



THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON THE MOTIVATION FOR EDUCATION IN THE CASE OF DENTAL TOURISM

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Abstract:

Dental tourism is a promising niche market, which is still at the beginning of its evolution in Slovenia. In order for it to successfully develop in Slovenia, superior dental services will have to be offered and provided to foreign patients. To ensure and maintain a high quality of these services, it will be necessary to provide continuing education for stomatologists, and care for their motivation for education. Due to the changing economic conditions caused by the economic crisis, a research in which Slovene stomatologists participated was conducted on the subject of the effects of the crisis on various motivational factors regarding the education of stomatologists. The results showed that as many as 19 of 32 different factors of stomatologists' motivation for education had changed since before the economic crisis. The research showed that the most profound effect of the crisis was an increase in the influence of the following factors of motivation for education: an increased sense of security at work, the potential for performing more professional works after completing their education, the improvement of the results of the organisation in which the stomatologists work, and the potential for a better salary. At the same time, the crisis' most profound negative effect was the decrease in the importance of education for gaining knowledge and professional development.

Keywords: education, motivation, dental tourism, effects of the economic crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism is a term used to describe the practice of travelling across international borders to obtain medical services which are of the same or higher quality, more affordable and/or available faster than in the homeland (What is medical tourism, 2010). The costs of medical insurance and medical treatment in developed countries during the economic crisis have become too expensive for many citizens, forcing them to seek medical services abroad. In numerous countries, including Slovenia, workers in health and tourism have begun to consider offering their services to foreign patients. In Slovenia, based on the ownership structure and organisation of healthcare in Slovenia, during the initial development period, it would be best to develop dental tourism. It must be taken into account that such services are being offered in numerous other European countries (MTA Members in Europe, 2010), and that the Slovene offer will be successful on the market only if we offer affordable stomatological services of top quality.

The superior education of stomatologists has a decisive influence on the quality of stomatological services, which is why it is necessary to devote special attention to the continuing education of stomatologists. Continuing education of stomatologists is also necessary for extending medical licences (Rules on medical licences, 1999, Articles 20–22), so stomatologists are accustomed to education. The rules define different forms of education: attending professional gatherings, publishing professional articles in professional literature, study trips, study visits, participation in professional lectures, conducting studies of professional literature with written answers to test questions, and self-education using multimedia programmes (Rules on medical licences, 1999, Article 24). E-education has become very popular as of late in developed countries, but it has yet to become established in the field of medical care in Slovenia. E-education has many advantages in comparison with traditional education (Hansen & Levin, 2010, p. 790), but motivation for this form of education (Rabak & Cleveland-Innes, 2006, p. 117) and being accustomed to the use of electronic educational portals (Maldonado et al, 2011, p. 76) are of key importance for the successfulness of e-education.

Despite being used to continuing education, stomatologists' motivation for education differs. Many have already become aware that education has nowadays become the key survival strategy (Cheng & Ho, 2001, p. 20), so those who are naturally inclined toward education take their own education-related actions and ensure their own development (Harris & Cole, 2007, p. 788). This often leads to employees, upon completing their education, not possessing the adequate motivation to transfer their knowledge to the working environment (Monk, 1996, p. 31). In such cases, the most appropriate way to improve the employee's motivation is to thoroughly examine the work and its effect on the employee (Glen, 2006, p. 37). Increasing every employee's motivation is very important and urgent, as motivation affects the acquisition of new knowledge at the workplace (Hytti et al, 2010, p. 590).

In understanding motivation, it is of key importance to realize that people have needs which guide their activities toward certain goals. Motivation is the complete set of factors which organise a person's activities and guide them toward their chosen goals (Woolfolk, 2002, p. 347). The goals of a person's motivational activities are objects and acts with which they balance or meet their needs (Musek & Pečjak, 2001, p. 89). Due to the large influence of motivation on a person's life, there are numerous researches and theories regarding this subject. There is no

universal theory; there are only individual studies. Each author has researched and explained their part of the study of motivation. During the current era of economic crisis, the most popular is the part of the study of motivation concerning uncertain environments, such as the environment of today's economy. In such an environment, motivation is subject to change (Rozman, 2000, p. 44). Due to these findings, and because it is necessary in order to provide top-quality stomatological services, to be aware of all important obstacles and motivational factors which affect the education of stomatologists during the current crisis, a research was conducted on the subject of these obstacles and motivational factors, as the crisis period is not likely to end soon.

2. THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the research was to study the influence of the economic crisis on the motivation of stomatologists for education in the field of dental tourism. The goals of the research were to establish which motivational factors for the education of stomatologists the economic crisis is influencing, and in what manner.

In the introduction, there is a mention of Rozman's finding that motivation in a crisis environment is subject to change, so it was assumed that the factors of motivation for the education of stomatologists have changed in comparison with the factors before the crisis. The following hypothesis was established based on the above.

Hypothesis 1: Most of the factors of stomatologists' motivation for education had changed since before the economic crisis.

The research was based on the collection and processing of secondary and primary data. The scientific methods used in this research are the study of literature, the compilation method, the comparison method, the descriptive method, the deductive method, the analysis and synthesis method, the inductive method and the survey method. The combination of these methods was used with the purpose of providing a more comprehensive overview of the subject. The questionnaire was written in Slovene and was tested with the help of three stomatologists, who were not included in the final survey.

The questionnaire started with a question on the willingness of the stomatologist to participate in dental tourism. Those who were willing to participate then answered several social and demographic questions in the beginning of the questionnaire. In the second part, they evaluated the influence of the motivational factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education before the crisis and now. The evaluation was based on the use of a 5-level Likert scale, where 1 signifies that the factor has no influence whatsoever on the stomatologists' motivation for deciding on education, and 5 signifies that the factor has a very large influence on the stomatologists' motivation for deciding on education.

The questionnaire was sent to 649 e-mail addresses of Slovene stomatologists. The author had found the addresses on different websites of Slovene stomatologists and in the e-mail address database of the institute in which the research was conducted. The research took place between March 7 and April 4, 2011. Anonymity was ensured. The Pasw Statistics 17.0 program was used to process the data. The following statistical methods were used: calculating the basic procedures

of descriptive statistics for individual variables, and a t-test for establishing the differences between the data derived from the answers of the stomatologists according to the time before the crisis and now.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

142 questionnaires were returned and valid, wherein the initial question on the willingness to participate in dental tourism was answered positively by 127 stomatologists (19.6 % of all sent questionnaires). Their questionnaires were then analysed. The social and demographical data of the respondents showed that 107 of them (84.3 %) were female and 20 of them (15.7 %) were male. The average age of the interviewed stomatologists at the time the survey was conducted was 43.7 with a standard deviation of 6.8 years. 68 of the interviewed stomatologists (77.2 %) were the only stomatologists working in their surgery, 26 respondents (20.5 %) were employed in a surgery where one other stomatologist was employed, 3 stomatologists (2.4 %) were employed in a surgery with more than two employed stomatologists.

The interviewed stomatologists evaluated the influence of 32 listed factors of motivation for education. The option of providing and evaluating their own additional proposition for a factor of motivation was not used by any of the respondents. The results of the stomatologists' evaluation (Table 1) show that before the economic crisis, the stomatologists were most motivated when deciding on education by the pressure (condition) of medical licence renewal (5.00), the desire to obtain more knowledge for their work (4.81), the desire to obtain more medical knowledge (4.80), the increase of the satisfaction of their patients with their work (4.65), and the potential for professional growth obtained through education (4.61). The results also show that the stomatologists were also very motivated by the potential to achieve a greater value of work upon completing the education (4.42), the potential for advancement (4.23), more authority (4.09), a better reputation at work (4.08), a better salary (4.02), increased bonuses at work (4.01), increased independence at the workplace (3.93), increased support from their superiors (3.78), the potential of obtaining a reward (3.74), the potential of obtaining a commendation or an award (3.71), and better working conditions (3.64). The stomatologists were also motivated for education by a better reputation among the professional public (3.42), increased potential to achieve set goals (3.33), increased responsibility at the workplace (3.19), the potential for personal growth from education (3.12), the fact that co-workers are also undergoing education (3.05), the potential to meet and co-operate with other medical experts (2.83), the desire to obtain a higher degree of education (2.57) and the opportunity for education abroad (2.54). The potential for performing more professional works (1.92) upon completing the education did not motivate the stomatologists very much when deciding on education. The increase in self-confidence (1.33) upon completing their education, the desire to learn, educate themselves (1.31), self-satisfaction (1.27), interest in additional education (1.26), the increase of the sense of security at work (1.10), the improvement of the results of the organisation in which they are working (1.08), and the potential of providing better help to co-workers (1.07) had no influence on the stomatologists' motivation for education before the economic crisis.

The results of the research show that the factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education are different in numerous cases during the time of the current economic crisis. The stomatologists are very much motivated by the pressure (condition) of medical licence renewal (4.99), the

potential for a better salary (4.85), the potential for advancement (4.83), the increase of the sense of security at work (4.76), the increase of their patient's satisfaction with their work (4.73), the potential to achieve a greater value of work upon completing the education (4.72), a better reputation at work (4.71), more bonuses at work (4.69), and the desire to obtain additional medical knowledge (4.52). The stomatologists are well-motivated for gaining education by the desire to obtain more knowledge for their work (4.49), the potential of obtaining a commendation or an award (4.26), the potential for professional growth gained through education (4.25), the potential to receive a reward (4.23), increased support from their superiors (4.18), more authority (4.12), better working conditions (3.91), a better reputation among the professional public (3.87), the increased potential of achieving set goals (3.82), the potential to perform more professional works (3.77) upon completing the education, and the increase of independence at the workplace (3.76). During the current time of crisis, the stomatologists are motivated for education by the increased responsibility at the workplace (3.24), the fact that co-workers are also undergoing education (3.18), the potential for personal growth through education (3.11), the desire to obtain a higher degree of education (2.86), the potential for meeting and co-operating with other medical experts (2.82), the improvement of the results of the organisation in which they are employed (2.78), and the opportunity for education abroad (2.50). Today, stomatologists are not very motivated for education by the motive of interest in additional education (1.97). During the time of crisis, the following factors have no influence on the stomatologists' motivation for education: the desire to learn, educate themselves (1.33), the increase in self-confidence (1.32) upon completing the education, self-satisfaction (1.26) and the potential to provide better help to co-workers (1.08).

Table 1: Factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education before the economic crisis and during the current time of economic crisis.

| Factor of the motivation for education | Influence on the stomatologists before the economic crisis | | Influence on the stomatologists during the economic crisis (now) | | T | Sig (t) |
|--|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|-------|---------|
| | Average value | Standard deviation | Average value | Standard deviation | | |
| Pressure (condition) of medical licence renewal | 5.00 | 1.01 | 4.99 | 0.84 | 0.01 | 0.99 |
| <i>Desire to obtain more knowledge for work</i> | 4.81 | 1.19 | 4.49 | 1.24 | 2.87 | 0.01** |
| <i>Desire to obtain additional medical knowledge</i> | 4.80 | 0.94 | 4.52 | 1.06 | 2.55 | 0.02** |
| Increased satisfaction of patients with my work | 4.65 | 1.05 | 4.73 | 1.00 | -0.45 | 0.65 |
| <i>Potential for personal growth through education</i> | 4.61 | 0.99 | 4.25 | 0.92 | 2.53 | 0.02** |
| <i>After education, I will achieve a greater value of work</i> | 4.42 | 0.91 | 4.72 | 1.05 | -2.86 | 0.01** |
| <i>Potential for advancement</i> | 4.23 | 0.97 | 4.83 | 0.91 | -3.49 | 0.00** |
| More authority | 4.09 | 1.11 | 4.12 | 1.12 | -0.18 | 0.86 |
| <i>Better reputation at work</i> | 4.08 | 1.15 | 4.71 | 0.72 | -2.92 | 0.01** |
| <i>Better salary</i> | 4.02 | 1.07 | 4.85 | 0.78 | -3.47 | 0.00** |
| <i>More bonuses at work</i> | 4.01 | 1.03 | 4.69 | 0.88 | -2.85 | 0.01** |
| Increased independence at the workplace | 3.93 | 1.27 | 3.76 | 1.20 | 1.30 | 0.20 |
| <i>Increased support from superiors</i> | 3.78 | 0.97 | 4.18 | 1.24 | -2.18 | 0.03** |
| <i>Receive a reward</i> | 3.74 | 1.16 | 4.2 | 0.88 | -2.52 | 0.02** |
| <i>Receive a commendation or</i> | 3.71 | 1.19 | 4.26 | 0.94 | -3.38 | 0.00** |

| | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|-------|--------|
| <i>an award</i> | | | | | | |
| <i>Better working conditions</i> | 3.64 | 1.13 | 3.91 | 0.90 | -2.11 | 0.04** |
| <i>Better reputation among the professional public</i> | 3.42 | 0.86 | 3.87 | 1.19 | -2.20 | 0.03** |
| <i>Increased potential to achieve set goals</i> | 3.33 | 0.93 | 3.82 | 1.07 | -2.54 | 0.02** |
| Increased responsibility at the workplace | 3.19 | 1.13 | 3.24 | 0.98 | -0.35 | 0.73 |
| Potential for personal growth through education | 3.12 | 1.46 | 3.11 | 1.44 | 0.12 | 0.90 |
| Co-workers are also undergoing education | 3.05 | 0.69 | 3.18 | 0.60 | -0.76 | 0.45 |
| Potential of meeting and co-operating with other medical experts | 2.83 | 0.71 | 2.82 | 0.82 | 0.13 | 0.90 |
| <i>Desire to obtain a higher degree of education</i> | 2.57 | 0.86 | 2.86 | 1.11 | -2.15 | 0.04** |
| Opportunity for education abroad | 2.54 | 1.06 | 2.50 | 1.12 | 0.24 | 0.81 |
| <i>The potential for performing more professional works</i> | 1.92 | 1.34 | 3.77 | 1.02 | -3.57 | 0.00** |
| Increased self-confidence | 1.33 | 0.98 | 1.32 | 1.16 | 0.17 | 0.87 |
| Desire to learn, educate | 1.31 | 0.83 | 1.33 | 0.75 | -0.09 | 0.92 |
| Self-satisfaction | 1.27 | 1.08 | 1.26 | 0.9 | 0.19 | 0.85 |
| <i>Interest in additional education</i> | 1.26 | 1.20 | 1.97 | 1.26 | -2.89 | 0.01** |
| <i>Increased sense of security at work</i> | 1.10 | 1.29 | 4.76 | 0.74 | -3.99 | 0.00** |
| <i>Improvement of the results of the organisation in which I am employed</i> | 1.08 | 1.26 | 2.78 | 1.05 | -3.02 | 0.01** |
| Potential to provide | 1.07 | 0.97 | 1.08 | 0.81 | -0.01 | 0.99 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| better help to co-workers | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Source: Our own calculations.

A comparison of the average values of the factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education before the crisis and during the current time of crisis reveals that the most profound effect of the crisis in terms of the stomatologists' motivation for education was on the increase of the sense of security at work (by 3.66), the potential for performing more professional works upon completing the education (by 1.85), the improvement of the results of the organisation in which they are employed (1.70), and the potential of a better salary (0.83), which shows that during the current time of crisis, the stomatologists have begun to regard education as additional protection in the event of problems which could occur due to the crisis.

At the same time, the crisis significantly decreased the influence of the following factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education: the potential for professional growth through education (by 0.36), the desire to obtain more knowledge for work (by 0.32) and the desire to obtain additional medical knowledge (by 0.29), which shows that, during the current time of crisis, the stomatologists, in comparison with the time before the crisis, do not ascribe as much importance to education for the knowledge and professional growth they gain from it. The time of crisis has reinforced the importance of financial security of survival, and decreased the importance of professional growth.

The calculated values of the significance of the different motivational factors of education during the time before the economic crisis and the current time of crisis are lesser than 0.05 (see Table 1, ** mark) for the desire to obtain more knowledge for work, the desire to obtain additional medical knowledge, the potential for professional growth through education, the potential for achieving a greater value of work upon completing the education, the potential for advancement, a better reputation at work, a better salary, more bonuses at work, a better reputation among the professional public, increased potential for achieving set goals, the desire to obtain a higher degree of education, the potential to perform more professional works, interest in additional education, an increased sense of security at work, and the potential to improve the results of the organisation in which they are employed, meaning that they are statistically significant. There are 19 motivational factors which differ statistically significantly, or 59.5 % of all of the motivational factors. We can now accept hypothesis 1, which claims that most of the factors of stomatologists' motivation for education had changed since before the economic crisis.

4. CONCLUSION

Affordable prices of high-quality stomatological and tourist services will have to be provided in order to ensure the successful development of dental tourism in Slovenia. Special attention will have to be devoted to providing top-quality stomatological services, as it is top quality, coupled with affordable prices, which most often constitutes a competitive advantage. To achieve the top quality of stomatological services, stomatologists will have to undergo continuing education. A very important factor in this is what motivates stomatologists for education, as motivation is very important for work and attitude toward work. Motivation must constantly be monitored, as it can change according to changes of the environment. It has been established that motivation is subject to change in uncertain, crisis environment.

The entire Slovene economy, including stomatologists, is now situated in such a crisis environment. It was thus studied in the research how the recession changed the individual factors of stomatologists' motivation for education. The result analysis showed that the factors of stomatologists' motivation for education most profoundly affected by the crisis were the increased sense of security at work, the potential for performing more professional works after completing the education, the improvement of the results of the organisation in which the stomatologist is employed, and the potential for a better salary, which shows that the stomatologists have begun during the time of crisis to regard education in a positive light, as a means of aid in solving the problems which could occur due to the crisis. The factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education the crisis has had the most profound negative effect on are the potential for professional growth through education, the desire to obtain more knowledge for work and the desire to obtain additional medical knowledge, which shows that, during the current time of crisis, the stomatologists, in comparison with the time before the crisis, do not ascribe as much importance to education for the knowledge and professional growth they gain from it. The comparison of the factors of the stomatologists' motivation for education showed that there are differences between the influence of factors before and during the crisis for most factors, namely the desire to obtain more knowledge for work, the desire to obtain additional medical knowledge, the potential for professional growth through education, the potential for achieving a greater value of work upon completing the education, the potential for advancement, a better reputation at work, a better salary, more bonuses at work, a better reputation among the professional public, increased potential for achieving set goals, the desire to obtain a higher degree of education, the potential to perform more professional works, interest in additional education, an increased sense of security at work, and the potential to improve the results of the organisation in which they are employed.

It would be advisable in the future to research the motivation of other medical workers within dental tourism, as they, too, play an important role in the quality of medical services. A special research should also be devoted in the future to studying the motivation of other participants in dental tourism (administration staff, tourism workers), as they also affect the quality of dental tourism services.

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