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Factors Affecting Medical Tourists to Malaysia

Thoo Ai Chin*

Department of Business Administration (Marketing), Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti
Teknologi Malaysia
Malaysia

Anis Izzren Noor Khairuddin

Department of Business Administration (Marketing), Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti
Teknologi Malaysia
Malaysia

Huam Hon Tat

Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia
Malaysia

Zuraidah Sulaiman

Department of Business Administration (Marketing), Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti
Teknologi Malaysia
Malaysia

Lee Yoke Lai

Landscape Architecture (Program), Faculty of Built Environment and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
Malaysia

Adaviah Mas'od

Department of Business Administration (Marketing), Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti
Teknologi Malaysia
Malaysia

*Corrospoding author's Email: acthoo@utm.my

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lat 306 Savoy Residencia, Block 3 F11/1, 44000 Islamabad, Pakistan,
info@readersinsight.net

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Research Highlights

The study developed four hypotheses namely i) hospital and staff ii) country factor iii) combining medical and healthcare services, and iv) cost saving with repurchase intention for medical treatment in Malaysia. There are only two factors including hospital and staff, and cost saving are positively and significantly related to repurchase intention for medical treatment in Malaysia. In contrast, country factor, and combination tourism and health service have no significant relationship with repurchase intention for medical treatment in Malaysia. In fact, cost saving has a storngest impact on repurchase intention for medical treatment with beta value of 0.409, followed by hospital and staff with beta value of 0.402. The adjusted R² of 43.2% represents the proportion of variation in the repurchase intention for medical treatment in Malaysia that has been explained or accounted for by a combination of various two factors including hospital and staff, and cost saving.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to examine the intentions of foreign tourists to come to Malaysia for medical treatment. The four factors including hospital and staff, country factor, combination tourism and health services, and cost saving were investigated. Malaysia just crowned the “Destination of the Year” at the International Medical Travel Journal (IMTJ) Awards in 2017. The medical tourism industry in Malaysia achieved more than RM1 billion every year due to her top notch and innovative healthcare services. Most of the medical travellers seek treatments such as oncology, cardiology, in vitro fertilisation (IVF), orthopaedics, dental and cosmetics in Malaysia. In fact, the medical tourism industry of Malaysia is facing stiff competition from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, Japan and Thailand. Therefore, in oder to become medical tourists’ preferred destination for treatment and vacation, it is important to examine which factors motivate them to choose Malaysia. On the other hand, in Malaysia, the research on medical tourism is scarce and only few studies about medical tourism are found in Malaysia such as Alavi et al. (2015), Manaf (2011), Na et al. (2016) and Chandran et al. (2017). As such, this study is useful for policymakers to develop strategies in order to attract more foreign patients to choose Malaysia as their medical center.





Methodology

The questionnaire was distributed to 117 foreign patients in several private hospitals located in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Johor Bharu using purposive sampling technique. The sample size is sufficient to examine a relationship using a regression or correlation statistical analysis. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents from June to October 2017. Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software was used for data analysis. Descriptive analysis, normality test, reliability test, multicollinearity test and multiple regression analysis were employed in this study. A pilot study aims to conduct a small scale preliminary study in order to assess the feasibility of a full-scale project in future. There are 30 foreign patients were included for a pilot study. The data collected from the pilot study was used to run the reliability test using Cronbach Alpha. All the dimensions are reliable with coefficients more than 0.70. This means the measures used in the study are acceptable and reliable. Further, the constructs of the study including hospital and staff, country factor, combination tourism and health services, cost saving and repurchase intention for medical treatment were examined using a 5-point Likert scale which ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

Most of the respondents were males (57.26%) and aged between 46 and 55 years old (29.06%). Majority of the respondents had a Bachelor degree (35.90%) and worked in private sector (35.04%). Also, most of the medical tourists had visited Malaysia around 2 to 5 times (41.88%). The mean values of all variables such as hospital and staff, country factor, combination tourism and health services, cost saving and repurchase intention for medical treatment ranged from 3.0755 to 3.6173. All the values of skewness and kurtosis for the variables are found to be within the acceptable range. Thus, the data can be considered normally distributed. Cronbach's alpha values for all variables range from 0.726 to 0.792. There is no evidence of multicollinearity problem in this study. There are only two factors including hospital and staff, and cost saving have a significant and positive relationship with repurchase intention for medical treatment in Malaysia. Surprisingly, country factor, and combination tourism and health service have no impact on repurchase intention for medical treatment. In fact, cost saving is the strongest predictor for repurchase intention for medical





treatment as the medical cost in Malaysia is relatively cheaper if compared with other countries.

Findings

This study found that factors including hospital and staff, and cost saving are positively related to repurchase intention of foreign patients to seek medical treatment in Malaysia. Cost saving is the strongest factor to attract foreign patients to seek medical treatment in Malaysia, followed by hospital and staff. The findings of the study could benefit hospital management and government. Private or government hospitals could focus on hospital and staff, and cost saving in order to attract more foreign patients to revisit their hospitals in future. Government authority such as Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC) which is under the Ministry of Health could promote Malaysia's healthcare travel industry using hospital and staff, and cost saving.

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