

SYSTEMATIC ARTICLE REVIEW ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEMAND FOR MEDICAL TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

Nur Batrisyia Huda¹
Siti Yuliandi Ahmad^{*1}

*Corresponding author: (email: sitiyuliandi@iium.edu.my)

Abstract

Malaysia has established a strong reputation as a leading destination for medical tourism in the Asia Pacific area, primarily attributed to its high quality of services. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the existing research pertaining to the many elements that influence the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. This study aims to ascertain the determinants that influence the selection of Malaysia as a favoured destination for medical tourism among foreign medical tourists. The present study employs a methodological approach centred on conducting an article review, wherein ten scholarly works on medical tourism in Malaysia spanning the years 2019 to 2022 were thoroughly examined and analyzed. Furthermore, the present evaluation has incorporated secondary data from a prior medical tourism study. The findings suggest that the factors driving the demand for international tourists seeking medical treatment in Malaysia include the country's experience in the medical field, advanced equipment utilization, high-quality facilities, effective information dissemination, strong communication capabilities, and low medical costs. The surge in the popularity of medical tourism in Malaysia can be attributed to the country's favourable accessibility to a wide range of medical treatments. Several crucial aspects that significantly impact consumer behaviour encompass the level of satisfaction derived from the counsel received and the perceived value attributed to Malaysian doctors. The findings above provide valuable insights into consumer behaviour, offering guidance to destination management organizations and stakeholders in the tourism industry. These insights can aid in developing strategies to improve the medical tourism experience, foster community support, and ensure the sustained demand for medical tourism in Malaysia.

Keywords: Demand, International tourist, Medical tourism, Private medical services, Preferences

¹ Department of Tourism, Kulliyah of Languages and Management International Islamic University Malaysia

Abstrak

Malaysia telah membina reputasi yang kukuh sebagai destinasi utama untuk pelancongan perubatan di kawasan Asia Pasifik, yang sebahagian besar disumbangkan oleh kualiti perkhidmatannya yang tinggi. Kajian ini memberikan gambaran menyeluruh tentang penyelidikan sedia ada yang berkaitan dengan elemen-elemen yang mempengaruhi permintaan untuk pelancongan perubatan di Malaysia. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan Malaysia sebagai destinasi pilihan untuk pelancongan perubatan dalam kalangan pelancong perubatan asing. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah yang berpusat pada pengkajian artikel, di mana sepuluh karya ilmiah yang berkaitan dengan subjek pelancongan perubatan di Malaysia dari tahun 2019 hingga 2022 telah dikaji dan dianalisis secara teliti. Selain itu, penilaian ini juga telah menggabungkan data sekunder yang diperolehi dari satu kajian terdahulu mengenai pelancongan perubatan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa faktor-faktor yang memacu permintaan pelancong antarabangsa yang mencari rawatan perubatan di Malaysia termasuk pengalaman negara dalam bidang perubatan, penggunaan peralatan yang canggih, penyediaan fasilitator berkualiti tinggi, penyebaran maklumat yang berkesan, keupayaan komunikasi yang kuat, dan kos perubatan yang rendah. Lonjakan populariti pelancongan perubatan di Malaysia boleh dikaitkan dengan aksesibiliti yang baik ke pelbagai jenis rawatan perubatan. Beberapa aspek penting yang mempunyai impak besar terhadap tingkah laku pengguna merangkumi tahap kepuasan yang diperolehi daripada nasihat yang diterima dan nilai yang diberikan kepada doktor Malaysia. Penemuan-penemuan tersebut memberikan wawasan yang berharga ke dalam tingkah laku pengguna, dengan demikian menawarkan panduan kepada organisasi pengurusan destinasi dan pihak berkepentingan dalam industri pelancongan. Wawasan ini dapat membantu dalam pembangunan strategi yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pengalaman pelancongan perubatan, menyokong komuniti, dan memastikan permintaan berterusan untuk pelancongan perubatan di Malaysia.

Katakunci: Permintaan, Pelancong antarabangsa, Pelancongan perubatan, Perkhidmatan perubatan swasta, Keutamaan

Introduction

The medical tourism sector in Malaysia exhibits a complex and ever-evolving nature. Identifying critical elements influencing the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia holds significant importance as it enables stakeholders to devise effective strategies to foster and sustain this industry's growth. This study aims to investigate the factors that influence the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. By examining these variables, this research offers valuable insights into how Malaysia may further strengthen its position as a prominent destination for medical tourism. Thus, a

comprehensive systematic literature study was undertaken to provide insight into Malaysia's demand patterns for medical tourism.

Medical tourism refers to the practice of individuals travelling to foreign countries in order to receive medical care. The subject pertains to engaging in a visit encompassing travel across international borders to get a comprehensive range of medical interventions (Aziz et al., 2021). Medical tourism continues to be a rapidly evolving problem wherein individuals seek medical treatment or healthcare services in a foreign country. Furthermore, the phenomenon of medical tourism has recently experienced a surge in popularity, primarily attributed to the forces of globalization, advancements in transportation infrastructure, and the increasing accessibility of information pertaining to healthcare treatments offered in foreign countries. Patients can now expand their healthcare alternatives beyond their immediate vicinity, allowing them to consider and choose from various medical destinations.

Throughout its evolution, the phenomenon of medical tourism in Malaysia has garnered significant attention as a particularly attractive option for individuals seeking medical treatment from outside, surpassing its counterparts within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). According to the study conducted by Zain et al. (2022), Malaysia has emerged as a prominent destination for individuals seeking high-quality healthcare services, particularly in private hospitals. Malaysia's robust private healthcare sector caters to local and international patients.

The research inquiry pertains to factors contributing to the persuasive appeal of healthcare tourism in Malaysia for international patients. Multiple factors have contributed to the increasing prevalence of medical tourism in Malaysia. Firstly, medical tourism enables individuals to access medical treatments or procedures that may not be readily accessible or efficient within their home nations. This includes the availability of specialized expertise, advanced technology, state-of-the-art facilities, and effective communication capabilities. Moreover, the primary factor driving the phenomenon of international medical tourism is the potential for financial savings. A significant number of individuals opt for medical treatment in Malaysia due to the comparatively reduced costs compared to their country of origin.

Moreover, the burgeoning demand for medical tourism in Malaysia possesses the capacity to yield substantial economic advantages. The influx of international patients contributes to the stimulation of the local economy by utilizing expenditure on medical services. This can generate employment opportunities, enhance infrastructure, and facilitate overall economic expansion. Therefore, this study suggests that the country's availability of private healthcare services influences the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. These services have been recognized as the key factors that lead medical tourists to choose Malaysia as their preferred destination for medical tourism.

In conclusion, this paper aims to comprehend the impact of customer behaviour on decision-making processes, expenditure trends, and overall satisfaction within the medical tourism sector. Furthermore, this study aims to get insight into how tourists interact with and encounter the medical tourism industry in Malaysia. This investigation focuses on comprehending their motives, preferences, and behaviours. The research also examines the potential of medical tourism in Malaysia to achieve sustainable development, foster economic growth, and promote community engagement.

Literature Review

Medical tourism

The global growth of healthcare services has given rise to a unique phenomenon known as medical tourism. Medical tourism encompasses two distinct categories of individuals seeking healthcare services: illness-oriented medical tourists and wellness tourists aiming to enhance their overall well-being. However, it is essential to note that there is a lack of consensus (Damayanti et al., 2021) regarding the precise definitions and estimations for each group. Medical tourism is a prominent and swiftly expanding sector within health tourism. This growth has prompted numerous countries to adopt legislative and practical strategies to participate in this market (Aziz et al., 2021).). Medical tourism refers to individuals travelling across international borders to access healthcare services and seek medical treatment (Omar et al., 2023). This practice is primarily motivated by the desire to benefit from improved healthcare accessibility, enhanced quality of care, and cost-effective treatment options. It is worth noting that individuals who engage in medical tourism typically finance their medical expenses. These factors collectively contribute to the attractiveness of medical tourism as a healthcare option. According to Aziz et al. (2021), medical tourism has emerged as a significant component of tourism expansion in Malaysia within the realm of popular tourism offerings.

Furthermore, it has been observed that the primary emphasis of medical tourism in Malaysia lies in providing private medical services, as highlighted by Zain et al. (2022). The appeal of Malaysia as a favoured destination for medical tourism is attributed to several factors. These include highly skilled medical professionals, state-of-the-art facilities, readily accessible information, and exceptional care (Zain et al., 2022). Additionally, the availability of sophisticated equipment (Damayanti et al., 2021) and affordable treatment costs (Narayanan, 2021) further contribute to Malaysia's reputation in this field.

Defining medical tourism from a consumer context

Medical tourism has emerged as a significant phenomenon in today's interconnected world, where individuals are increasingly willing to cross borders in search of healthcare services. From routine medical checkups to specialized surgeries and advanced treatments, consumers are exploring the global healthcare environment to fulfil their medical needs. One destination that stands out prominently in this global phenomenon is Malaysia. This work explores medical tourism in Malaysia through the lens of consumers, defining the practice and clarifying the motivations that drive individuals to seek healthcare services in this Southeast Asian nation.

Medical tourism in Malaysia, understood from a consumer's perspective, is the intentional choice of individuals to travel to Malaysia to access medical treatment and healthcare services. This decision is based on various factors, each contributing to a unique healthcare experience in Malaysia. Consumers frequently seek medical tourism in Malaysia, where individuals require specialized care. The nation has earned a reputation for its expertise in numerous medical fields, including cardiac surgery, orthopaedics, fertility treatments, and more. Patients believe that coming to Malaysia gives them access to cutting-edge treatments and consultations with world-class specialists. Consumers trusted the accurate advice and information provided by medical experts concerning routine checkups or intricate surgical procedures.

Furthermore, Malaysia's healthcare system extends beyond conventional treatments, encompassing alternative and complementary therapies, often employing the latest technology and equipment. This approach appeals to some consumers who seek holistic or traditional healing methods that may not be readily accessible or accepted within their home regions. Moreover, Malaysia's multicultural environment and language proficiency, notably English, render it a highly appealing destination for medical tourists from neighbouring countries and regions. The confluence of linguistic accessibility augments the holistic healthcare experience, creating a sense of comfort and convenience for international patients to communicate. However, a compelling rationale for selecting Malaysia as a destination for medical tourism resides in the notable cost effectiveness it affords. Patients often ascertain that medical treatments and procedures in Malaysia exhibit a higher degree of affordability than the individual's home countries, even when factoring in expenses related to travel and accommodations. This financial advantage is particularly salient when considering elective procedures encompassing cosmetic surgery, dental interventions, and fertility treatments.

Examining medical tourism in Malaysia from the standpoint of consumers reveals a deliberate selection driven by many determinants. The allure of quality healthcare services and facilities, the availability of specialized care, the efficacy of information dissemination, adept communication capabilities, access to alternative therapy

modalities, and noteworthy cost savings opportunities set Malaysia apart as a preferred choice among medical tourism destinations.

Current practice of medical tourism

Malaysia has garnered international recognition for its distinguished healthcare services, attracting diverse clients seeking superlative medical care. This article provides a comprehensive examination of the contemporary healthcare panorama in Malaysia, shedding light on the factors contributing to its revered standing as a foremost healthcare destination of distinction.

Malaysia is renowned for its excellence in healthcare services—the cornerstone of Malaysia's distinguished healthcare reputation is its unwavering dedication to the provision of superlative care. The nation's formidable healthcare infrastructure encompasses state-of-the-art hospitals, clinics, and medical centres. A notable proportion of these institutions have earned prestigious international accreditation, including the esteemed Joint Commission International (JCI) certification, affirming their rigorous adherence to and exceeding global healthcare standards, as Ratnasari et al. (2021) highlighted. Additionally, according to Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (2023), Malaysia has cultivated a reputation for excellence in various medical specialities, earning acclaim for its expertise in fields including cardiac surgery, orthopaedics, fertility treatments, dental treatments, cosmetic surgery, ophthalmology treatments, urology treatments, Gastroenterology surgery, and cancer care. Malaysia's specialist healthcare professionals are internationally renowned for their advanced skills and specialized knowledge.

Moreover, integrating advanced medical technology and equipment is a testament to Malaysia's inflexible determination to maintain excellence in healthcare. Innovative technology facilitates precise diagnoses, minimally invasive procedures, and innovative treatment options, contributing to the elevation of the overall standard of care, as stated by Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (2023). Likewise, in recognition of its stature as a global medical hub, Malaysia boasts a multilingual healthcare workforce comprising professionals who exhibit a high proficiency in English. This language diversity facilitates effective communication and fosters a welcoming and accommodating environment for patients from diverse linguistic backgrounds, as highlighted by Jahidah Samsudin (2022). Furthermore, an outstanding characteristic of Malaysia's healthcare sector lies in its remarkable cost-effectiveness. It is a common realization among patients that medical treatments and procedures in Malaysia are notably more economical than those available in their countries of origin, even after accounting for expenses related to travel and accommodation. The consequential cost savings represent a substantial advantage for healthcare seekers, as Ratnasari et al. (2021) highlighted. In addition, according to Narayanan (2021), Malaysia has implemented a streamlined visa process to facilitate medical travel. The

government has instituted measures to simplify entry procedures for international patients, demonstrating a keen recognition of the paramount significance of accessibility and travel convenience. Hence, Malaysia remains an embodiment of excellence in healthcare services to its citizens and the international community, solidifying its position as the preferred destination for individuals seeking top-tier healthcare.

Private healthcare services

Private medical services have been a significant attraction for international tourists due to their provision of exceptional healthcare services, including access to a wide range of specialized medical knowledge given by Malaysia. According to Narayanan (2021), the many treatment categories include orthopaedic treatment, cosmetic treatment, cardiovascular treatment, dental treatment, bariatric treatment focusing on weight loss, and further unspecified treatment options. Furthermore, the presence of certified professionals proficient in persuading international visitors to consider seeking medical treatment in Malaysia has been highlighted by Vashu et al. (2021). Medical professionals in Malaysia are widely acknowledged and esteemed by doctors from other countries. This recognition stems from the fact that many doctors and experts in private healthcare in Malaysia have received education and training from globally renowned institutions (Ratnasari et al., 2021). Furthermore, the elements contributing to the recurrence of visitors within the realm of medical tourism are closely interconnected with the proficiency and specialization of hospitals, which have influenced international tourists to revisit private healthcare facilities in Malaysia. This is achieved by enhancing patient satisfaction with hospital treatments and the level of expertise displayed by medical professionals (Zain et al., 2022).

Furthermore, private hospital services in Malaysia, such as offering accurate details to patients, contemporary knowledge services, and addressing the client's view of the value of the money spent on their medical care, have been identified as factors that attract international visitors (Li et al., 2022). According to Jahidah (2022), healthcare professionals employ suitable paralanguage techniques, such as tone, pitch, speech rate, hesitation noises, gestures, and facial expressions, to effectively communicate medical information to patients. The trust in Malaysian medical treatments has consistently grown compared to the trust in local hospitals. Malaysian physicians exhibited higher expertise and proficiency in accurately diagnosing patients' ailments. The medical professionals in Malaysia are renowned for their amiable disposition and aptitude in establishing a comforting atmosphere for patients. They effectively communicate information concisely and comprehensibly during consultations, fostering a favourable patient encounter and promoting their holistic welfare (Rozainee Abdullah, 2019). Additionally, this approach has been associated with the anticipated recovery of patients (Ratnasari et al.).

In addition, the presence of contemporary infrastructure facilities in Malaysia incentivizes international medical tourists to seek appropriate healthcare services beyond their country of origin (Damayanti et al., 2021). The assortment of amenities encompasses various lodging choices, such as individual and group-oriented private rooms and suites conveniently situated within medical centres. Various accommodations are available at different price points, typically encompassing meals, rendering them an appealing option for medical tourists (Aziz et al.). These accommodations also provide transportation, waiting areas, care facilities, therapeutic treatments, and comfortable spaces for health tourists to recuperate (Ratnasari et al.; Narayanan et al., 2021). Consequently, these amenities serve as a magnet for international tourists seeking healthcare treatment in Malaysia. According to Ratnasari et al. (2021), the presence of quality healthcare facilities is one of the factors contributing to the growth of medical tourism in Malaysia.

In addition, providing advanced technological equipment is crucial in facilitating international tourists who seek medical treatment abroad, as Zain et al. (2022) highlighted. Private hospitals in Malaysia boast advanced technological capabilities, such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), 64-slice Computed Tomography (CT) scanning, PET Scanners for early cancer and disease detection, and cyberknife systems that effectively target tumours while minimizing harm to adjacent vital structures. According to Aziz et al., implementing this measure guarantees that individuals are provided with accurate and secure medical interventions tailored to their specific ailments. Furthermore, Ratnasari et al. (2021) highlight that private hospitals in Malaysia utilize modern medical equipment and provide streamlined and uncomplicated medical procedures, hence facilitating patients in attaining more precise diagnoses.

The inexpensive treatment prices in Malaysia are a significant attraction for overseas tourists seeking healthcare treatment in the country. According to Morrison and Goh (2021), the currency exchange rate in Malaysia is more favourable, resulting in lower costs for health services in the country. This includes expenses related to recommended treatments, surgical operations, and medications, as highlighted by (Rozainee Abdullah).

Methodology

This research utilizes an article review approach, in which ten publications focusing on the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia from 2019 to 2022 are examined and evaluated. The methodology utilized in this study aligns with the research objective, which seeks to understand the determinants that impact the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. Thus, the first step in the systematic article review is the process of selecting appropriate keywords. The subsequent keywords were utilized to search for pertinent scholarly articles. The topic of interest pertains to medical tourism in

Malaysia post-COVID era, explicitly focusing on conducting a database search. The subsequent scholarly databases were utilized to search for pertinent articles: PubMed and Scopus are two widely used academic databases in the field of scientific research. Google Scholar is a web search engine that provides a platform for searching scholarly literature, including articles, theses, books, and conferences.

The process of selecting an article for academic purposes. The subsequent inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed in the article selection process for the review. It is imperative that the paper go through the rigorous process of peer review prior to its publication in a scholarly journal. The publication of the essay is required to be in the English language. The item's publication must occur after January 1, 2023. The primary subject matter of the paper should be around the phenomenon of medical tourism in Malaysia subsequent to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to outline the specific objectives that will guide the research and analysis conducted in this study. The data was subjected to thematic analysis in order to discern significant themes and patterns. The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary and analysis of the given text. The text will be explained, and its main points will be summarized, followed by an analysis. The review concludes by providing a comprehensive overview and analysis of the findings, considering their potential implications for further research, practical applications, and policy development.

The utilization of this systematic process for conducting article reviews guarantees a comprehensive, objective, and transparent approach. The review outcomes will offer significant perspectives on the present condition of medical tourism in Malaysia following the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to developing policies and practices within the industry.

Finding

Table 1: Summaries of The Findings

NO	AUTHOR	TITLE	COMPONENT	METHOD	RESULT	REMARK
1	Nur Adilah Md Zain, John Connell, Mohd Salehuddin Mohd Zahari, Mohd Hafiz Hanafiah	"Intra-Regional Medical Tourism Demand in Malaysia: A Qualitative Study of Indonesian Medical Tourists' Rationale and Preferences"	Medical tourist preferences	interviews	medical expertise, transparency, hospitality in Malaysia	Malaysia's availability of medical services increases the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia.
2	Aisyah Jahidah Samsudin Tg Ainul Farha Tg Abdul Rahman, Mohd Zamrus Mohd Ali, Zalika Adam, Aishah Isahak, Amani Nawi, Muhammad Sabri Sahrir	"Model of Language Interpreter for Medical Tourism in Malaysia: A Fuzzy Delphi Approach"	Language Interpreter, Medical Tourism	questionnaire	three main components in preparing a competent medical interpreter, which are language, communication, and medical tourism."	This study showed that communication and language are key to international tourists seeking medical treatment in Malaysia.
3	Trie Damayanti, Susanne Dida, Dadang Rahmat Hidayat, Sung	Malaysian medical tourism communication in shaping	Medical Tourism, communication	survey	Malaysia's reputation for health services, the validity of	Malaysia flourishingly develops tourist dependence on the

	Kyum Cho	Indonesian public opinion			doctors, the equipment, the ability to bring information	health services provided.
4	"Liu Li, Neethiahnanthan Ari Ragavan, Ataul Karim Patwary and Wu Baijun"	Measuring patients' satisfaction toward health tourism in Malaysia through hospital environment, nutritional advice, and perceived value: A study on Chinese exchange students	patients' satisfaction, health tourism	questionnaire	good nutritional advice and perceived value significantly influence patients' satisfaction in Malaysia."	It also indicates that, regarding the quality of service, most patients are delighted with the advice and perceived value of Malaysian doctors.
5	Ririn Tri Ratnasari, Sri Gunawan, Anwar Allah Pitchay & Marhanum Che Mohd Salleh	Sustainable medical tourism: Investigating healthcare travel in Indonesia and Malaysia	Healthcare tourism, medical travel, health hospitality	Combination of qualitative and quantitative	trust, communication interactions, excellent service, affordable medical bills, high technology, excellent services, increased international patient in Malaysia	Medical services in Malaysia increase the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia.

						healthcare	
6	Morissan, Gerald Goh Guan Gan	"Motivation and loyalty of Indonesian medical tourists toward Malaysian health services"	Medical tourists	survey	Push and pull factors that influence medical tourists to Malaysia.	Affordable cost and adequate facilities are the pull elements in increasing the demand for healthcare tourism in Malaysia.	
7	"Deeparechigi Vashu, Ridzuan Bin Masri, Cham Tat Huei, and Kenny S.L Cheah"	"Destination image as a healing destination among medical tourist: an exploratory case study of Penang, Malaysia"	Medical Tourism, Destination Image	interviews	The key elements of Penang's destination image as perceived by medical visitors include Internal hospital amenities influenced and informed decisions.	Hospital internal amenities are more to medical experts that influenced medical tourists.	
8	Azreen Rozainee Abdullah & Sweeting Cheah, Victor Bangun Mulia, Irfan Afif Abdul Fatah	Factors attracting Indonesian medical tourists to Penang	Medical tourism	interviews	Effectiveness and accuracy of medical prescription treatment, improved telecommunication and connectedness, affordable prices	This interpretative study describes the elements that encouraged Indonesian health tourists to choose Malaysia as a medical vacation.	

9	Suresh Narayanan, Lai Yew Wah	Medical Tourism in Malaysia: Growth, Contributions and Challenges	Medical Tourism	Article review	medical services in Malaysia improve, and the capacity to serve the citizens grow	Medical services mentioned is medical expert, high-quality facilities, and affordable cost in serving the tourists influence medical tourist to Malaysia.
10	"Anidah Aziz, Muhamamd Syukri Abdullah, Rozman Md Yusof, Siti Daleela Mohd Wahid, Afzan Sahila Mohd Amir Hamzah"	"The Development and Behavioral Intention in Choosing Malaysia as Destination for Medical Tourism"	"Medical Tourism, Behavioral Intention, Perceived Destination Image, Perceived Quality, Perceived Value and Patient Satisfaction."	examine	Malaysia is known as one of the most popular destinations for medical tourism due to its superb and systematic medical employment and innovative facilities.	Medical services in Malaysia make Malaysia known as a popular medical tourism destination.

Summary

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of ten scholarly works that pertain to the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. The primary findings of this study will focus on the factors that influence the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. According to the research conducted by Zain et al., the results indicate that the primary emphasis of medical tourism in Malaysia lies in private medical services. According to the findings of Zain et al. (2022), several factors contribute to the satisfaction experienced by medical tourists in Malaysia and subsequently influence the demand for medical tourism. These factors include the presence of medical expertise, transparency in hospital practices, and the provision of high-quality hospitality services to patients. According to Jahidah Samsudin (2022), the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia is driven by factors such as communication and language capabilities. In Malaysia, the absence of a language barrier allows tourists to comprehend information and advice easily, fostering trust between doctors and international patients.

Moreover, following Damayanti et al. (2021), Malaysia's healthcare system has gained a favourable reputation regarding the competence of its medical practitioners, the quality of its medical equipment, and its capacity to provide reliable information. As a result, tourists have become increasingly reliant on the healthcare services provided by Malaysia. According to Li et al. (2022), there is a strong correlation between providing high-quality dietary guidance and the perceived value of healthcare services among overseas patients in Malaysia. This suggests that the recommendations and opinions of Malaysian doctors substantially impact the overall satisfaction levels of these patients.

According to Jahidah Samsudin (2022), various factors contribute to the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. These factors include patient trust, effective communication and interactions between doctors and patients, provision of magnificent service, affordability of medical bills, availability of modern medical technology, provision of holistic service, and increased patient expectations in the healthcare sector in Malaysia. Furthermore, following the findings of Morissan and Goh (2021), the attractive aspects of inexpensive treatment costs and satisfactory facilities serve as the driving forces behind the decision of international tourists to pursue medical treatment in Malaysia. These elements contribute to the growing demand for medical tourism inside the country. Furthermore, Vashu et al. (2021) found that the primary factors influencing the destination image perceived by medical tourists in Malaysia are the internal amenities of hospitals. The study also highlighted the significant impact of medical expertise on the decision-making process. Malaysia's doctors play a crucial role in influencing international tourists to seek medical treatment in the country.

According to the findings of Rozainee Abdullah (2019), several factors played a significant role in the decision-making process of overseas patients when choosing Malaysia as a healthcare destination. These factors include the effectiveness and accuracy of medical prescription treatments, advancements in the telecommunication and connectivity infrastructure, and the affordability of healthcare services in the country. Moreover, according to Narayanan (2021), various variables contribute to the decision of international tourists to select Malaysia as a medical destination. These aspects include the presence of skilled medical professionals, the availability of top-notch healthcare facilities, and the relatively low cost of medical services, all of which significantly attract medical tourists to Malaysia. According to Aziz et al. (2021), Malaysia has gained recognition as a prominent choice for medical tourism owing to its exceptional and proficient medical personnel and cutting-edge healthcare and wellness infrastructure. The many components of medical services provided by private healthcare facilities in Malaysia serve as compelling factors for international medical tourists when choosing Malaysia as their preferred location for medical care.

Discussion

The demand for medical tourism in Malaysia is significantly shaped by the accessibility and calibre of private healthcare services within the country. Private healthcare services in Malaysia offer diverse advantages that persuade overseas patients to select and pursue medical treatment there. One of the factors contributing to the desire for medical tourism in Malaysia is the presence of highly skilled medical professionals within the private healthcare sector. Malaysia provides specialized medical practitioners catering to diverse ailments and offering various treatment modalities. These competent healthcare professionals actively encourage international patients to seek medical treatment in the country.

Furthermore, enhancing communication capability and effectively conveying information play a crucial role in fostering trust between doctors and patients. This, in turn, contributes to an increased demand for medical treatment in Malaysia. In addition, the presence of well-equipped amenities offered by Malaysia's private healthcare sector, including lodging, transportation, personalized assistance, nourishment, and therapeutic interventions, serves as a compelling factor for international visitors when selecting Malaysia as a preferred medical destination.

Furthermore, the utilization of contemporary technology in Malaysia's private healthcare sector has proven instrumental in providing advanced treatment modalities and improved diagnostic capabilities. This has fostered a sense of trust among patients and significantly contributed to the country's burgeoning demand for medical tourism. Finally, the availability of cost-effective healthcare services in Malaysia is a compelling factor that attracts international tourists to seek medical care there. The

accessibility and standard of private healthcare services in the country influence the desire for medical tourism in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, a dearth of prior research exists in the realm of patient satisfaction and experience, specifically in terms of similar analyses. A comparative analysis of patient happiness and experiences across several locations is paramount. Prior research may have failed to comprehensively examine and contrast the assessments and testimonies of medical tourists in Malaysia with those in other nations. Furthermore, gaining insight into the factors that contribute to favourable patient experiences and satisfaction across different settings would aid in finding areas for growth and enhancing the overall patient journey within Malaysia.

Economic Impacts

The increasing demand for medical tourism in Malaysia significantly influences the augmentation of economic growth. Firstly, in the context of expenditure and revenue. The expenditure made by international patients on medical treatments, including operations, drugs, consultations, and other related services, generates revenue for the healthcare sector in Malaysia. This revenue contributes to the enhancement of healthcare infrastructure and the development of the medical industry in Malaysia. However, the rise in demand for healthcare tourism in Malaysia has the potential to generate employment opportunities for the local population and alleviate unemployment. The surge in demand resulted in a rise in the number of international patients seeking medical care in Malaysia.

Furthermore, Malaysia's private healthcare sector must recruit supplementary personnel to effectively address overseas tourists' requirements and contentment. According to the study conducted by Damayanti et al. (2021), a potential approach involves the implementation of a requirement wherein exclusively private hospitals are designated to cater to individuals who are non-Malaysian nationals. International patients often choose private hospitals in Malaysia, while non-Malaysian individuals also receive healthcare services from public hospitals in the country. Nevertheless, private hospitals in Malaysia are frequently considered more suitable for international patients seeking healthcare services due to various factors. Therefore, medical tourism has a substantial influence on the economic growth of Malaysia.

Recommendation

This study has unveiled that the demand for medical services in Malaysia is contingent upon numerous factors, encompassing the nation's extensive experience in the medical field, adept utilization of advanced medical equipment, superlative high-quality healthcare facilities, efficacious information dissemination strategies, robust communication capabilities, and the affordability of medical cost. Thus, the

ensuing recommendations are as a result of this proffered. However, since the demand for medical services in Malaysia has been proven, this study predominantly comprised Indonesian medical tourists. It is recommended that future researchers prioritize the examination of healthcare tourists' input concerning other nations. Expanding the study's scope to encompass a broader spectrum of nationalities can provide valuable insights into international medical tourists' diverse preferences, experiences, and decision-making processes. This comparative analysis would provide a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the advancement of medical tourism in Malaysia.

Implications

The potential for governmental investment resides in implementing programs aimed at the training and professional development of healthcare practitioners and enhancing medical infrastructure. The potential collaboration between the government and commercial sector in devising and executing marketing and promotional initiatives might be explored to enhance the appeal and influx of medical tourists.

Furthermore, it is imperative to do additional research on the specific requirements and inclinations of medical tourists hailing from diverse nations to enhance the efficacy of the medical tourism sector in Malaysia. This data can potentially be utilized in developing more precise and efficient marketing and promotional strategies.

The study proposes that future researchers should prioritize investigating the perspectives of healthcare tourists compared to those from other countries. Broadening the scope of the study to include a more diverse range of countries can yield significant insights into the varied preferences, experiences, and decision-making processes of international medical tourists. This comparative analysis aims to enhance comprehension regarding the elements that contribute to the progress of medical tourism in Malaysia.

This comparative analysis holds potential benefits for policymakers and stakeholders in the medical tourism business in Malaysia, as it would enable them to understand better the requirements and inclinations of medical tourists from diverse nations. This data might subsequently be utilized to build more focused and efficient marketing and promotional strategies.

Conclusion

Several factors influence the demand for medical tourism in Malaysia. These include private healthcare services offering Malaysia's medical expertise, advanced equipment utilization, high-quality facilities, effective information dissemination, strong

communication capabilities, and affordable medical costs. The burgeoning demand for medical tourism in Malaysia suggests the potential for substantial economic expansion. This surge in demand contributes to the growth of revenue in the healthcare sector and fosters the emergence of employment prospects across diverse industries. The rising demand for services confers benefits upon healthcare professionals, support people, hospitality employees, and transportation suppliers. Furthermore, the implications of those mentioned earlier suggest that it would be advantageous for Malaysia to persist in attracting international medical patients and prioritizing the economic prospects associated with medical tourism to enhance its overall economic stability.

References

- Aziz, A., Abdullah, M. S., Yusof, R. M., Wahid, S. D. M., & Hamzah, A. S. M. A. (2021). The development and behavioural intention in choosing Malaysia as destination for medical tourism. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences*, 11(11). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v11-i11/11475>
- Damayanti, T., Dida, S., Hidayat, D. R., & Cho, S. K. (2021). Malaysian medical tourism communication in shaping Indonesian public opinion. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 9(2), 138. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v9i2.35852>
- Jahidah Samsudin, A. (2022). Model of language interpreter for medical tourism in Malaysia: A fuzzy Delphi approach. *Social Sciences Journal*, 12(1), 1–17.
- Li, L., Ragavan, N. A., Patwary, A. K., & Wu, B. (2022). Measuring patients' satisfaction toward health tourism in Malaysia through hospital environment, nutritional advice, and perceived value: A study on Chinese exchange students. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.893439>
- Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council. (2023, July 11). *Healthcare Traveller Statistics - Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC)*. Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC). <https://www.mhtc.org.my/statistics/>
- Morissan, M., & Goh, G. G. G. (2021). Motivation and loyalty of Indonesian medical tourists toward Malaysian health services. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 10(6), 295–305. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i6.1325>
- Narayanan, S. (2021, February 28). *Medical tourism in Malaysia: growth, contributions and challenges*. <https://so05.tcithaijo.org/index.php/TER/article/view/240359>

- Omar, M. Z., & Othman, M. (2023). Medical tourism in Malaysia: A review of the literature. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management*, 41, 100777. DOI: 10.1016/j.jhtm.2022.100777.
- Ratnasari, R. T., Gunawan, S., Pitchay, A. A., & Salleh, M. C. M. (2021). Sustainable medical tourism: Investigating healthcare travel in Indonesia and Malaysia. *International Journal of Healthcare Management*, 15(3), 220–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20479700.2020.1870365>
- Rozainee Abdullah, A. (2019). Factors attracting Indonesian medical tourists to Penang. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 12.
- Vashu, D., Masri, R., Cham, T., & Lee, K. C. S. (2021). Destination Image as A Healing Destination Among Medical Tourists: An Exploratory Case Study of Penang, Malaysia. *ABAC Journal*, 41(2), 156–176. <http://shdl.mmu.edu.my/9029/>
- Zain, N. a. M., Connell, J., Zahari, M. S. M., & Hanafiah, M. H. (2022). Intra-Regional medical tourism demand in Malaysia: A Qualitative study of Indonesian medical tourists' rationale and preferences. *The Malaysian Journal of Medical Science*, 29(2), 138–156. <https://doi.org/10.21315/mjms2022.29.2.13>