

referral lists and identify potential partners for ventures in other countries.

- Partner with organizations involved in international programs (e.g., Sister City programs) as well as the local chamber of commerce to promote hometown health facilities.
- Initiate carefully thought-out international advertising as part of a coordinated marketing and communications effort.
- Maintain ongoing public relations efforts to highlight recent successes, medical breakthroughs, new technology, and exceptional physicians.
- Maintain listings in international medical directories, both print and online, even if some cost is involved.
- Take advantage of social media to maintain a worldwide presence and real-time communication capabilities.

Case Study 12.1 provides an example of one country's global medicine marketing efforts.

### **CASE STUDY 12.1**

#### **Marketing Medical Tourism in Asia**

In 2013, Ballistan—a fictional country based on a small Asian nation with a modern healthcare system and a strong economy—recognized that its healthcare system had features that would be attractive to medical tourists. The potential revenue that medical tourism could generate was large enough for the national government to take a vested interest in ensuring the success of this endeavor. To this end, Ballistan established an agency to attract international business and promote medical tourism. Funded by the national government, the agency was a ministry operated with the full cooperation of the country's healthcare organizations and directed by a high-ranking government official.

One of the first steps the agency took was to assess the current domestic need for health services and the availability of local facilities. It identified existing capacity, took an inventory of medical equipment, and determined the number and qualifications of existing clinical personnel. It also evaluated the system's ability to meet domestic needs and to serve an international clientele. Further, it estimated the size of the international market and calculated potential revenue.

Having determined that there was a large and growing market with substantial resources to spend on healthcare and that the system

would be able to absorb a substantial number of international patients, the agency developed a multipronged marketing initiative. The first campaign raised awareness about available services for the countries that had the most potential customers (i.e., elsewhere in Asia, the Middle East, and the United States). The follow-up campaign promoted Ballistan and its healthcare resources. Related articles were written and published in newspapers, magazines, and journals. These print materials were supplemented by a website with interactive features, including not only a blog, a cost calculator, and a map of the country's health facilities but also colorful infographics about medical tourism. A Facebook page, a Twitter feed, an Instagram account, and other social media platforms were used to connect to prospects. Although some paid advertising was used, the agency felt that paid advertising was the least effective means of reaching the target population.

The agency put together comprehensive medical tourism packages with the help of the country's travel and hospitality industries. These packages had a fixed price and were all-inclusive, covering charges for air or train travel; room and board; medical, rehabilitation (if needed), and follow-up care; and local tours.

The agency installed liaison offices and staffs in several foreign countries to ensure that someone in-country was available to answer questions and coordinate arrangements for incoming customers. In addition, these satellite offices forged a relationship with medical practitioners in these countries to establish legitimacy and ensure a steady source of referrals. Negotiations were carried out with health insurance plans that agreed to refer some of their cases to these countries' practitioners.

In convincing potential customers to travel to Ballistan to obtain health services, the agency highlighted the following benefits:

- One fixed, competitive price
- State-of-the-art facilities staffed by English-speaking clinical experts who had been trained in the United States
- Care and services whose quality is equal to or better than that found elsewhere
- Personalized attention before, during, and after the treatment or procedure
- Various cultural and sightseeing opportunities available to visitors and their families

*(continued)*

The campaign to promote medical tourism in Ballistan was highly successful, particularly among consumers from the United States. People with medical needs or wants have been flocking to its cities since. Customers with commercial insurance have been able to cover either the full or partial cost of care, but those who pay out of pocket are delighted to pay only a fraction of what the same care would cost in the United States. Notably, the agency's market research revealed that a high number of these medical tourists were satisfied with the outcomes of care and the manner in which the services were delivered—a critical finding that marketers can use and considering the importance of word of mouth to growing medical tourism.

### **Case Study Discussion Questions**

1. What prompted officials in Ballistan to consider entering the medical tourism business?
2. What steps were taken to identify the current status and future potential of medical tourism?
3. What factors encouraged government officials to develop a marketing campaign to attract medical tourists?
4. What marketing techniques did the agency use to promote medical tourism?
5. What role did relationship development play in implementing the promotional strategy?
6. How effective was the campaign to Ballistan's thriving medical tourism?

### **What Is Most Important to International Healthcare Consumers?**

Different types of consumers have differing motivations when using new and innovative services. Both US- and foreign-based healthcare organizations have identified the following as prerequisites for attracting an international clientele:

- *Excellent care.* High-quality service is a must for those hoping to compete in this arena. Consumers will travel to another country for services only if they are assured that they will receive the best services possible and their needs will be fulfilled.
- *Physician skill set.* Most healthcare consumers, regardless of nationality, are looking for a physician who is capable of performing