

## Strategic priorities for exploiting Bahrain's medical tourism potential

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### **Abstract:**

**Purpose** – Medical tourism, a promising market opportunity to support economic diversification in many countries, is an area of national interest in the Kingdom of Bahrain, due to the government's heavy dependence on oil and gas-related revenues and imminent diversification needs of domestic economy due to current oil price slump. This study investigates the strategic priorities for developing a competitive medical tourism sector in Bahrain.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper is based on a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative research design of collection of data and subsequent qualitative analysis of the perspectives of private medical services providers in Bahrain.

**Findings** –Overall, the findings of the study indicated that Bahrain has a potential to attain a paradigm shift in its medical tourism competitiveness mainly through sector wide-approach management, which calls for establishing effective public-private partnerships, reinventing healthcare legislation, and encouragement of investment in medical tourism infrastructure.

**Practical implications** – The study is of particular significance to Bahrain which has a potential growth opportunity in medical tourism sector. Further, the results of the paper are of strategic value to guide policy makers in other countries to diversify their economies. It aims to support decision making of various sector stakeholders in the phases of planning and implementing future reforms dedicated towards medical tourism.

Originality/value – There is lack of study of the assessment of the medical tourism competitiveness of countries. This study fills existing gap by providing a distinct and comprehensive method of evaluation of such competitiveness based on a structured analysis of the perspectives of the key stakeholders of medical tourism sector of Bahrain. The study can be applied to any country and can be further extended to include a wider range of stakeholders including government sector.