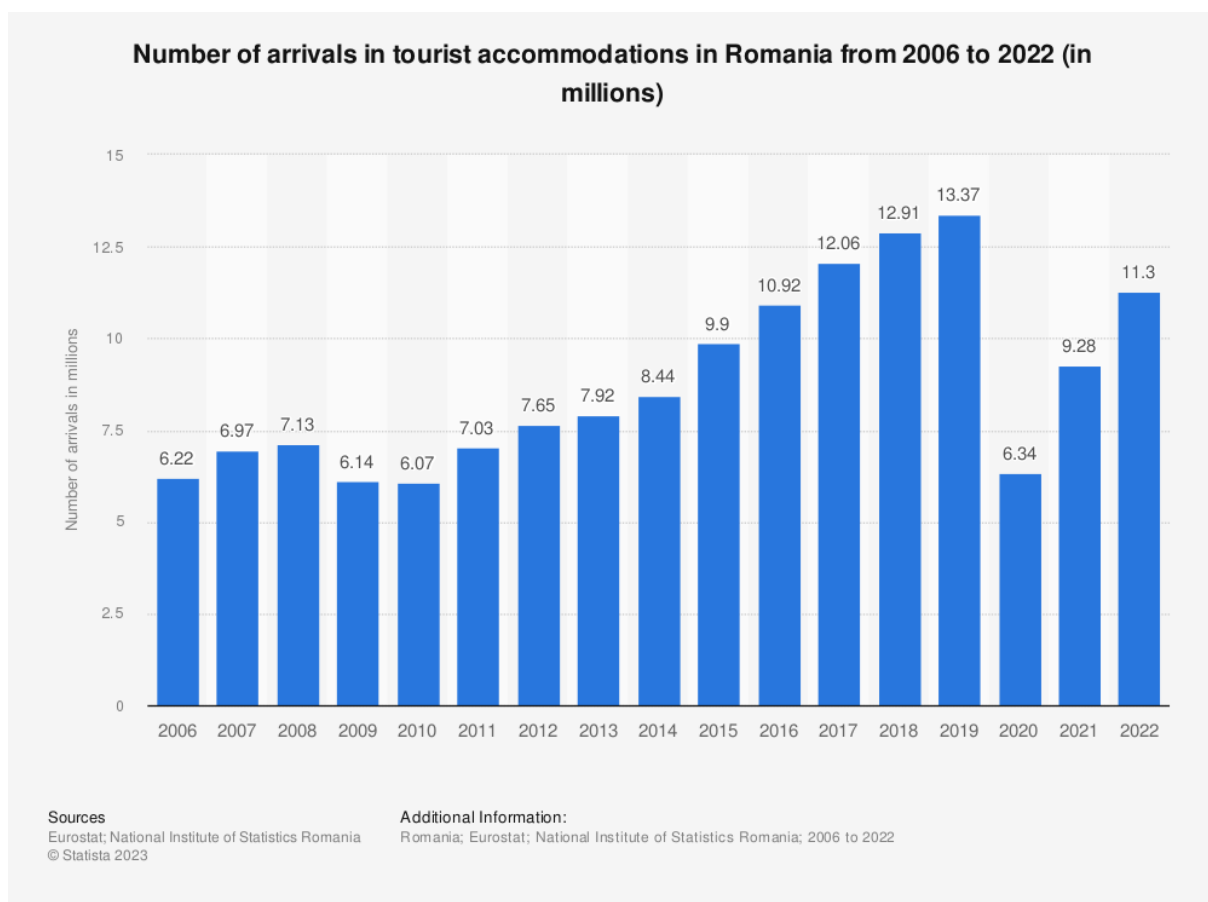


Fig.4. Inbound in Romania from 2006 to 2022 (in millions). Source: Statista.

3. Direct Marketing

Marketing is a complex of activities to create a balance between demand and offer of tourism products and deliver value to customers for success on the market and gain money.

¹² "Growing spa tourism in Romania", 2019, <https://www.laingbuissonnews.com/imtj/news-imtj/growing-spa-tourism-in-romania/>

¹³ "[Number of tourist arrivals in Romania 2022 | Statista](https://www.statista.com/statistics/413253/number-of-arrivals-spent-in-short-stay-accommodation-in-romania/)", <https://www.statista.com/statistics/413253/number-of-arrivals-spent-in-short-stay-accommodation-in-romania/>



In tourism, all activities should work by a strategic plan. The newest offer arrives to the end consumer via e-mail, social media, and online or physical promoting campaigns, without intermediaries. According to followers' activity, the marketers analyze the demand and its consumption, effectively making the consumption of the tourist product specific to this type of activity, where the consumption takes place only where the supply/customer is.

Direct marketing, unlike traditional marketing, is based on campaigns that target the general public without intermediaries with results that can be measured and interpreted as perspective or inefficiency: SMS or phone, social media, ¹⁴ the opportunity for direct marketing is to personalize the message sent directly to the customer according to the type of services offered, interested market, the level of education, and type of culture of the country that is a potential for the company.

This type of marketing involves activities to be always near customers, to be able to answer their needs quickly and sometimes before they ask for them. The most important component is delivering value to customers and management of customer relationships. The goal of direct marketing is to approach customers, understand their behavior, and transform all information into value to predict the future of the market, of products or services, to gain the loyalty of customers, and to increase the number of new clients and new markets.

In reality, this type of marketing can't apply to each customer, because it works just for those using gadgets with internet connection. Online searcher for information about health trends is a potential customer for health tourism direct marketing. The difference in social status is a priority for governments where this problem is a present of the future and the major goal is to improve strategies to create available access for all people to online information. In 2023, digitalization is a priority for Romania, for the healthy sector is a primary goal. Inbound tourists for medical treatments are familiarised with online booking channels, with online payment, online submitting, and signature, as the quality in arranging this services policy is a big deal for the enterprise.

They are interested in the quality of services and comfortable experience. Medical centers or clinics must provide strategies that promote an unsurpassable experience for the patient to attract more international tourists, using digital technology to be present near customers always,

¹⁴ Nejra Hujčić, Fatima Salihi, "MARKETING IN TOURISM - DIRECT MARKETING AS MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, Vol. 2, no 1, (2020): STED JOURNAL, <https://doisrpska.nub.rs/index.php/STED/issue/view/No./719>"



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offering loyalty with patience, and respecting their confidence. Romanian hospitals are in old constructions, with few doctors and much work to do. Contrarily, the private hospitals are in a new building with a very specialized team in their work, fluent English speaking, online for 24h hours and answering client's questions, with open minds cooperating with international intermediaries for inbound patients.

Building a good health market requires a quick collaboration between the government and private institutions, can save much important time for the patient, and requires digital marketing instruments for health research. Success for medical companies interested in increasing inbound depends on knowledge of human force and proper execution of their strategies which must center on the need of the prospective consumers. An example, in this case, is Medlife, a provider who starts the international expansion with the Hungarian group Rózsakert Medical Center. (RMC).¹⁵

Medlife has a complex and specialized contact form on its website, and a call center number for booking a consultation. (Fig. 3. Direct marketing form on Medlife's website)

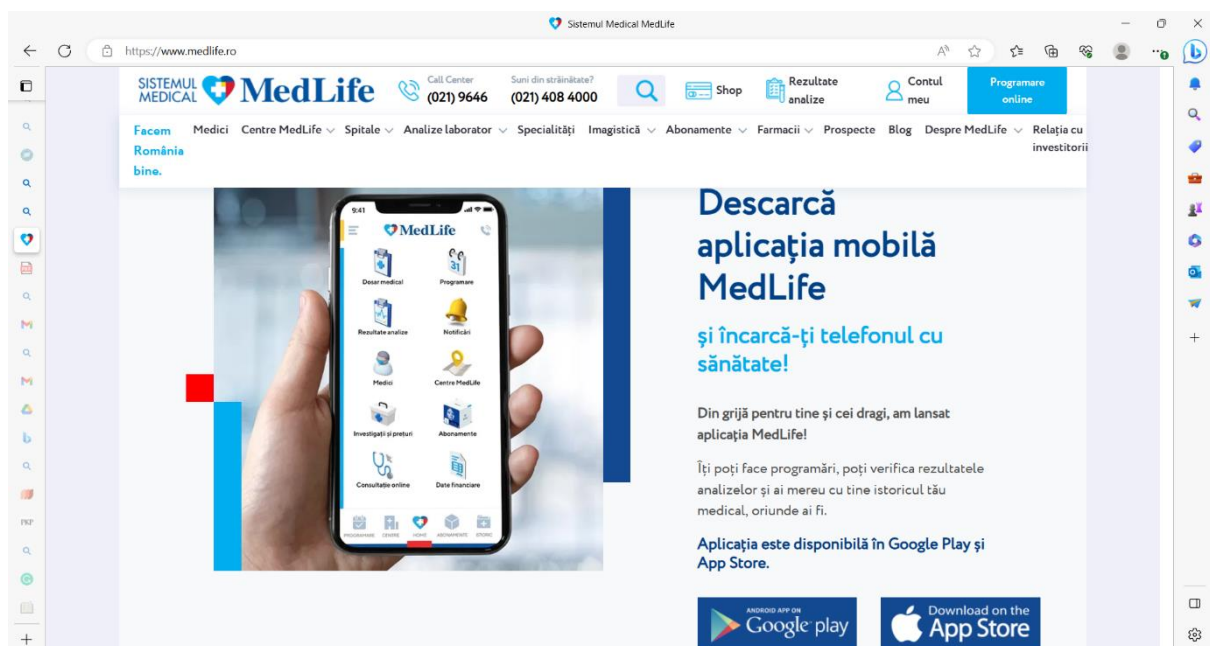


Fig. 5. Direct marketing form on Medlife's website, at <https://www.medlife.ro/>

The manifestation forms of direct marketing in Romania are printed catalogs or brochures with diverse information about tourist offers, a service provider, and a partnership that gathers its powers. Newsletters sent via e-mails, tasks, value vouchers or discounts, able website content

¹⁵ "Romanian private medical services provider starts international expansion" at (Romania-insider.com)



with simple words, and online booking applications or contact forms with standard messages, are forms of direct marketing that generate low fixed costs compared to classical promotion. In this case, the patients and the enterprise gain enough time to know each other. The most important thing is that each form offers the possibility of measuring the results of its use in each market, on each group of consumers, in each segment of the tourist product, resulting in figures that determine its use.

The content of these presentation brochures is compressive, using simple words, with maps of the presentation of means of transport, transport providers, related service offers, and a start-up price. The e-mail is often used in the previous existence of first contact between the tenderer and the client, giving the interspersed person detailed information unavailable in the offer. Promotion and direct distribution are two precious components of direct marketing, and the tools used by the tenderers are Telemedicine communication applications (Zoom, Blue Button, Telegram, Viber). This option has a particular advantage in gaining time for correct right decisions, promptly based on obtaining secure information directly from the source. Instagram and Facebook are means whose content gets uncontrolled way, but which can be measured, and the opportunity to use them very often likely allows a practical approach to consumers.

Today, most of the population uses media as a means of information. Any need will cause the person concerned, from convenience, to want to preserve your privacy, to search for answers to questions by themselves using content uploaded to media platforms, and access to the results used. According to the Country Health Profile Report of 2021st year, 30% of the population, is using teleconsultation services.¹⁶

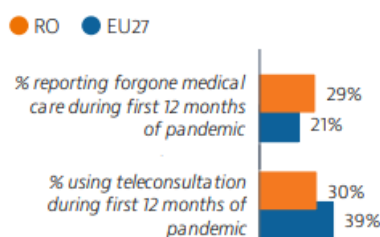


Fig.6. Romania Health System 2021, Source: Romania - Country Health Profile 2021 report
UNIDENT Company is one of the players in the dental Romanian tourism market, in relationship with the Loire Valley deputies regarding the after-surgery procedure of French

¹⁶ "Romania: Country Health Profile 2021", <https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int/publications/m/romania-country-health-profile-2021>



patients who come to Romania for implant surgery. The website is a way of presenting bidders to the target audience, which is why its content can be digital devices, with information in Romanian and English and the official language of the target group. This opportunity makes the patient or client feel appreciated by the tenderer and that the effort to get as close as possible by using the national language will be an asset to the provider.

The testimonials section and the media (pictures and video) are on the website, such as the direct interaction platform will always track you as much as ai access the company's website. Links and tasks generated by providers leading to the access site will follow a follower interested in the activity field of the tenderer. Participation in events with a wide audience, charitable actions, national and international conferences, TV, radio, and online emissions of the tenderer is a way of recognizing the quality of services by the target client.

The Pandemic period pushes consumers online to inform about a good life, about digital techniques for measuring their behavior, to metaverse space, where the virtual world is the best place for thinking, playing, and living.¹⁷ The Metaverse technology is used in health care for several diagnostic and therapeutic applications, such as blockchain and virtual assets, as well as in medical training and meetings, and conferences. Is a low-cost technology in care delivery, medical training and data management, and recruitment of patients.¹⁸

Digital health is an interesting sector for Romanians, Statistical information can confirm our supposition¹⁹:

- *"Revenue in the Digital Health market is projected to reach US\$460.10m in 2023.*
- *Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2023-2027) of 11.96%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$722.90m by 2027.*
- *The average revenue per user (ARPU) is expected to amount to US\$29.94.*
- *In global comparison, most revenue will be generated in China (US\$55,050.00m in 2023).*
- *The market's largest segment will be Digital Fitness & Well-Being with a total revenue value of US\$233.80m in 2023"*

¹⁷ Westcott, K., Arbanas, J., Arkenberg, C., Auxier, B., Loucks, J., Downs, K., "2022 Digital media trends, 16th edition: Toward the metaverse", full art. On [2022 Digital media trends survey summary | Deloitte Insights](#)

¹⁸ Adigozel, O., Mérey, T., Mathews, M., January 19, 2023, "The Health Care Metaverse Is More Than a Virtual Reality", full art. On [Reaping The Benefits Of The Healthcare Metaverse | BCG](#)

¹⁹ "Digital Health - Romania", at [Digital Health - Romania | Statista Market Forecast](#)



In this case, information about health tourism destinations, and reviews and activities of influencers on online platforms will increase Romanian interest in wellness and SPA tourism.

4. Sustainability Instruments for the health tourism market

Like every industry, the health tourism sector has a positive and negative impact on nature. Tourist patients travel outside for high-quality services, and low costs create phenomenons with influences in the residential country, travel region, and economic and social sector.

Using natural resources without a good strategy will generate their depletion. In this case, it is necessary to input a national or regional protection rule of the environment: limited access to the beach, the entrance on the beach by online reservation for several tourists, and limited access to medical buildings by the medical certificate sent before traveling inside. The tourism centers that provide health services promote on their websites the sustainability political rules for customers to inform them about, and require the accord for intern political rules of readers. The most negative influence on the social-economic environment is when customers are treated differently. This behavior of human resources creates a new marketing phenomenon as the personalization of products or tourism services. The level of the medical and wellness tourism sector in the market industry, in the region creates increasing economic indicators and for hotels, restaurants, transportation, tourism agencies. In this case, this destination is affected by the inflation of prices, creating life difficulties for people with low budgets.

All forms of health tourism are growing by the goals of the World Tourism Organization: use natural resources and conserve natural biodiversity, promote the importance of ecosystems and vitality of cultural value and assets, and importance of health education, promote programs to reduce poverty and social differences. All these create a marketing art where we are active or nonactive players.

Wellness has consistently been a top priority for hotels as a whole. Generally speaking, hotels have traditionally placed on wellness services, and agrotourism services, ecotourism services, SPAs. Thirst, it has become increasingly common at the luxury and upper-upscale levels, where it is even more of a personal well-being experience. Second, it's something that should be on everyone's mind right now and is currently. We have a responsibility to consider our guests' health and safety in addition to our associates as well. I believe that this is something that consumers will come to anticipate, and if you do not address it, you may find yourself at a competitive disadvantage, just as non-smoking rooms were 25 years ago. It is a possession of



yours. Why is it necessary to send all this information directly to clients, to transform them into our customers? Every new visit is an opportunity for us to believe in profitable our success for tomorrow and be sustainable with our society and environment.

To be sustainable:

- A hotel atmosphere that has been certified as safe and clean.
- The accommodation unit has a filtered water system.
- Access to outdoor fitness activities.
- A hotel atmosphere with green practices activity
- Air filtering systems in guest rooms ensure clean air. Wellness has long been at the forefront of hotel operations in general.

It is more widespread at the upper-upscale, luxury tiers, and even more of a personal well-being experience. It is now at the forefront of everyone's consciousness, as it should be. We must consider not only our workers' health and safety but also our guests.

Video content, 24-hour front desk help, and short standard messages to first questions are pieces of a successful direct marketing strategy. After first contact, the personalization of services for each client's need is one of the goals to be competitive. Explanations about the quality of services, the modern technique, and continual education in scientific research, about the future of the environment should be more attractive than competitors.

This is an opportune way to promote the sustainability of the environment and plains strategies for profitable success according to the green Mondial political management of ONU with some proposes:

- * Accessibility of mental health professionals
- * Access to fitness devices and apps that can measure real-time data such as heart rate
- * Nutritionists can be reached for discussion.
- * Access to healthcare professionals for one-on-one consultations or medical tests that could forecast future health problems
- * Access to extra wellness practitioners, SPA services

Best practices are expected in sustainable policy with direct messages:

- * Physical safety as well as protection from COVID exposure
- * Access to peaceful and still places
- * Nature and the great outdoors for your have been, relaxation on air



Conclusions

It was understood that the success of a company, in terms of the fast-growing rush, is anticipating the customer's response to the needs that are born daily, gaining confidence through stability, security, and online communication.

The medical and marketing specialization, especially in direct marketing of Romanian private companies, attracted foreign tourists making it a profitable business and with long-term prospects. Major investments are being made to occupy a particular market position, marketing positioning being an increasingly well-understood phenomenon by those who have focused on the external customer market. The National Health System Reform Program in Romania through digitalization follows three important programs: creating a patient's national database, and creating a database of medical offers abroad as part of the national insurance budget.

The quality of the results of direct marketing in Romania leads to the efficiency of the activity by reducing production costs, expanding the market for offering services, and analyzing consumption allowing the improvement of the tourism product and the creation of tourism products and services.

The first target for the Romanian business sector who are working in the tourism field is to be present online with a strong content message who are transmitted hope, national security, cibernetic guarantee for personal data, and confidence in health information. One of the tourism health industry's goals after Covid is to be approached by clients and customers and offer them the safety of information about their personal life. It's like the Directive for the activity program: life safety is a priority for all players in this type of market, and a political rule of activity for hotels, restaurants, food units, and transport services.

People are becoming more aware of the value of wellness retreats and how they may improve their mental and physical well-being. As a result, wellness staycations are becoming increasingly popular. Travel for wellness or medical reasons, meaning that health and wellness vacations are more probable present objective on journeys for people are still online on content health trends promoted directly by health players markets.

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