

**FACTORS INFLUENCING ON CHOOSING MEDICAL TOURISM  
DESTINATION BY MYANMAR MEDICAL TOURISTS**



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Thesis/Thematic paper  
entitled  
**FACTORS INFLUENCING ON CHOOSING MEDICAL TOURISM  
DESTINATION BY MYANMAR MEDICAL TOURISTS**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University  
for the degree of Master of Management  
on  
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## **FACTORS INFLUENCING ON CHOOSING MEDICAL TOURISM DESTINATION BY MYANMAR MEDICAL TOURISTS**

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M.M. (Healthcare and Wellness Management)

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, the world economy has an eye on non-smoking industries such as tourism sector which has less effect on the environmental pollution, where medical tourism is one of the components. This continuously growing industry of medical tourism attracts international medical travelers around the globe and the market is getting very competitive among famous medical tourism destinations. According to the statistics from some famous medical tourism destinations in Southeast Asia region, Myanmar is one of the top markets and many thousands of outbound Myanmar medical travelers are seeking healthcare overseas every year. Lack of studies and previous researches about Myanmar medical tourists causes missing an opportunity to address the consumer behavior of outbound Myanmar medical tourism market. This exploratory research is to study the decision making of outbound Myanmar medical tourists and identify the decisive factors influencing on choosing their medical tourism destination.

This research applied qualitative approach with the use of semi-structured open-ended research question as research instrument. This individual face-to-face in-depth interview is participated by 30 respondents with various and vibrant characteristics where the respondents are those who experienced as medical tourist at least once at the time of interview.

The result of this study revealed that traveling convenience as the most influence decisive factor for Myanmar medical tourists. Then it is followed by quality-concerned factors such as quality of cares and services, physician training, and availability of medical facilities and services on decision making. Cultural distance is the less decisive factors influencing Myanmar medical tourists to choose their medical tourism destination. Moreover, it is also elaborated some new emerging decisive factors of outbound Myanmar medical tourists such as presence of hospital representative offices and strong recommendation by friends and family. The findings of this study might be able to provide a foundation for further academic studies and market researches on this particular interest, more specifically on outbound Myanmar medical tourists. Moreover, it can also give a solution or an idea for policy makers, healthcare organizations and tourism-related service providers in both local and destination countries.

**KEY WORDS:** medical tourism/ medical tourists/ decisive factors/ Healthcare/ Myanmar

173 pages

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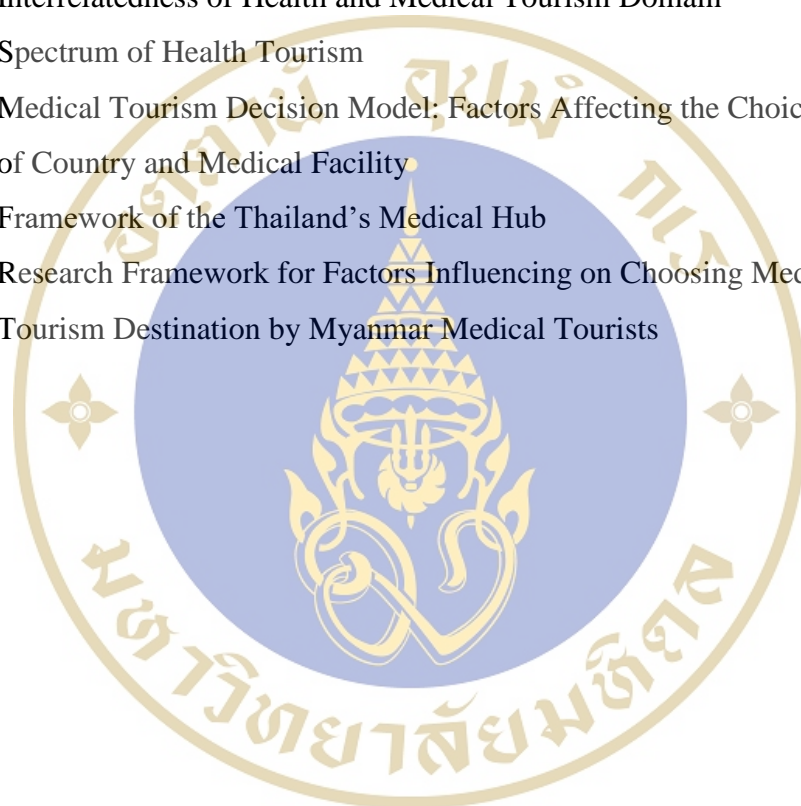


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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Tourism by definition is varied source by source, person by person and institution by institution. No single consensus definition has been identified yet globally. According to UNWTO – the united world tourism organization, definition of tourism which is formerly known as “WTO – world tourism organization”, it is defined as “Tourism comprises the activities of person traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”.

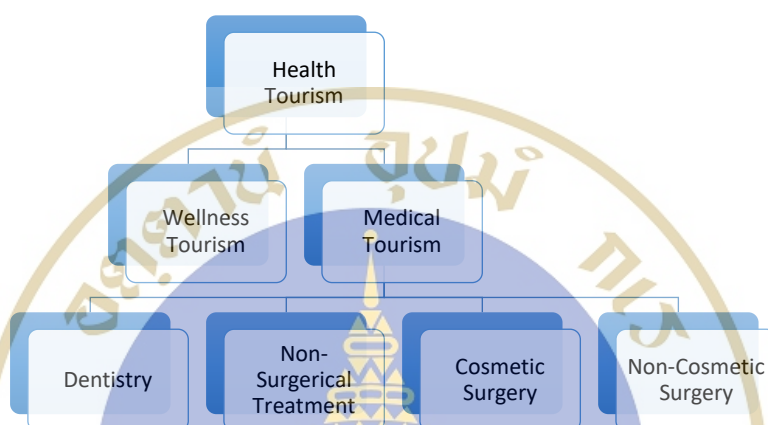
Medical Tourism describes as the purposeful cross-border movement of travelers in order to obtain medical care and treatment, which is privately purchased and arranged for (Snyder, Crooks, Johnston & Kingsbury, 2011). Since long times ago, people tend to travel beyond their country boundary to pursue expected excellent healthcare. In term of modern medical tourism, it is defined as the act of people traveling to another foreign country to consume medical services (Horowitz and Rosensweig, 2007). Healthcare seeking across the nation is becoming more and more prevalent during the globalization process of the world. The advanced facilities and availabilities of travelling enhanced the behavior of medical tourists around the world. Moreover, there are different and several motivational factors which leads medical travelers look for medical care outside their nation border such as cheaper medical treatments, the-state-of-the-art medical technologies and facilities, internationally certified doctors and nurses and of course, their skillful and first-rate healthcare services. It may be different on the developing index of each country, for example, for medical tourists from the developed country, the primary reason to seek medical care in less developed countries are because of cost effectiveness (Horowitz, Rosenseig, & Jones, 2007). But in case of low developed countries, their primary reason may be the quality of healthcare services and latest medical technologies which cannot be available

and accessible within their country. The medical tourism industry is steadily growing globally, although the detailed exact estimation of its current size is not available due to poor universal definition of what will constitute under the category of medical tourism (Woodman, J.,2014).

According to some previous accessible papers, it is stated the evolution of this health-seeking-across-the-border industry into three big waves. The first one includes the cross-border traveler visiting holy people and places with the belief to be provided healing and well-being in ancient times which may be considered as the first wave or example of this industry (Pafford, 2009). Second wave of medical tourism is said by Pafford (2009) and it was referred as “traditional medical tourism” by Horowitz and Rosensweig (2008). This includes, in the twentieth century, gaining momentum with the flow of people from underdeveloped countries visiting more developed countries such as Germany and USA to access the unavailable services in their homelands. Later the healthcare facilities were developed in developing countries with the help of best institutions from developed countries. With the trend of availability and accessibility to qualified and standardized medical facilities in the cost-effective advantages, the people in the developed countries or under-developed countries who are not getting or out of reach to their required medical treatments for different reasons start to consider international health tourism as a viable alternative. This new trend of movement is defined as “new medical tourism / modern medical tourism” or “third wave” or “neo-traditional medical travel” respectively by Horowitz and Rosensweig (2008), Pafford (2009) and Cohen (2012).

The travelers related to healthcare services includes curative purpose of specific disease or problem to get a treatment needed or preventive action, in term of wellness-oriented purpose. It is how health tourism is defined in which travelling from one place of residence to another place to consume health related services. Medical Tourism is quite different and more specific than the term used health tourism. In the general assumption, health tourism may also comprise of wellness that is mainly referred to physical, mental, spiritual, or biological well-being and consists of travelling with the aim to promote their lifestyle rather than curing a specific disease or medical illness (Smith & Puczko, 2009). Medical tourism can be grouped as any other medical treatments (surgical and non-surgical) except the treatments and facilities related to

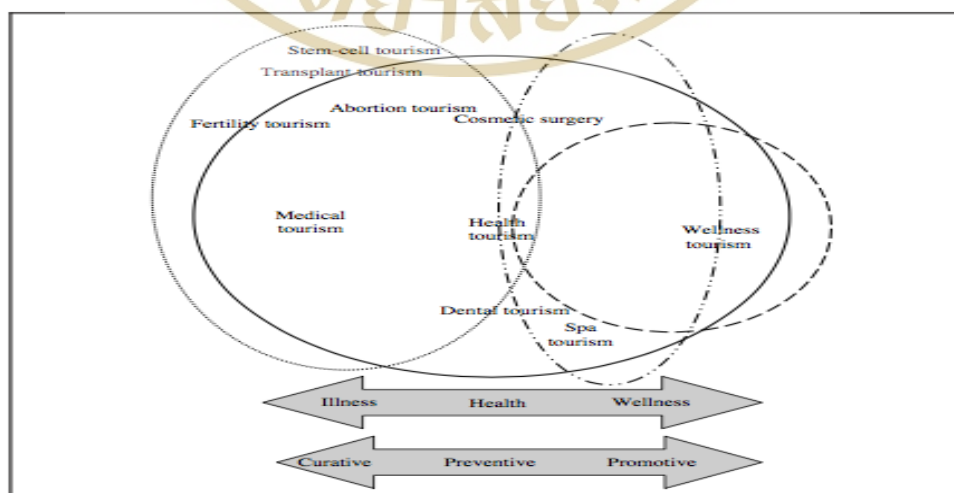
wellness (Altin, Singal & Kara, 2011 and Menvielle, L. & Menvielle, W., 2011). The group classification is shown as the following on Figure (1.1). Whether medical tourism or health tourism, the traveler may look forwards to other touristic opportunities during their visits. However, these are assumed as secondary purpose where the primary reason of their cross-border travelling is to boost up their quality of life by maximizing well-being through healthcare services (Genç, 2012 and Bookman, M. & Bookman, K. 2007).



**Figure 1.1 Classification of Health Tourism and Range of Services offered in Medical Tourism**

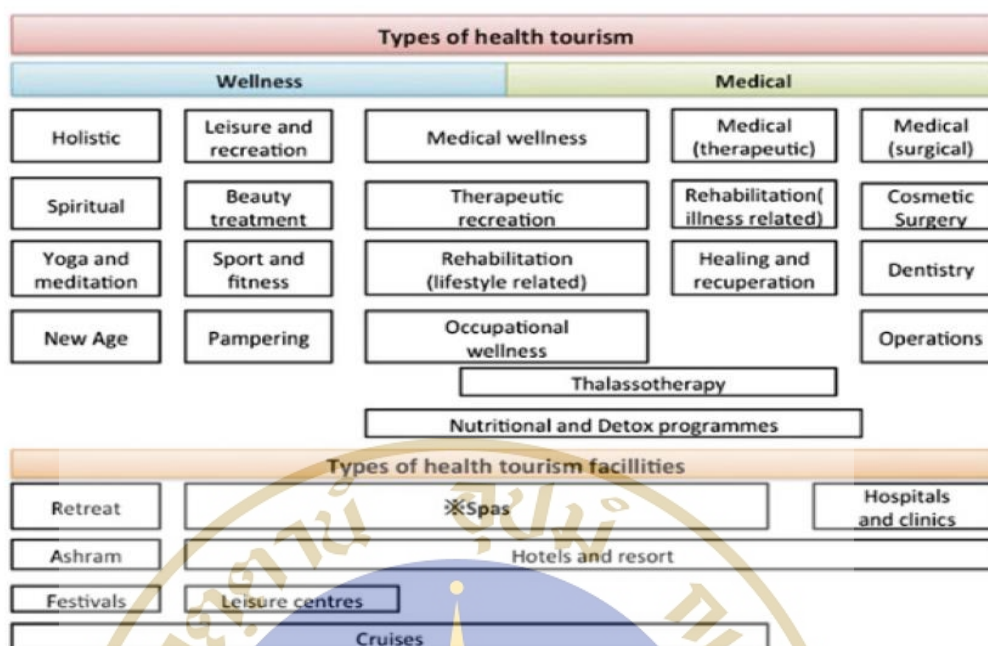
**Source: Altin, Singal & Kara, 2011 and Menvielle, L., & Menvielle, W., 2011**

For the better understanding of the categories of health tourism where medical tourism is a big part of them, Figure (1.2) and Figure (1.3) show and explain each and every component of health tourism industry and interrelatedness among the sectors of health tourism.



**Figure 1.2 Interrelatedness of Health and Medical Tourism Domain**

**Source: C. Michael Hall, 2011**



**Figure 1.3 Spectrum of Health Tourism (Smith and Puczko<sup>3</sup>, 2009)**

In term of economy advantages by medical tourism, many articles and statistics state that it has a much contribution to the country GDP growth and economy index relatively. This sixty billion dollars' industry has a positive impact on different parties with a range of customers, service providers, medical destinations, governments and other related organization with the industry (Lunt, Smith, Exworthy, Green, Horsfall, & Mannion, 2011). It is also stated that an estimate of over eleven million patients globally travel across the country to consume medical services on yearly visits. The recent statistic explores that almost eleven million medical tourists spend \$3,500 - \$5,000 per each visit and it is inclusive of international and domestic transport, accommodations and medical expenses (Woodman, 2014). Together with the uprising of medical tourism industry and competitiveness among the countries, it is also necessary to look after the other supporting services such as short-term accommodations and lodges which is in line with the standard expectations of international medical tourists (Han, & Hwang, 2013). The overall growth and success of international medical tourism industry is not confined exclusively to the destination of medical tourists only. The partnership between the host country and native country of medical tourists such as tour agencies, medical organizations, insurance companies magnifies the image of a destination (Bookman, M. & Bookman, K. 2007).

In the global market, according to some statistics, current top medical tourist destinations include Costa Rica, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, and the United States who are leading to be benefit in their economy by this recent phenomenon (Woodman, 2014). It is complicated to identify the factors stimulated the growth and popularity of these famous medical tourism as it might include variety of circumstances such as high cost of healthcare and long waiting times for procedure or unavailability of the specific treatments in their home country, improvements in technology and standard of healthcare in other countries, ease and affordable international travel, cultural familiarity, and other assessable tourist destinations within the destined countries (KHAN, Mohammad Jamal, 2015).

According to the study by IPSOS Business Consulting Group in 2013, as a result of the lack of quality healthcare service availability and accessibility within the country, most of Myanmar citizens and foreign expats usually seek healthcare across the border such as Thailand, Malaysia, India and Singapore which are the famous tourist destinations for medical treatments in Myanmar. Among of all, the very closed neighboring country, Thailand is the most famous preferred choice of medical tourism destination due to the similar cultures, ease of travel, affordable living costs and medical expenses. The most regularly seeking treatments abroad are health check-ups in general, cardiac surgery, orthopedics surgery, pediatrics surgery, neurology and cancer care.

However, even variety of medical services and treatments are delivered by different medical tourism destinations, Cook (2011) states that the medical tourism destination countries should attract their potential customers by defining the most common medical services by a destination country. For example, Korea is famous for its world-known plastic surgery techniques and facilities. India is famous for its transplant center and on the other hands, due to its proximity to the Myanmar, Thailand is a popular destination for Myanmar patients who look for affordable treatments and services. In accordance with the increasing emphasis in marketing literature on total experience and total perceived value obtained from services, holistic approaches are needed by marketers specialized in various service contexts, including medical tourism, to offer higher value and superior experiences to consumers.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Due to the lack of research paper and studies about Myanmar medical tourists along with the increase in the outgoing rates of Myanmar medical tourists and competitiveness among the medical tourism destination over the recently opened country, Myanmar, this will lead to miss an opportunity to identify the consumer behavior of Myanmar medical tourists in term of the healthcare providers from medical tourism destinations and moreover, it is a undesirable result by the government as it produces a lots of cash flow outside the country and it also reflects the healthcare standard and actual situation within the country. This research paper is aimed to look insight of the reasons behind the factors influencing the tendency of choosing their medical tourism destination and overseas healthcare provider by Myanmar medical tourists.

## **1.3 Research Question**

What are the factors influencing on decision making of Myanmar medical tourists in order to access medical services abroad?

## **1.4 Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to identify the factors influencing to choose destination by Myanmar medical tourists while consideration of seeking medical services abroad. This study will provide an understanding of consumer behaviors of medical tourism from the perspective of Myanmar medical tourists.

## **1.5 Contribution to the Community**

The findings and analysis from this study will give competitive advantages to those from the healthcare industry and medical tourism industry with an insight to understand the challenges on pursuing Myanmar medical tourists and promoting their



healthcare facilities in Myanmar. Moreover, it will also give an opportunity for the local government on the situation of healthcare standards within the country. Lastly, this will also provide a foundation for further studies on this particular interest by the other researchers of healthcare industry.

## **1.6 Scope of Study**

This study is mainly focused to analyze the factors influencing for Myanmar medical tourists on choosing their choice of destination to get medical treatment abroad. The factors were identified from previous research papers, articles and literatures and then research framework is developed for this particular interest. There is no limitation on the participants and those who had been treated abroad will be interviewed through semi-structure open-ended questions. The qualitative research method will be used and the semi-structured open-ended research questions will be used as a research instrument. The participants will be identified through purposeful sampling method and the total participants of 30 persons will be interviewed. The interview of this study will be conducted during May 2017.

## **1.7 Definitions**

### **1.7.1 Health Tourism**

Health tourism was defined by the International Union of Tourist Organizations (IUTO), as “the provision of health facilities utilizing the natural resources of the country, in particular mineral water and climate”. Goeldner (1989) in a review of the health tourism literature, defined health tourism as “(1) staying away from home, (2) health [as the] most important motive, and (3) done in a leisure setting” (C. Michael Hall, 2011).

### **1.7.2 Medical Tourism**

According to Keckley and Underwood (2008), medical tourism is the

process of “leaving home” in order to access medical services and health care outside a patient’s home country. Also, medical tourism includes a “set of activities in which a person travels often long distances or across the border, to avail medical services with direct or indirect engagement in leisure, business or other purposes”.

### **1.7.3 Wellness Tourism**

Kaspar (1996) defined wellness tourism as the sum of all the relationships and phenomena that occur as a result of travelling to tourism destinations other than the place of residence of individuals interested in promoting, stabilizing and when necessary, restoring physical, mental and/or social well-being by means of the use of services that favor health.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

As the term and definition of tourism, medical tourism and medical tourist were explained earlier in this paper, this chapter is aimed to explore the general knowledge and facts about famous medical tourism destinations and also the general idea of decision-making process and travel motivations from the literatures and articles from general tourism field to look insight into the factors that influences the medical tourists on their decision-making process to choose their destinations accordingly.

#### **2.1 Decision Making by General Tourists**

Different researchers stated that it is important for tourism industry to get into the understanding of tourist behavior and their motivation behind in order to elevate a demand and attract the tourists globally. Consumer behavior is particularly a difficult topic, especially in the tourism field as it is significantly predominant by emotional factors. The decision-making process on selecting a destination is influenced by multiple changeable factors, based on the needs and habits of tourists and also the influence of external factors. External factors are the external impact such as attractiveness of tourist destination including the availability of tangible resources and tourist's perceptions and expectations where internal influencing factors include the personal desire and interest, the state of health and wealth of an individual and social interaction. (Javid Seyidov & Roma Adomaitienė, 2016)

A four-stage travel decision-making model were developed by Schmoll (1977). It is explained stage by stage as follows.

*First Stage* – Travel Stimuli (e.g. advertisements & interpersonal recommendation)

*Second Stage* – Personal and social determinants of travel behaviors (e.g. socioeconomic status, personality features and social influences)

*Third Stage* – External variables such as confidence in service provider, destination image, previous experiences, time and cost limitation

#### *Fourth Stage – Characteristic and features of service destination (e.g. cultural situation)*

Moreover, the tendency to purchasing behavior is highly overwhelmed by social, cultural, personal and psychological factors. The factors are probably uncontrollable by the market, but it should be considered. These will help to identify what kind of products and services in what situations are consumed by the customers. In term of social factors, it is referred to the groups, family, roles and status. Cultural factors comprise of within themselves elements of culture, subculture and social class. In the personal factors, it is considered to include age and life-cycle, occupation, economic situations, lifestyle and personality respectively. Lastly, psychological factors include the motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes (Kotler, P., Bowen, J. and Makens, J, 2006)

The procedure of recognizing and choosing from among available solutions of a problem according to the demands of the circumstance is a state of decision-making. There is also a motivational approach behind this process of decision-making to choose a tourist destination. The push-pull model is also widely applied to this motivational approach. The push motivations show that the desire for travel while the pull motivations are useful for explaining the actual choice of destination. The tourists are pushed by their different needs to travel and pulled by different attributes of destination (Cohen, Prayag and Moital 2014). Tourists who enjoyed with a high level of satisfaction will recommend to his or her friends and have a tendency to visit again and provide a positive feedback about their experiences. However, it will not be happened by dissatisfied tourists and even criticism on the destinations may be occurred (Chen, C. F., and Chen, F. S., 2010)

## **2.2 Decision Making by Medical Tourists**

Various studies of research and journals identified the framework where the medical tourists decided to identify the situation of their medical tourism destination and from which the intention of travelling occurs to pursue medical care. It is a complex framework including the factors which are also associated with their personal and extra personal influences (both tangible and intangible) like we have seen in the general tourism field.

There is an exploratory study done at a western university to identify the factors influencing the decision-making by medical tourists. The final result indicates that medical facilities and services have the highest impact on the patients' decision. Local doctor's recommendation and suggestion, government's policy and law enforcement, accommodation and lifestyle, and other general tourism supply of the destination country also play a role in choosing a medial tourism destination (Gill & Singh, 2011). There is an analytical network process (named ANP) model which were raised by Bies and Zacharia (2007) to analyze whether it is worth to promote this industry in the U.S. The results of this model finalizes that self-selected medical tourism is the most preferable one among the four different packages which are social, economic, medical and political perspectives, due to the fact of having lowest cost and risk and highest benefits.

Furthermore, according to the recent theoretical review by Gökhan Aydin and Bilge Karamahmet (2017), increasing rate of globalization, increasing rate of healthcare expenditures, increasing the availability of global travel, increasing demand for non-essential healthcare services, significant differences in healthcare cost, increasing sophistication of health tourism sector and the rise of information and communication technologies were identified as the factor enhancing the medical tourism among US travelers. The influential factors such as expensive local services, long waiting time of local dentists, qualified international dentists, affordable cost of travel, and ease of communication through Internet were also identified by the another study about dental tourism as these factors affect the popularity of dental tourism (Turner, 2008).

### **2.2.1 In Term of Motivational Aspect**

As stated before, there are many psychological factors plays a role in choosing a destination by medical tourists, which are preferably internal or external factors which lead the tourist to select the destination based on their feelings and motivation.

Regarding to this, the concept of push and pull factors are widely investigated by a number of researchers. In this concepts, push factors are related to the cognitive process and internal socio-psychological motivation of an individual to travel

and most of them result from the intangible or intrinsic desires of human beings. On the other hands, pull factors originates from the external forces emerging from the attributes that attract the individual to a specific destination and establish the actual specific destination of choice. Both tangible and intangible features such as natural and historical attractions, physical environment, infrastructure, sport and recreation facilities, food, people and the marketed image of the destination are characterized as pull factors.

Moreover, Baloglu and Uysal (1996) describe that push factors are usually intangible or intrinsic desire of the individual travelers and pull factors are predominantly influenced by the attractiveness of the destination. Therefore, if sum up, the push motives (inner needs) and pull motives (tourism attractions) laid a foundation to explore the motivations for the oversea medical treatments.

In 2011, according to the study about travel behavior of medical tourist in Malaysia by Musa, Thirumoorthi and Doshi (2011) was conducted and several different ranges of motivational factors are seen among the medical tourist. These includes value for money, excellent medical services, cultural similarities, religious factors and so on. Besides, the travel motivation in medical tourism is highly influenced by tourist's medical demand such as affordable medical service, short waiting time, advanced or unique medical technology, tourism opportunity and status. Furthermore, it is also related to the type of treatment required by medical tourists. The other motivational factors for medical tourists such as unavailability of a treatment at home country, cost effectiveness, medical expertise, lack of language barriers and the presence of family members in a medical destination country were discussed in the paper conducted by Guojinga and Zahijun (2013).

### **2.2.2 In Term of Source of Information for decision making**

According to Baloglu S and McCleary KW (1999), the sources of the information of a particular object act as stimulus factors which control the perception and evaluation of that particular object. Source of information is a vital antecedent of destination image formation and destination choice intention. Amount and type of different information sources directly influence the decision making of the choice of particular destination. Moreover, they also mentioned four types of sources of

information which includes professional advice, word of mouth information, official advertisements and other different categories which includes the information such as news, books, movies and journals.

Medical tourism facilitators such as travel agencies or representative offices usually promote the available medical services abroad and deliver other supportive services such as coordination with the hospitals and doctors, travel arrangements such as visa and flight tickets and arrangement of other required paper work for the customers. Those facilitators provide an utmost assistant to those unenthusiastic potential patients who do not want or unable to make their trip arrangements by their own (Mohamad, Omar & Haron, 2012 and Lovelock, 2008). Moreover, there are also some literatures explaining the influential role of local medical practitioner in promotion of medical tourism mainly in underdeveloped countries for the various reasons such as scarcity of resources, absence of medical facilities, lack of specialized manpower and unavailability of required medication (Kangas, 2010, Musa, Thirumoorthi & Doshi, 2012 and Muraina & Tommy, 2012).

Moreover, Jotikasthira (2010) indicates that word-of-mouth plays a significant role in persuading potential tourists to choose a destination and also stated that it is more reliable and tend to be more persuasive for decision making than any other sources of information such as marketing agencies and advertisements. Decision making by international medical traveler is highly influenced by word of mouth information and recommendation from previously experienced travelers. Various studies revealed that international medical tourists chose their medical tourism destination by the information and recommendation from their close friends, family member, relatives and colleagues.

In 2015, a research to identify the decision-making behaviors of medical tourists was conducted by using the theory of planned behavior (TPB). This theory is a well-established and comprehensively tested model about the relationship between beliefs, attitude, intention and actual behavior of consumers. A conceptual framework is developed in this research to evaluate the decision-making process of international medical travelers. It found out that there is a significant relationship between the intention of choosing the medical tourist destination and source of reliable information available (KHAN, Mohammad Jamal, 2015).

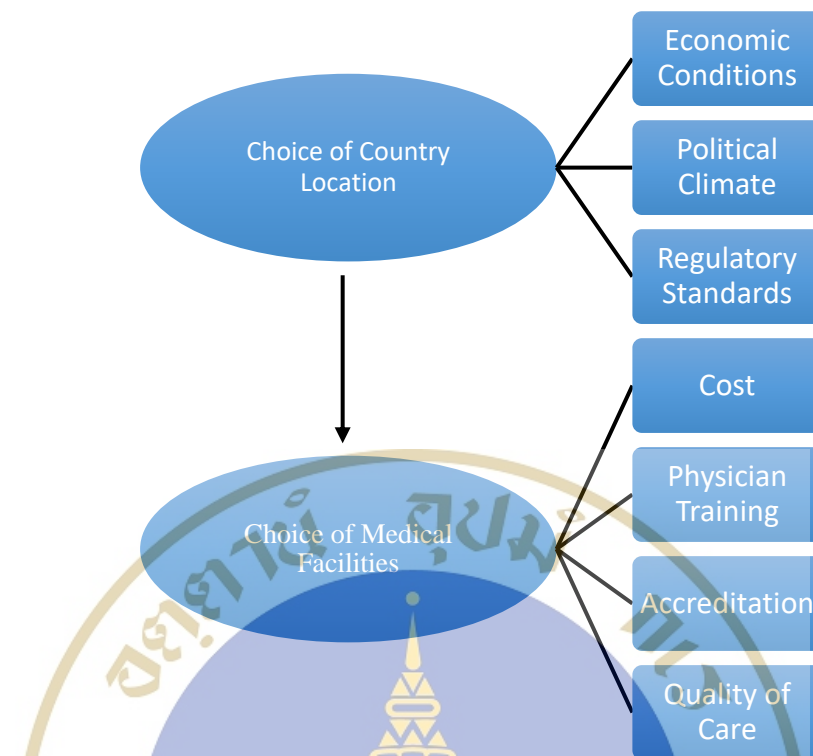
### **2.2.3 In Term of Medical Tourism Decision Model**

Many theoretical and research frameworks were developed to get insight into the understanding of how a medical tourist chooses their destination and which plays behind this process of decision-making by medical tourists.

Bardy (2007) states that cancer patients usually travel to pursue an alternative medical procedure or treatment which are not available or even banned within the country. Moreover, it is also explained by Horowitz and Rosensweig (2007) that medical tourists from Canada and Britain are often seeking to avoid long delays in treatment or waiting lists for treatment that their governmental healthcare systems have regulated. In the case of cosmetic medical procedures, Fried and Harris (2007) mention that they are not usually covered by the insurance or national healthcare programs and also that fact that the medical seekers want to get their privacy for such a procedure is influenced the travelers to seek healthcare provider outside their countries (Lagiewski, Rick and Myers, William, 2008).

It is also pointed by Connell (2006) that several factors that influence the decision-making process by the medical travelers includes high cost and long waiting time within the country, and advanced technology and qualified physicians in a medical destination country. In the 2007, two researchers design a model to identify and describe the factor influencing on the choice of destination. This model is aimed to investigate the destination of choice from two different perspectives, where one is the location of the country and another is the medical facilities within that country. According to this model, it can be assumed that the country situation is more important than the medical facilities of the country. However, in real situation, it depends case by case basis. Therefore, it suggests that medical tourists need to be cautious about the economic environment, political situation and international standards of a destination country. The components of this framework is shown in the following figure.





**Figure 2.1 Medical Tourism Decision Model: Factors Affecting the Choice of Country and Medical Facility**

Source: Smith and Forgione, 2007

### 2.3 Determinants Influencing on Decision Making by Medical Tourists

Because of the complexity of the industry, there are many factors explored and stated by many researchers, yet not definite single outline has been identified. However, the contribution of these factors are significantly influenced the decision-making process. Apart from the factors stated above, long waiting list of hospitals, travel opportunity, lack of services with the country, and lack of adequate health insurance and privacy were also stated as other important contributing factors which influences the patients to seek healthcare and medical treatment abroad (Gill and Singh, 2011). Cultural distance, language difference and traveling distance are also identified to be the considerable factors while choosing the medical tourism destination (Gökhan Aydin and Bilge Karamahmet, 2017). All these mentioned factors are categorized based on the medical tourism decision making model by Smith and Forgione (2007) for the better understanding of this complex process and this model will be applied as the research framework later in this chapter. The explanation on these various determinants

are expanded below section by section.

### **2.3.1 Determinants on Choosing Destination Country by Medical Tourists**

#### **2.3.1.1 Economic Condition**

Medical tourism industry is a profitable business model for any host country. To consider a country as a medical tourism destination, a state of economic stability of that country plays as an essential indicator in providing high-quality medical facilities and treatments (Smith and Forgione, 2007). Kalshetti and Pillai (2008) state that a secure and peaceful environment in a country is also important to appeal to tourists. Economic stability and high average income levels in a country lead to lower crime rates and a secure environment. For example, in one research regarding to American medical tourists, it is mentioned that the countries with economic stability and growth owns this advantage hence a sound and stable economic condition can take action rapidly to stimuli and facilitate the provision of services to a broader sector of clients (Smith and Forgione, 2007).

#### **2.3.1.2 Political Situation**

Instability in political climate is a challenge to the profound image of medical tourism industry and it may result in the public hesitancy to travel to such a country. According to Smith and Forgione (2007), safety is the first priority for medical tourists both in term of hospital and travel safety. The preference by medical tourists will be attracted to such a region without violence and uprising. Fletcher and Morakabati (2008) also state that the demanding market for medical tourism is reduced by the situation such as civil wars, political unrests, and terrorist attacks, and any other activities such as numerous protestor events within the country which may threaten the safety and security of medical tourists. As the international medical travelers will put into consideration about their safety first and security climate of the destination, it becomes one of the essential factors in the decision making process by medical travelers.

#### **2.3.1.3 Law Enforcement and Regulation**

For international medical travelers, the law enforcement and legal framework regarding to malpractices is important as it will protect them from

being misbehaved by medical personnel. Prasad (2008) identifies weak malpractice and transplantation laws in India as deterrents for patients seeking international health-care facilities. The malpractice laws protecting consumers in developed countries are usually lacking in developing countries. Tourists looking for high safety standards enforced by laws may be discouraged by the lack of applicable laws in host countries (Gökhan Aydin and Bilge Karamahmet, 2017).

#### 2.3.1.4 Cultural Distance

Social and cultural factors play a role in our daily life as to deal with different kinds of people from different background, beliefs and cultural practices which may be contradicted to another. Likewise, according to Sousa and Bradley (2008), socio-cultural factors is also an important regional preference in medical tourism which forms different types of medical hubs in different parts of the world. Gökhan Aydin and Bilge Karamahmet, (2017) also state that the differences in culture including language will create a barrier for our potential international customers in choosing their choice of destination and it is found to be significant in consumer behavior. For that reason, in medical tourism industry, this additional strain of being in different unfamiliar environment may arouse unnecessary stress for patients seeking healthcare.

#### 2.3.1.5 Language Difference

Language as part of one culture is also played a role for medical tourists to choose their medical destination. Connell (2013) states that most of Mexicans and Americans often travel back to their home countries for medical care due to language as they could communicate better in their native countries. Language difference is a considerable barrier for patients unless there is an interpretation system provided in the hospital of the destination which is explained by Joohyun Lee and Hong-bumm Kim, (2015). Besides, the proper communication is required for the medical travelers as the extensive and intensive information exchange and counseling process between doctors and patients is important. It is also stated that consultation process between the doctor and patient with well-understanding communication can facilitate the discussion and improve the patient outcomes (Anothai Ngamvichaikit and Rian Beise-Zee, 2014).

#### 2.3.1.6 Presence of Tourist Destinations

Moreover, the medical tourists also look for other opportunities of tourism destinations within their destination country to enjoy the attractions of particular tourist destinations. Connell (2006) states that it is an another opportunity for a medical tourism country to take an advantage of its tourist attractions within the country for the international medical travelers. A number of popular sun-sea-sand tourism destinations have, in the last decades, attempted to diversify into health tourism in order to achieve a more balanced, sustainable approach to tourism development (Ariwa and Syvertsen, 2010). The opportunity to travel to exotic destinations is an additional benefit for several medical travelers. For instance, South Africa offers safari medical tourist packages, where a family visits for treatment followed by a wildlife safari (Runckel, 2007).

#### 2.3.1.7 Traveling Distance

In medical tourism, each and every country has a geographical location advantages to serve the outbound medical tourists from nearby countries. For example, because of the close border, according to Cohen (2012), Singapore and Malaysia in Southeast Asia are providing to those medical travelers from regional countries and it is also stated by Debata et al., (2012) that most of the international patients in India are from Asian and African countries. In a similar manner, Arellano (2011) also said that Mexico and Caribbean countries usually target primarily to US medical tourists. It is also mentioned earlier that according to the study from IPSOS Business Consulting Group in 2013, Thailand is the top medical tourism destination by Myanmar medical tourists for several reasons including the ease of travel, advantage on physical distance and cultural similarity. This kind of phenomenon can be explained by the physical distance between original and host countries. Usually the international medical travelers are discouraged by the long travel needs to access the services they require.

### **2.3.2 Determinants on Choosing Healthcare Provider by Medical Tourists**

#### 2.3.2.1 Cost Effectiveness

The cost effective is one of the major factors in choosing foreign

medical facility in medical tourism industry. Connell (2006) stated that the price attractiveness for healthcare services were determined by favorable exchange rates, lower professional wages and efficient state-of-the-art equipment lead consumers to healthcare providers in developing countries. Kumar et al (2012) mentions that as a significant of cost differences, international health tourism was used as viable alternative to local healthcare facilities by insurance companies and large institutions for their employees. Moschis and chambers (2009) also state that the cost of healthcare services is one of the important factors for mature customers in choosing international healthcare facilities. According to Smith and Forgione (2007), cost differences is the top factor cited for outbound American medical tourists. This noticeable differences in medical treatments from several developed nations compared to many emerging medical tourism destinations is one of the primary driving forces for the rapid growth of global medical tourism. The following table shows differences in medical treatments by some of the famous medical tourism destinations globally.

**Table 2.1 Comparative Costs of Some Medical Treatments in Some Medical Tourism Countries by 2014**

Average Medical Cost Comparison (in USD)					
Treatment	United States	Malaysia	Thailand	Singapore	India
Heart Bypass (CABG)	136,000	14,000	13,000	23,000	7,000
Angioplasty	57,000	8,750	3,800	27,750	3,300
Knee Replacement	45,000	10,900	11,400	16,700	6,800
Gastric Bypass	33,000	8,600	16,700	20,000	5,500

**Source: Kee, K.W., P.V. Tengku, and N.T. Arshad, 2014**

#### 2.3.2.2 Physician Training

For the continuous and sustainable development of medical tourism, Smith & Forgione (2007) state that the role of physician capability and efficiency is also a considerable point in term of service quality. The internationally recognized world-class physicians and surgeons with English language proficiency is a significant attractive factor for outbound American medical tourists. Most of that kind

of qualified physicians were trained in the developed countries, especially U.S. Moreover, Menvielle,L., & Menvielle,W (2011) indicate that expert physicians, advanced technologies and facilities, and skilled caregivers are important components that drive medical tourists to seek medical treatment overseas. These are the important facts of how the efficiency of trained doctors contribute to the choice of facilities to several medical tourists globally.

### **2.3.2.3 Hospital Accreditation**

A credibility of the healthcare service provider is one of the decision-making factors for both domestic and international medical tourists. In addition to their respective recognition by local organization, it is also important to be in line with rules and regulations by internationally recognized organizations as to establish the trust with international customers in this challenging international markets. Debata et al., (2012) found that most of the problems faced by international medical tourists coming to India is the lack of accreditation of healthcare facilities as one of the major barriers for the development of Indian medical tourism.

With the increasing demanding growth of medical tourism industry, it is getting more significant on the need for internationally recognized accreditation by the hospitals in the several medical tourism destinations. Especially from the developed countries such as American medical tourists, they usually seek the qualified and creditable healthcare outside their border. Joint Commission International (known as JCI accreditation), founded in 1994, is one of the accreditation organizations, which works with more than 100 countries worldwide. In order to enhance the patients' safety and quality of care by the healthcare provider, this internationally recognized U.S based organization evaluates and accredits the hospitals and healthcare providers globally. The JCI evaluates and accredits more than 20,000 organizations with the aim of enhancing patients' safety and quality of care.

Besides from JCI, according to Keckley & Underwood (2008), there are other several organizations which provides accreditation and certificate to the hospitals and healthcare providers to standardize their healthcare facilities and services. These are National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and European Society for Quality in Healthcare (ESQH) which evaluates the quality of services offered to healthcare

consumers.

#### 2.3.3.4. Quality of Care and Services

From this point of view, international accreditation of a facility is an effective indicator of the quality of care provided; however, it may not be a viable indicator of the overall quality of care available in a country. According to Gill and Singh (2011), quality of care and services is the second important decisive factor in decision making of medical tourists after the cost factor. However, Runnels and Carrera (2012) explained that the quality of care and services has a large influence on decision making process by medical tourists for their safety concern.

Gene (2012) stated that different epidemiological characteristics in host countries and potential infectious disease breakouts may create health problems for visitors from other regions of the world. Quality is considered as one of the major factors in choosing health-care facilities. Nonetheless, the quality of a facility and the overall quality of care received including the hospitality and transportation may contrast each other.

According to Smith & Forgione (2007), most of the hospitals for medical tourism industry are from developing countries with the advantage of cost-effective, but there might be an issue such as infectious and parasites problem are present. Therefore, regionalized endemic problems in developing countries such as TB, Malaria, Typhoid, Influenza, Hepatitis and so on may discourage the international medical tourists to seek medical care outside their countries, especially from developed countries, such as the U.S.

#### 2.3.2.5. Lack of medical facilities and services

Some certain kinds of treatments are unavailable within the country according to the law and regulation of the government. Moreover, lack of medical facilities to perform latest treatment and services also lead local people to seek their desired latest medical care abroad. This lack of opportunity on accessing those illegal or unavailable medical services will encourage the medical travelers to seek the required healthcare outside the country (Gill & Singh, 2011). Moreover, according to Johnston et al. (2012), it is found out that majority of the participants went abroad because of the desired procedure unavailability within their country. The reasons behind this procedure unavailability includes the procedure not being approved by

safety regulators, the patient being ineligible for surgery due to age or the absence of the facilities for proper diagnosis or the lack of domestic surgical expertise to perform the surgery. Patsner (2008) also states that the potential reasons why medical travelers seek healthcare abroad include lack of access to either technology or facilities to perform the required procedures within the country. According to the study by Moghimehfar F. & Nasr-Esfahani M.H. (2011), lack of expertise or unavailability of assisted reproductive technology (ART) within the country is one of the factor influencing decision making by outbound medical travelers in Isfahan, Iran because of that they do not have an access to high quality medical facilities or expertise in their own country.

#### 2.3.2.6 Long waiting time

Usually it is referred to the service capacity and quality of individual healthcare provider for international medical tourists. With the overload of patients and imbalance capacity of the hospitals, it may lead to prolong waiting time which may interfere with patient satisfaction and which will lead not to choose the same hospital again. According to Behrmann and Smith (2010), such an issue of spending too much time on waiting at the hospital to access the medical services has caused a noticeable considerable factor in medical tourism.

## 2.4 Current Famous Medical Tourism Destinations

Currently there are many countries who are trying to improve their economy sector through medical tourism. This is a greatly emerging partial private-government sector globally together with the advancement of the medical treatment standards and quality of care within the country. In order to more understanding of this emerging industry, some of the world-famous medical tourism destination which are in the interest of Myanmar medical tourists will be discussed in this section

### 2.4.1 Thailand

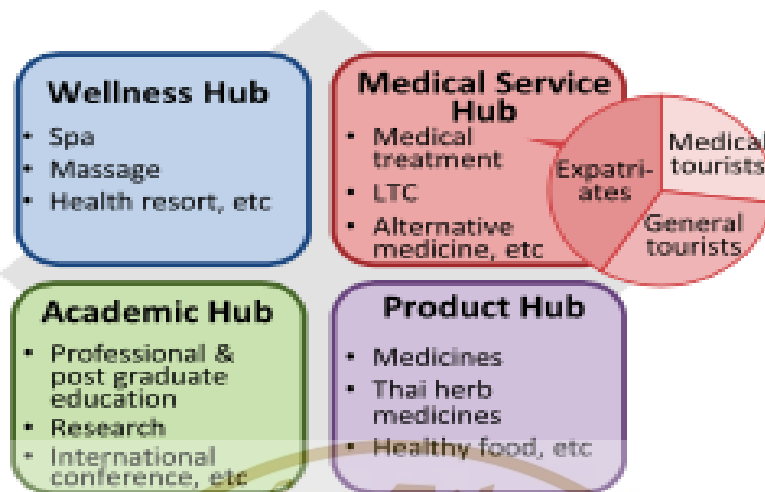
Thailand starts its journey to medical tourism destination back in 1990s, when Thai baths were so popular among the tourists. Nowadays, there are more than 32 accredited hospitals within the country that continuously serving international medical tourists around the world. Compared to the U.S., EU and Japan, the cost saving on



medical tourism in Thailand is between 40% and 60% (Woodman 2014). According to Cohen (2008), hospitality and friendliness of Thai people plays an important role in attracting international medical tourists in addition to the high quality medical services with affordable price within the nation.

Miyashita et al. (2017) stated that in Southeast Asia with 1.4 million foreign patients in 2013, Thailand becomes the largest exporter of health services for international medical travelers. Through Medical hub policy of the government, Thailand owns to the efforts of private hospitals to develop a new customer base from around the global. Thailand's medical hub policy is the government's overall strategy for ensuring that Thailand becomes medical hub of Asia in the future. This policy is briefly explained by the following figure (2.1).

Most of international hospitals can be founded in major cities of the country such as Bangkok, Chaing Mai, Pattaya and Phuket where several thousands of international medical travelers are serving per year. One of the most well-known international hospitals is Bumrungrad hospital, located in Bangkok, which is one of the Asia's largest private hospital and treats over 1.1 million patients every year for both inpatient and outpatient departments. Bumrungrad Hospital claims to be the worlds' premier medical tourism destination and states that more than a third of its patients (520,000) are international patients from 190 different countries. The company declares that there was US\$ 477 million turnovers in the Year 2013. This hospital is providing world-class latest state-of-the-art medical treatments by staffing an American-led international management team, over 4,800 employees, over 1,200 physicians and dentists with international training and certification and over 900 nurses (Bumrungrad Hospital, 2017).



**Figure 2.2. Framework of the Thailand's Medical Hub Policy. Ref: Ministry of Public Health. Summary of Thailand Health Tourism, Nonthaburi 2014**

**Source: Miyashita et al., 2017**

#### 2.4.2 Singapore

Singapore is one of the most attractive medical tourism destinations in Asia because of its key competitive advantages such as excellence in healthcare quality, trustworthiness, safe medical practices and the availability of a large number of internationally accredited hospitals. Moreover, Singapore's government also involves as an active role in attracting international medical tourist and investors through strategic collaboration among different stakeholders and signing agreements with Middle Eastern countries for the provision of medical services (Subhadra Ganguli and Ahmed Husain Ebrahim, 2017).

Woodman (2014) also stated that Singapore is one of the most expensive medical tourism destinations in Asia. Singapore is serving approximately 550,000 medical tourists per year and most of them from Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, North America and the EU countries. English language is widely used within the country. According to Pocock & Phua (2011), Singapore is well-known in providing treatments such as cardiovascular, neurological surgery and stem-cell therapy. National University of Singapore (NUS) also established a joint venture medical school together

with Duke University from USA in 2005 in order to provide qualified and skillful physicians for the healthcare industry.

### **2.4.3 Malaysia**

The development of Malaysia in its medical tourism industry started in 1997 after the Asian economic collapse. According to Malaysia Health Care 2006, Malaysia targets its promotion as a medical tourism destination for the local regional market (Indonesia, Brunei, Vietnam and Myanmar) and also the Middle East. They focus on promoting through the foreign training of Malaysia's medical staffs and also the price differentiation, beautiful beaches and resorts available for the medical tourists (Whittaker, 2008).

According to Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (2016), there are now over 250 private hospitals in Malaysia and less than 50 of them are serving international medical tourists around the world. Malaysia's medical excellences include cardiology, orthopedics, oncology, neurology and dentistry. As a revenue, according to the Health Ministry, Malaysia generated more than 850,000 medical tourists in 2015 and revenue of more than RM 900 millions where half of revenues come from Indonesian medical tourists. Over RM 20 millions a year is spent by the Malaysia government to promote and develop medical tourism around the global. Moreover, its national carrier, Malaysia Airlines has also signed an agreement with government agency Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council to promote through joint marketing activities to place Malaysia as an international medical tourism destination.

### **2.4.4 India**

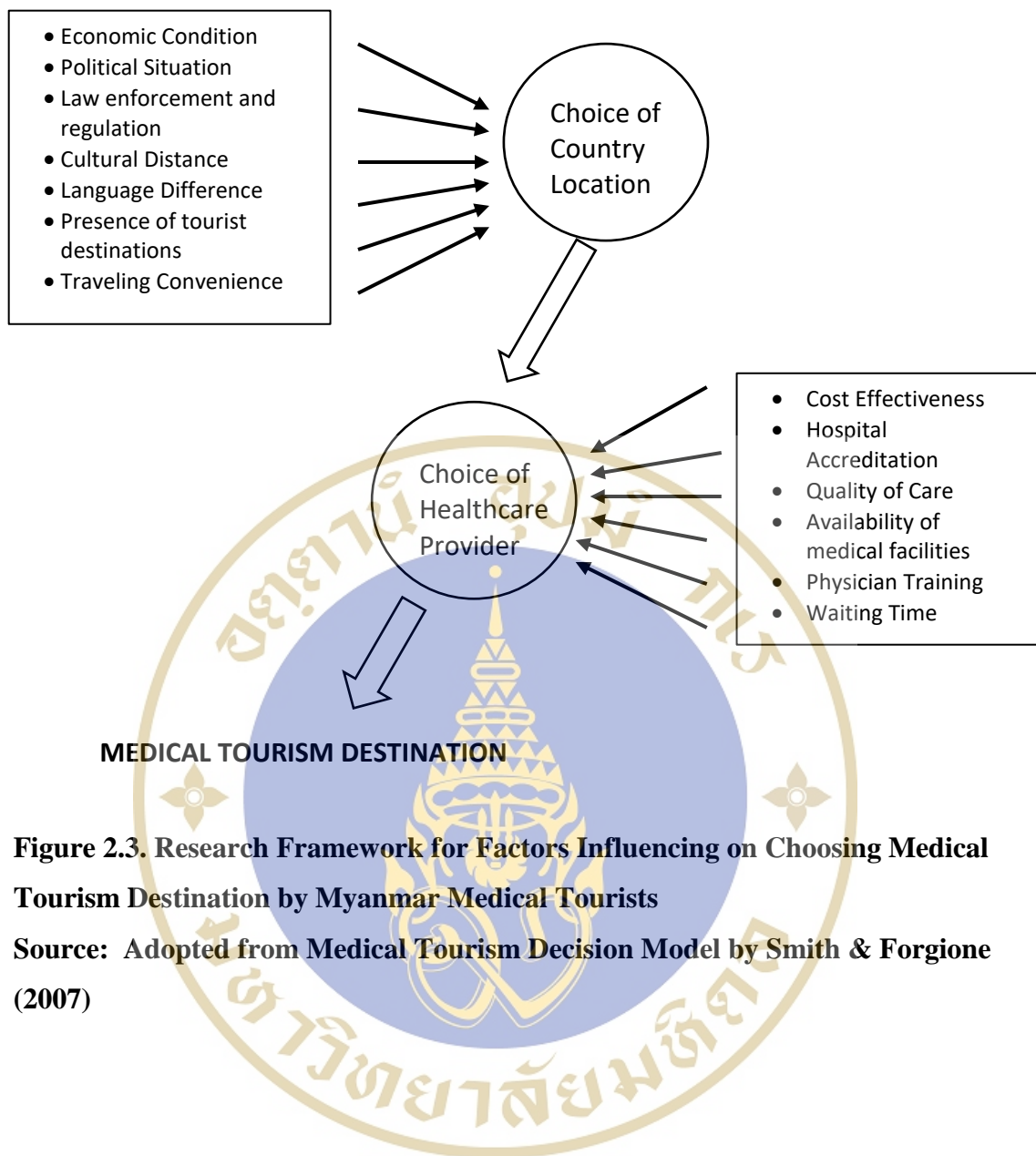
In the recent years, India has emerged as the hub of medical tourism in Asia and attracting much of international medical tourists around the world. McLean (2008) explains in his study that India has the largest share in international medical tourism market and is expected to earn US\$25 billions in revenue in 2020 with a 12 percent share (which is growing at the rate of 25 percent per year). The medical visa in India also help the international medical travelers for their convenient and legal visit to India to receive Indian healthcare services. The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) in India also promote the provision of medical visa services along with its "Incredible India"

campaign to encourage medical tourists to return after their initial visits. The ministry also supports the medical tourism service providers to promote India medical tourism in international markets via road shows, travel fairs, healthcare fairs and other publicity materials (Swati Gola, 2016).

According to Woodman (2014), apart from the price saving between 65% and 90% for different medical and surgical treatments, world-class India healthcare industry attracts more than 250,000 international medical tourists to consume their medical services by world-class local doctors and surgeons in India. International healthcare facilities, aimed for inbound medical tourists can be found in different cities of India such as Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi. Gupta (2008) also mentions that the success of medical tourism industry in India is facilitated by advanced facilities, English proficiency of service provides, affordable cost and other additional tourist attractions within the country.

## **2.5 Research Framework**

The decision making process is complex and the decisive factors on choosing their medical tourism destination by Myanmar medical tourists are widespread. According to the literature review, articles and previous study on factors influencing for international medical tourists, there are a number of factors founded to be influenced on the medical tourists based on their personal preference, country of origin and nature of their medical problems. The research framework is developed for this study based on the literature which is closely possible for Myanmar medical tourists and with the aim to help the researcher for better understanding of the industry regarding to outbound Myanmar medical travelers. Two steps of Medical Tourism Decision Model by Smith, P. C., & Forgiione, D. A. (2007) is used to visualize and structure the research framework, with the inclusion of the possible influencing factors for this study.



**Figure 2.3. Research Framework for Factors Influencing on Choosing Medical Tourism Destination by Myanmar Medical Tourists**

**Source: Adopted from Medical Tourism Decision Model by Smith & Forgione (2007)**

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter is to describe about the research method, sample size, data collection and data analysis procedure used to conduct this research paper.

#### **3.1 Research Method**

The exploratory type of qualitative research technique will be used to study the factors influencing Myanmar medical tourists on choosing their medical tourism destination to fulfill their medical needs. The reason to choose this method is because of the complexity of the decision-making process of medical tourists and moreover, it can provide more flexibility than quantitative research. This technique will also help the researcher to get an opportunity to investigate the real insight into the less observable and identifiable aspects of an individual decision making (Cormany, 2013).

Moreover, it is also a type of research technique which can provide the complex textual descriptions of how people feel or experience on a particular research issue. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), a qualitative research technique is defined as, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns or relationships among the categories”. Merriam (2009) also mentioned that a method of qualitative research is generally aimed to understand the experiences and attitudes of people on their social context or phenomenon. It delivers information about human behaviors, beliefs, values, opinions, emotions and the relationships of individuals.

#### **3.2 Instrument Development**

The research instrument by the researcher for this study is the semi-structure, open-ended research questions. The instrument to conduct this survey is developed according to the category of research topic by choosing the most suitable

form of survey instrument to reflect the interest of the researcher. A list of semi-structured, open-ended questions was developed to perform as a tool to assist the participants in providing their ideas and opinions toward the research questions. According to Denzin et al., (2000), it is stated that the participants of the study will feel free to respond in their own words to the questions conducted and these responses tend to be more valuable and descriptive than simply saying Yes or No.

### 3.2.1 Research Questionnaire

The researcher designed the research questions to explore and identify the key factors influencing outbound Myanmar medical tourists on their decision making process to choose their medical tourism destination around the world. It is chosen to use in-depth interview and conversational technique to work as primary data collection approach. A series of research questions is developed based on the previous literatures and studies to acquire the required information through the interviews. (Smith & Forgione (2007), Radmanesh (2016), Pradsarakee (2015) and Ye, Qiu & Yuen (2011)).

The research questions to be used during an individual face-to-face in-depth interview are stated as follows.

1. Please mention your age, gender and marital status.
2. Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
3. When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
4. Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experiences.
5. How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
6. What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
7. What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
8. What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.

9. What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - a. Economic condition
  - b. Political situation
  - c. Cultural distance
  - d. Language difference
  - e. Law enforcement and regulation
  - f. Presence of tourist destinations
  - g. Traveling convenience
10. What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
11. In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - a. Cost effectiveness
  - b. Hospital accreditation
  - c. Quality of care and services
  - d. Availability of medical facilities and services
  - e. Physician training
  - f. Waiting time
  - g. Others

### 3.3 Data Collection

In this stage of data collection, as mentioned above, a list of semi-structured open-ended questions will be used to collect the data through individual face-to-face, one-on-one in-depth interview. In addition to face-to-face interview, the researcher will also use telephone interview (Line call or Skype call) to those are not accessible in person, which is also a popular way (Kalve, 2006). Therefore, note-taking and voice recording will be used during the interview section.

According to Bryman (2004) and Veal (2006), the in-depth interviews are



categorized into three types, structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Raderbauer, 2011). Among them, semi-structured interviews are the one designed to convey the information more precisely about the participants' ideas, feelings, thoughts and knowledge. Moreover, according to Borg and Gall (1983), those semi-structure type of interview provides the researcher with an advantage of more thorough understanding of the interviewee's opinions and the reason behind them. Kavle (2006) also stated that semi-structured interviews will help the interviewer with a greater degree of control over the subject and the direction of the interview than other approaches.

As English language is not a native language in Myanmar, Myanmar Language will be used for those who could not understand English language while during the interview, but original English version will still be used to interview those participants who have enough understanding of English language. For those participants who could not be interviewed in person, the interview will be conducted through telephone conversation during their available time.

### **3.4 Sample Size**

As the lack of access to certain available sources of the data, the participants for this interview will be purposefully selected through friends, relatives, colleagues and those who experienced as medical tourists. Any Myanmar citizen residing in Myanmar who experienced as medical tourist at least once are eligible to be interviewed for this research. Besides, for this interview, there is no limitation on the participant such as age, gender, occupation, their tourism destination countries and the type of medical services seeking abroad. Moreover, purposive sampling method will be used to choose the participants which is relevant and fitted to this research topic. This is one of the common sampling methods used in qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009), purposive sampling is the method the selected criteria relevant to this particular research question.

According to Creswell (2008), this does not necessarily suggest random sampling or selection of a large number of participants as typically found in quantitative research. There was a similar study on motivation and experiences of Chinese medical tourists in Hong Kong with a sample size of nine participants and it used 15 minutes to

one hour long in-depth interviews (Ye, Qiu & Yuen, 2011) and an another similar study on identifying the factors affecting the attractiveness of Thailand medical tourism on international medical tourists, the research used 15 respondents as the participants of the study conducting qualitative interview (Pradsarakee, 2015).

Therefore, in this research, due to unavailability to identify the size of the total industry, a sample size of 30 participants will be interviewed through semi-structured open-ended interview and will take up to 20 minutes per interview depending on the response of the participant. The only criteria to choose the participant is to be the one who used to be an outbound medical tourist at least once and his or her medical tourism destination is not limited.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

After the completion of data collection from the desired sample size, data analysis will be done through qualitative content analysis to identify the emerging characteristics and themes grounded on the obtained qualitative data.

According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is a research method used to analyze text data and it involves with the interpretation of the content of text data through systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The purpose of content analysis is to help the researcher in providing the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon in a given research topic.

Data coding technique is also applied to help organize and analyze the data collected during qualitative research. Coding is the process of combining the data for ideas and categories and then marking the similar passages of text with a code label. Hence these data can easily be retrieved later. By coding the data, it makes easier to track the data to make comparisons and to identify the patterns that require for further investigations (Taylor and Gibbs, 2010).

To be in line with literature, in the coding process, the following steps will be used to analyze the data. Firstly, all the data from interviews will be transcribed. After this step, irrelevant information will be eliminated and the data is narrowed down to the information most relevant to the research topic. Afterwards, the transcripts will be

broken down into smaller sections containing a word or a group of sentences. Then the coding will be continued by merging and refining codes to represent the meaningful groups or themes.

The descriptive data analysis will be used to analyze the socio-demographic data of the participants for the better understanding of their characteristics.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the in-depth interview with 30 participants using semi-structured open-ended questionnaire stated in Chapter 3, the transcribed data were coded manually for its final analysis. In this chapter, the findings from the data analysis will be explained and discussed for this study.

#### 4.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants

The demographic information of the participants included in the questionnaire will be identified in term of their age, gender, marital status, educational status, occupational status, their tourism destination country, the purpose of their visits and frequency of their visits. This is to understand the sample size used for this study and to visualize the status of the participants included in this study. The following table summarizes the statistics data of demographic information of the participants and explanations of the data are provided under each table accordingly.

**Table 4.1 Coding for the characteristics of the participants**

Code	Destination Country	Purpose of Visit	Frequency of Visit	Age	Gender	Marital status	Education	Occupation
T1	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	31	Female	Single	Master Degree	Private Company Employee
T2	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	57	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Government officer
T3	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	First visit	26	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Government officer
T4	Thailand	Cosmetic surgery	First visit	29	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T5	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	Follow-up visit	64	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Government officer
T6	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	50	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner

**Table 4.1 Coding for the characteristics of the participants (cont.)**

Code	Destination Country	Purpose of Visit	Frequency of Visit	Age	Gender	Marital status	Education	Occupation
T7	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	45	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T8	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	30	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Private Company Employee
T9	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	33	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T10	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	30	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T11	Thailand	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	31	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T12	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	41	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T13	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	30	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
T14	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	35	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Private Company Employee
T15	Thailand	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	33	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Private Company Employee
T16	Thailand	Cosmetic surgery	First visit	30	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
S1	Singapore	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	34	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
S2	Singapore	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	62	Male	Married	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
S3	Singapore	Non-cosmetic surgery	First visit	35	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Private Company Employee
S4	Singapore	Non-cosmetic surgery	First visit	40	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
S5	Singapore	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	31	Female	Married	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
S6	Singapore	Non-surgical treatment	Follow-up visit	23	Male	Single	Bachelor Degree	Private Company Employee
S7	Singapore	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	34	Male	Single	Master Degree	Business Owner
S8	Singapore	Non-cosmetic surgery	First visit	30	Female	Married	Master Degree	Business Owner

**Table 4.1 Coding for the characteristics of the participants (cont.)**

Code	Destination Country	Purpose of Visit	Frequency of Visit	Age	Gender	Marital status	Education	Occupation
S9	Singapore	Non-surgical treatment	Follow-up visit	41	Male	Married	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner
S10	Singapore	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	30	Female	Married	Master Degree	Private Company Employee
I1	India	Non-surgical treatment	First visit	32	Male	Married	Bachelor Degree	Private Company Employee
I2	India	Non-cosmetic surgery	Follow-up visit	64	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Government officer
M1	Malaysia	Non-cosmetic surgery	First visit	65	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Government officer
K1	Korea	Cosmetic surgery	First visit	28	Female	Single	Bachelor Degree	Business Owner

Table 4.1 is created to provide the better understanding of the characteristics of each participant and aimed to quote their statements from the transcript sheets easily for the readers. The code is created based on their choice of medical tourism destination and followed by other characteristics of the participants respectively. The identification of each code is as follows.

- T – For the participant who chose Thailand as medical tourism destination
- S – For the participant who chose Singapore as medical tourism destination
- I – For the participant who chose India as medical tourism destination
- M – For the participant who chose Malaysia as medical tourism destination
- K – For the participant who chose Korea as medical tourism destination

**Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Age**

Age Group	Quantity	Percentage
20 - 30 years old	10	33.33%
31-50 years old	15	50%
Above 51 years old	5	16.67%

Table 4.2 presents the age group of the participants which are divided into three groups respectively. First group includes the participants aged 20 to 30 years old

which is 10 participant (33.33%) and the second group is for the participants aged from 31 to 50 years old which is 15 participants (50%). The last group includes the participants aged from 51 years old and above which is 5 participants (16.67%).

**Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Gender**

Gender	Quantity	Percentage
Male	11	36.67%
Female	19	63.33%

Table 4.3 shows that the majority of the participant (63.33%) in this study are female which is 19 in number and the rest 11 participants are male which is 36.67% of total participants

**Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Marital Status**

Marital Status	Quantity	Percentage
Single	18	60%
Married	12	40%

Table 4.4 presents that 18 out of 30 participants are single and the rest 12 participants are married which represents 60% as single and 40% as married respectively.

**Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics of Educational Status**

Education Status	Quantity	Percentage
Bachelor Degree	26	86.67%
Master Degree	4	13.33%

Table 4.5 displays that most of the participants hold the bachelor degree which is 26 in number (86.67%) and the rest 4 participants in this study are master degree holder which is 13.33% of total participant.

**Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of Occupational Status**

Occupation	Quantity	Percentage
Business Owner	17	56.67%
Private Company Employee	8	26.67%
Government Officer	5	16.67%

Table 4.6 represents the data that 17 participants (56.67%) have their own businesses, 8 participants (26.67%) work at private company and the rest 5 participants (16.67%) are government officers.

**Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics of Destination Country**

Destination Country	Quantity	Percentage
Thailand	16	53.33%
Singapore	10	33.33%
India	2	6.67%
Malaysia	1	3.33%
Korea	1	3.33%

Table 4.7 categorizes the data regarding to choice of destination country that 16 participants (53.33%) went to Thailand as medical tourist, 10 participants (33.33%) to Singapore and 2 participants (6.67%) to India. One participant (3.33%) went to Malaysia and the rest participant (3.33%) went to Korea.

**Table 4.8. Descriptive Statistics of Purpose of Visit**

Purpose of Visit	Quantity	Percentage
Non-Surgical Treatment	13	43.33%
Cosmetic Surgery	3	10%
Non-Cosmetic Surgery	14	46.67%

In this data, their purpose of visit is categorized into three groups as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 which are non-surgical treatment, non-cosmetic surgical



treatment and cosmetic surgical treatment. The table 4.8. explains the number of participants for each category where 43.33% of the participants went to seek non-surgical treatment, 46.67% for non-cosmetic surgical treatment and the rest 10% obtained cosmetic surgical treatment.

**Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics of Frequency of Visit**

Frequency of Visit	Quantity	Percentage
First visit	18	60%
Follow-up visit	12	40%

Table 4.9 represents the data on the frequency of visit by the participants where 60% of the participants which 18 people out of 30 told that it was their first visit as medical tourist and the rest 40% went for their follow-up visits to continue getting medical treatments.

These all statistical data are to deliver the proper understanding of the characteristics of the participants in this study where there is no limitation on the features of the participants. The sole similarity of the participants is to be Myanmar citizens residing within the country who have an experience as outbound Myanmar medical tourist at least once at the time of the interview.

## 4.2 Research Findings Related to the Research Question

The research question is to identify and study the decisive factors on choosing medical tourism destination by Myanmar medical tourists. As stated in the Chapter (2), research framework is developed based on the previous studies and papers related to this particular interest. The questions include the semi-structured open-ended questions to identify the factors behind the decision making of each participant in receiving medical care abroad.

After the careful step-by-step merging and refining of the relevant codes from transcribed data is accomplished, the data are grouped into different categories which represent meaningful factors regarding to the decision making from the participants' perspectives. According to the complexity of decision making process,

more than one important factors were identified from each participant which are the most considerable for them on selecting their medical tourism destination country and healthcare provider.

Those factors include not only the determinants of decision making stated in the research framework but also other interesting factors which influence the outbound Myanmar medical tourists to choose their medical tourism destination. On categorizing the codes into their respective groups, each and every participant indicates more than one factor and from which the main decisive factors for their decision making are separated again. The following table is to show the factors deriving from this research study.

**Table 4.10 Decisive factors on decision making by outbound Myanmar medical tourists**

Pre-existing factors	No. of participants who mentioned as considerable decisive factors		No. of participants who mentioned as main decisive factors	
	No.	%	No.	%
Political Situation	12	40%	7	23.33%
Cultural distance	3	10%	2	6.67%
Language difference (Availability of medical interpreter)	21	70%	5	16.67%
Availability of Tourist destinations	19	63.33%	-	-
Traveling Convenience	23	76.67%	18	60%
Cost effectiveness	11	36.67%	3	10%
Quality of care and services	26	86.67%	17	56.67%
Availability of medical facilities and services	19	63.33%	8	26.67%
Physician training	20	66.77%	9	30%
Waiting time	2	6.67%	-	-
<b>Emerging factors</b>				
Presence of representative office	12	40%	7	23.33%
Presence of friends and family members in destination country	6	20%	3	10%
Strong recommendation by friends and local doctors	14	46.67%	4	13.33%
Ease of local transportation	3	10%	-	-
Living expenses	3	10%	-	-
Enough consultation time	3	10%	-	-

Even though each and every participant considers more than one factor to choose their medical tourism destination, not all of these factors are the most important for them regarding to their decision making process. According to the research framework and questionnaire design, the decision making is separated into two steps such as for choice of destination country and for choice of healthcare provider in selected destination country. Hence each participant might have more than one main important decisive factor for them in their decision making.

#### 4.2.1 Traveling Convenience

The geographical location advantage of destination country plays as one of the important roles on attracting international medical travelers. Usually medical tourists usually look the extent how it is convenient for them to travel their destination country. According to the previous research studies and literatures, for this reasons, some famous medical tourism destination countries such as Thailand and Singapore serves medical services to those regional countries more than other nationalities around the global.

Out of 30 participants in this study, majority of the respondents which is 23 in number or 76.67% of the total participants stated that traveling distance in term of how it is convenient to travel from Myanmar is one of their considerable factors but only 18 participants which is 60% of total respondents emphasized that it is their main decisive factors on choosing their tourism destination country.

According to their perspective, traveling issue is related to not only the distance between Myanmar and their destination countries but also other traveling related difficulties such as the availability of flight flying per day from Myanmar, cost of traveling, ease of VISA availability were also mentioned in the interview. This is one of the most favorable factors among the participants to choose their medical tourism destination as they usually look for effortless and comfortable traveling in seeking medical care abroad. The followings are some of the noticeable conversations from the participants who mentioned about this decisive factors.

*“I think about the country first because I do not want to travel very far just to get medical treatment. Thailand is also very famous in ASEAN region. Especially it is very close and convenient to*

*travel from Myanmar. As a Myanmar citizen, we do not have much countries from which we can get visa easily. But we do not have such problem with Thailand as we can easily get whether as tourist or visa for medical traveler. That's why I chose Thailand."*

T14

*"I chose country first. Because Thailand is our neighborhood and it is very easy to travel. If in case of emergency, my family member can follow me anytime and we can even go day trip to Bangkok. That's why I chose Bangkok."*

T16

*"I chose country first. Because Thailand is our neighborhood and it is very easy to travel. If in case of emergency, my family member can follow me anytime and we can even go day trip to Bangkok. We don't need tourist visa anymore to travel Thailand and it is very easy to travel like urgently. Especially because of this convenience, I chose Bangkok."*

T6

*"Moreover, as a cancer patient, we understand that we need frequent follow-ups so we chose Singapore because it is not very far and easy to travel from our country. Traveling convenience is the main reason why we chose Singapore."*

S6

*"It is easy and near to go Singapore. Besides, we don't need to apply visa anymore to go Singapore as it used to be very difficult process for us in the past. So I decided to go there."*

S1

These statements expressed by the participants are in line with the previous studies done by Cohen (2012), Debata et al., (2012) and Gökhan Aydin, Bilge Karamahmet (2017), which explained that the distance between two countries encourage the international medical travelers to consider as one of the important decisive factors on choosing their destination country. Moreover, they mentioned that how convenience of traveling for the medical tourists is accounted for their perspective on decision making process.

#### 4.2.2 Quality of Care and Services

The quality of medical care and services is highly influenced the decision making by international medical tourists. Some previous literatures and studies explained that quality of care not only reflects the quality of care provided by the healthcare provider but also includes the regional epidemic health problems and potential infectious diseases breakout within the country. This situation has a drawback effect on decision making by international medical travelers. But from the perspective of Myanmar medical travelers, they only mentioned and concerned about the quality of care provided by the hospitals in their destination countries. As a third-world country with lowest health index and existing local infectious problems, this situation is seemed not to be their primary concern, but the quality of care and services provided by the hospital must be a standardized one and qualified one for them.

During the interview section, 26 out of 30 participants which is 86.67% of total respondents disclosed that the quality of care and services of the hospital is their concern on choosing their healthcare provider to make sure the healthcare quality they are going to receive. Among them, 17 participants which is 56.67% of total respondents said that they mainly focused on this factor on choosing their healthcare provider and highlighted how excellent the quality of care they received and shared their experiences with the researcher. Those participants who answered the quality of care and services as their primary concern also stated that they chose their healthcare tourism destination with an idea of problematic based decision making as they only focused to get complete cure regarding to their medical problems.

One participant who chose Bumrungrad hospital regardless of its very expensive medical cost said as follows.

*“Roughly it is very excellent even though the price is a bit expensive. My hospital is more expensive than other hospitals in Bangkok but they have better customer service. The doctor is very good and patient. Moreover, they provided more advanced and safe medical services than other hospitals in Bangkok. So I concerned for my safety first and didn't even care about the expensive price at Bumrungrad hospital.”*

A kidney transplanted participant who went to India also explained his decision on choosing medical tourism destination as follows.

*“I didn’t choose in this way like country first or hospital first. For me, I have to go wherever it is to get resolved my problem. The main reason why I went India is because they are very famous for kidney transplant. Moreover, I chose Apollo hospital there because they are very famous in their quality of care for kidney transplant surgery. I asked thoroughly from some patients who got kidney transplant there before. They also said that it is very good. That’s why I chose this hospital.”* I2

One participant who went to Korea for plastic surgery disclosed for her decision to go there even though it is very far from Myanmar as follows.

*“Mainly, I considered like Korea is very famous for plastic surgery. As you know, in Korea, not only actors and actresses, even general public are also having plastic surgery as a normal operation for them. Moreover, they have latest technology and treatments regarding to plastic surgery. This specialty is very advanced and developed in Korea. That’s why I chose Korea.”* K1

Other participants explained about the important of quality of care and services together with their real experiences as the following conversations.

*“As to choose the hospital, Mount Elizabeth hospital is very famous for its quality of care in Singapore. That’s why I chose this hospital with the main consideration on their quality of care because I trust them on their hospital’s quality for the patients and it is very famous too.”* S9

*“We decided to go Thailand. It is very different hospital environment there. The hospital is very clean and the operation theater is very advanced as well. They have very good infection control at the hospital. That’s why even the major operation like my sister’s case which is one-hour duration long, didn’t get any fever and recovered within few days and healing is very fast too.”* T8

*“The hospital service is very great and I was satisfied very much. My doctor is very good, patient and explained me very well too. The hospital environment is very clean and standardized. Moreover, laparoscopic surgery at that hospital is famous and advanced than other hospitals. That’s why I chose this hospital.”* T7

These findings regarding to how quality of care and services is important for medical tourist are in line with the previous papers studied by Gill and Singh (2011), Runnels and Carrera (2012) and. Gökhan Aydin, Bilge Karam Mehmet (2017). They discovered that quality of care and facilities is one of the major decisive factors for international healthcare seekers. Moreover, it is also stated that overall quality of care delivered by the hospital plays as a major influential role on the final decision making by the healthcare seekers.

#### **4.2.3 Physician Training**

The quality of physician is identified based on their experiences, perceived trainings overseas and locally and the achievement of internationally recognized certificates and degrees. The world-class physicians who can provide excellent service quality and deliver more knowledges and information is a favorable point for international medical travelers.

In the third place, physician training regarding to their qualification and experiences becomes one of the most considerable factors for Myanmar medical tourists. Twenty participants out of 30 which is 66.67% of total respondents answered that physician qualification, experiences and training is important for their decision making and 9 out of 20 participants which is 30% of total respondents emphasized more specifically that this is the most important decisive factor on choosing their healthcare provider.

According to their conversations during the interview, it is important to choose the right, qualified and well-experienced physicians so that they can consult and discuss about their problems properly and will be able to get the best treatment which is not unavailable within their native countries. As a medical traveler, this is their primary concern to get cure and resolve their medical problems, consulting with well-trained global standard physicians is their utmost target regarding to their trips. They also

shared their experiences of how their physicians are skillful, highly experienced, caring and precise in terms of perceiving medical care and treatment. Some of the answers regarding the physician training and qualifications are as follows.

*“Physician training is something that we usually look for even in our country. I usually prefer a doctor with many degrees, certificate and training because it means to me that this doctor is well-trained and well-experienced.”*

T14

*“I think most of the hospitals in Korea have more or less the same technology. But for me, I want to get a very beautiful nose so I chose the hospital where they have very specialized plastic surgeon in nose surgery. I chose my doctor at that hospital because my friends also recommended me to do so.”*

K1

*“Especially I chose the hospital with expert physician for my problem. A good hospital with low experienced physician is not helpful for me. I think most of the people who went abroad as a medical tourist are kind of rich people. So we considered to choose expert physician with enough experiences and training for our medical problem. I chose this way too.”*

T4

One of the participants who went to Bangkok Hospital claimed the experience on how their physician is skillful and expert as follows.

*“Our doctor in Bangkok hospital checked my father’s medical history and his old medications. Then he prescribed new medicine which is nasal spray and asked us to use it for long term and to come back for follow-up in every six months. Since then, my father is getting better. He is a very good and well-experienced doctor. Being a qualified physician is important for me so that my father can get better faster and our doctor is also an expert one regarding to my father’s disease.”*

T1

A participant who double-checked the qualification of the doctor even though his friend recommended him stated as follows.



*“I looked through the doctor who my friend recommended me, about his degree, certificates and reviews on his treatment whether he is good in giving care or whether he is patient or not. Some stuffs like this. Especially I searched about my doctor’ qualification and experiences.”*

S10

These statements are consistent with the research findings from the studies conducted by Smith & Forgione (2007) and Menvielle,L., & Menvielle,W (2011), which emphasized on the advantages of having qualified physicians to attract international medical travelers. They also mentioned that the role of skillful, well-trained and internationally recognized world-class physician is a considerable factor in term of service quality for global medical tourists.

#### **4.2.4 Availability of Medical Facilities and Services**

Lack of medical facilities and services within the country becomes one of the most favorable factors for the healthcare seeker to go abroad regarding to their medical problem. Not only the lack of medical facilities for certain procedures but also the lack of expertise who will perform the procedures remain as an encouraging factor to choose international healthcare provider outside the country.

From the analysis of the interview data, another important considerable factor for outbound Myanmar medical tourists is the availability of medical facilities and services at their chosen healthcare provider. From 19 interviewees out of 30, 63.33% of total respondents mentioned this factor as one of their main considerable factors to choose their healthcare provide in the foreign country whereas 8 participants which is 26.67% of total respondents expressed as the main decisive factor for their decision making to choose their healthcare provider. Some of the reasons behind this factor are explained by the participants as the followings.

*“My problem was breast cancer. In Myanmar, my doctor said that my breast has to be removed totally. But I didn’t want to remove all so I planned to go abroad. In Bangkok, they have latest treatment, technology and their facilities are very good. I didn’t need to remove my whole breast. The main reason is because I don’t want to get*

*operation here. Moreover, medical facilities such as PET-CT scan for cancer is available in that hospital. In Myanmar, we don't have such kind of machine for cancer investigation."*

T6

*"Another thing is like they have plenty of medical facilities and treatments for plastic surgery even for weight reduction surgery, that sort of things. As you know in Myanmar, we cannot get full range of treatments in one place. As I went to get a kind of plastic surgery, it was very convenient for me."*

T4

*"Another important factor is about the availability of medical facilities because there are some medical facilities that cannot be available in my country. So I chose this hospital because they have wide range of medical facilities more than the hospitals in my country."*

T14

*"The reason is because in Myanmar, I have been told that I need an operation like open-typed abdominal surgery but I don't want to do that. I heard that in Thailand, it is not needed to open the abdomen and they have advanced technology like laparoscopic surgery and recovery time is very short too. That's why I decided to go Thailand."*

T7

Even within the same country, the important of complete medical facilities accounts for the decision making of medical tourist is explained by one of the participant as follows.

*"Besides, I chose the hospital where they can provide the medical facilities require for Lasik surgery as not every hospital in Thailand can provide that kind of treatment because they don't have that Lasik machine."*

T3

These statements are agreed with the previous studies on the attractiveness of state-of-the-art and advanced technology and medical facilities for the international medical travelers. Gill & Singh (2011), Patsner (2008) and Johnston et al. (2012) stated that the lack of accessibility to the required medical facilities and unavailability of the

surgical procedures within the country will lead the patients to seek medical care outside the country.

#### 4.2.5 Political Situation

The political stability of the destination country is also another significant considerable factor for international medical tourists. According to the previous literatures, unstable political situation within the country will discourage the travelers to choose as their destination country. Numerous and frequent political events such as protestors events or unstable situations such as civil wars may threaten the security of the global travelers and the country with this kind of political situations will be assumed as an unsafe environment and the international travelers tend to avoid choosing as their destination country.

While conducting the interview, the participants mentioned about the political situation of their chosen country in term of the words such as “for my safety” “a secure environment” “a safe place” “security”. According to the interview with outbound Myanmar medical tourists, 12 out of 30 participants concerned about the political situation of their destination country and it was precisely stated by 7 participants that their safety is the most important factor on choosing tourism destination country.

For the medical tourists who went Singapore and get medical treatments mentioned their perceptions on how Singapore is safe for the international travelers as follows.

*“Another one is the fact that the country is not an under-developed country and also the security within the country is very good. That’s what the way I think and I feel it’s safe for us to travel there. If not, I would not think of this country because I concern about my safety.” S2*

*“For us, we have two choices, Bangkok and Singapore. But we chose the country, Singapore first. Because we like Singapore more and we feel safe to go there. Moreover, the country is already developed and we feel safe to go there with our security even we want to go out at night. That’s why.” S8*

*“I considered about their political situation. I concern about my security so that it would be safe for me to go around Singapore. Besides, I assume that Singapore don’t have much bad people cheating tourists like other countries.”* S9

*“I would say that my safety in the foreign country is the most important and I think it is related to their political situation as well. If not, I would not be convenient for us to travel there. That’s why I chose that country.”*

S3

A participant who went to Thailand just after the political crisis confessed that they concerned about their safety as follows.

*“The country’s political situation just became settle before my trip. If not, I would choose another country because I feel like it is not safe for me if there are any political problems in the country”.*

T6

These findings how political situation accounts for medical tourists are in line with the previous papers studied by Smith, P. C., & Forgione, D. A. (2007) and Fletcher, J., & Morakabati, Y. (2008), which explained the safety is the first priority for the international medical travelers and the countries with civil wars, political instability and terrorist attacks which interfere with the safety of medical tourists will lose an opportunity of attracting majority of the global customers.

#### **4.2.6 Presence of Hospital Representative Offices**

As a country, Myanmar which is just started to develop in all sectors, the probability of reaching the information of the products to the customers through internet website is relatively low compared to other developed countries. All the required information such as available treatments, expenses and choice of physicians flows from the representative offices to the potential customers directly and effectively. Surprisingly the present of the hospital representative offices locally plays as an important role on choosing their medical tourism destination. Not only just the existence of the offices of the foreign hospitals but also their one-stop services

regarding to the complete arrangement of the healthcare-seeking trip attracts the customers rather than other hospitals.

Twelve participants out of 30 which is 40% of total respondents said that they chose the hospitals with local representative offices which provides the required information and complete services such as hospital appointment, accommodation, flight tickets and so on. Among them, 7 participants which is 23.33% of total respondents answered that they selected the hospitals with the main consideration on the presence of representative offices in Myanmar. According to their statements, the presence of representative offices is one of the advantages for international hospitals to attract more local customers. Even if they have to choose between the hospitals with the same quality of services and medical facilities, they tend to choose the hospitals with local representative offices. Some of the conversations regarding to the presence of hospital representative offices are as followed and they also shared how the representative offices helped them as well.

*“I think having their representative office in Myanmar is also a factor for me because sometimes my parents have to go by themselves if I am not available to go together with them. That’s why I chose Bangkok hospital because they have their representative office in Myanmar.”* T1

*“In Korea, they have many famous hospitals for plastic surgery. I chose the hospital which has their representative office in Myanmar because it is more convenient for me. They arranged everything for me regarding to my trip, including the interpreter. They helped me choose the best doctor for me as well. This is the main reason.”* K1

*“Besides, the hospital can send our medical documentation to Myanmar office and we didn’t need to wait at the hospital for long times. That’s why I chose Bangkok hospital as their services are very convenient for us.”*

T12

*“Their representative office helped us in very details such as accommodation, flight tickets and so on. We liked their services and they*

*helped us a lots throughout our whole journey including follow-up visits. They served very willingly and arranged everything for us. That's one of the factors we chose Bangkok hospital because some hospital agents don't serve well here."*

T8

*"Everything was smooth because we arranged our trip such as appointment and so on through their representative office here."*

T10

These statements show that how the presence of representative office as a medical tourism facilitator can promote and attract the potential medical travelers around the global. These finding are in consistent with the studies done by Mohamad WN, Omar A, Haron MS (2012) and Lovelock B (2008), which explained that the required information, travel arrangement and other supportive services provided by these representative offices play as one of the considerable factors on choosing international healthcare providers.

#### **4.2.7 Availability of Medical Interpreter**

Communication is one of the big problems facing by not only international medical tourist but also general tourist as well. This is one of the considerable factors for cross-border healthcare seeker because miscommunication will lead to misunderstanding and wrong treatment which can even lead to death. Lack of proper communication skill regarding to medical terms can be very problematic for international medical travelers. In the research framework, as a communication barrier, language difference is included as one of the decisive factors on choosing medical tourism destination.

According to the interview, 21 participants out of 30 participants which is 70% of total respondents answered that language difference is one of the considerable factors on choosing their medical destination whereas only 5 participants which is 16.67% of total respondents emphasized that it is the main decisive factors on choosing their medical tourism destination. On expressing language difference, almost all of them mentioned to the communication at the hospital whether with medical or non-medical staffs. In this communication category, medical interpreter plays an important role as

they coordinate between the doctor and the patient for better understanding of the conversations.

From the perspective of the participants, they mainly focus on the communication problem at the hospital while consulting with the doctors and only few of them mentioned about the communication with local people outside the hospital. Some participants disclosed that they chose the hospitals which can provide the medical interpreters for them as to be convenient while consulting with the doctors. Regarding to this language difference, the following statements are some of the conversations from the participants explaining how the availability of medical interpreter is important for them on choosing their healthcare providers.

*“Moreover, they provide medical translator so it was very convenient to discuss with the doctor. At first, I was worried about the communication but at the end, everything was okay.”* S1

*“Another thing is about communication barrier as I couldn’t speak English well, I couldn’t speak Indian language well too. But I can get medical translator from that hospital and they can help me at any time we need. That’s why I went there.”*

I2

*“For me, communication is a big problem as I couldn’t speak their language at all. But I didn’t need to worry because the hospital takes full responsibility on that matter and provides full time medical interpreters at the hospital.”*

T6

*“They also have full-time translators and it was very convenient for me because I am not a doctor and I am not familiar with medical terms. Moreover, even though my doctor is Thai nationality but he can speak Myanmar language too. It was very nice of him and he is very awesome.”* T9

A Chinese-speaking participant who went to Singapore because of narrow language differences still confessed that medical interpreter is useful for him as follows.

*“In term of language, as I can also speak Chinese very well, it is not much difficult for communication there which is very favorable to me. That’s why I chose Singapore. Moreover, they have full-time medical interpreters at the hospital even though I can communicate in both English and Chinese. They are very helpful whenever I need them.”*

S4

Myanmar-borne Indian participant who went to India as medical tourist also explained about his decision as follows.

*“Moreover, as we are Indian ethnic in Myanmar, it is very convenient for us that we can communicate very well in India. So we took our father to India to get treatment.”* II

These statements are consistent with the study of Cornell (2013) which found out language barrier is one of the considerable factor for outbound medical tourists. The important of the medical interpreters provided by the hospital is explained by Joohyun Lee and Hong-bumm Kim, (2015).

#### **4.2.8 Strong Recommendation from Friends and Local Doctors**

On choosing overseas healthcare providers, the recommendation and suggestion from experienced friends and their attending local physicians are largely put into a consideration as a source of information. Word-of-mouth news regarding to the quality of care and services by previous customers greatly influences on decision making by medical travelers. This plays as a primary source of information as an initial step on choosing the medical tourism destination. A reliable person such as experienced close friend or his or her attending physician can be a great inducer to choose their recommended hospital or healthcare provider.

Out of 30 participants, 14 participants which is 46.67% of total respondents told that the recommendation from their friends and local physicians is one of the decisive factors and from which, 4 participants which is 13.33% of total respondents disclosed that they just chose their medical tourism destination based on the information from their close friends and attending physicians. regardless of knowing the quality of care and services by the hospitals, these four participants just made a decision because their close friends and attending physicians strongly recommended them. According to



these four participants, it is explained below that how the recommendation from their close friends and attending physicians influenced on their decision making.

*“My story is like this. Firstly, I was seeing my doctor in Myanmar. Then he referred me to Singapore because he said that I should get an operation there. Especially my doctor referred me to that hospital directly because he knows about this hospital very well and helped me a lots and recommended me to go there. So I don’t even need to think too much.”*

S2

*“My friend’s aunty is a nurse at that hospital and so she recommended me to go there. Moreover, my cousin used to go there for her medical problem as well. So I chose to go there because of their suggestion.”*

S10

*“The main reason is because of recommendation from our friend as they have experiences about this hospital.”*

T8

*“We went for checkup at Thonburi hospital because our friend recommended us. He is the owner of the apartment we stayed in Bangkok and he brought us to that hospital because my mother also has diabetes mellitus and she is needed to consult for that also.”*

T15

These findings are consistent with the result of the studies established by Baloglu S & McCleary KW (1999) and Jotikasthira (2010) which stated that the information by word-of-mouth spreading from reliable friends and experienced colleagues plays a significant role on choosing destination by medical tourists. Moreover, the suggestion and recommendations from the attending local physician encourages the probability of selecting international healthcare providers which are explained by the literature of Kangas B (2010), Musa G, Thirumoorthi T, Doshi D (2012). And Muraina L, Tommy I (2012).

#### **4.2.9 Cost Effectiveness**

The cost attractiveness is one of the factors influencing on decision making by Myanmar medical tourist. The expenses of being a medical tourist is not just only

limited to treatment cost at the hospital and also included the traveling and living cost but anyhow medical expenses play a big role in this matter. Medical travelers usually look for reasonable price with comparable care and services among the hospitals.

According to the answers from the 30 participants, 11 participants which is 36.67% of total respondents said that cost factor is included in their decision making but out of 11 participants, only 3 participants which is 10% of total respondents stated that it is their main decisive factor on choosing their medical tourism destination. The way they chose their healthcare care provider with the main concern of cost factor are mentioned as below.

*“On choosing the hospital, firstly I think about the expenses at the hospital. I have to think about the cost of treatment whether it is within my affordable range or not.”*

S2

*“Here in Myanmar, Bangkok, Singapore and India are famous as medical tourism destination. So when we enquired them for the expenses, India is suitable for us and the estimated expenses is within our affordable range. The most important is about their reply to our enquires such as available treatments and their estimated cost. But it was not much different between other countries. But we chose India because their price is not too high and it was within our affordable range. That’s why.”* II

*“Most people go to Bangkok as medical tourist. The expenses and services are acceptable and not very expensive in Bangkok. Moreover, my sister’s case needs frequent follow-ups. So as an overall, we decided to go Bangkok because the expenses is seemed not to be burden for us in a long run.”*

T8

The findings are in line with the previous studies by Cornell (2006) and Smith and Forgione (2007), which stated that cost differences among several different destinations is a considerable factor for international healthcare seekers outside their native countries.

#### 4.2.10 Presence of Friends and Family Members in Destination Country

Some people do not want to travel to a place which is totally not familiar with them. Moreover, they are afraid of the situation where they will be out of help if in case of emergency. According to this particular reason, some Myanmar medical tourists also chose the country where their friends or family members are living. This helps not only for their convenient stay but also in term of emotionally secured as well.

Out of 30 participants in this study, six participants which is 20% of total respondents answered that they chose the country where their friends or family members are living for quite a long time. Among them, this factor is the main reason for three participants which is 10% of total respondents, to choose their medical tourism destination as they want to make sure with their convenient stay during their visit. They explained their decision as follows.

*“I would say how familiar the country is. We have much friends and relatives there. Moreover, my sister lives in Singapore so that she is very helpful for us. That’s why we chose Singapore.”* S5

*“I chose the country first because in Singapore, I have my relatives and friends there. So if in case, I can ask their help any time and it is very convenient for me. Then I decided to go Singapore.”* S10

*“For me, as a doctor, I have friends in almost all the hospitals in Singapore. But I am more familiar with my friend from Mount Elizabeth hospital. That’s why I chose this hospital because she can help me very well and she is the reason why I chose Singapore as well.”* S9

These findings are very interesting even though it is seemed to be related with traveling convenience to the destination country. In fact, it is clearly unrelated to the physical situation of the traveling needs. The participants explained that the presence of the familiar faces within their destination country makes a favor on choosing their destination countries. They also mentioned that they feel safe emotionally with the reason of having someone who will always help them whenever they are in need. Moreover, the help gained by their friends and family members is very meaningful towards their decision making. This psychological factor is not significantly pointed in the previous literature.

#### 4.2.11 Cultural Distance

Narrow cultural distance of the destination country attracts the international healthcare seekers more than other culturally different countries. In term of culture, the participants mentioned the words like “share same cultural values” “same religions and culture” “cultural familiarity”. Only 3 participants which is 10% of total respondents disclosed that they considered cultural distance while choosing their choice of destination country but only two of them (6.67%) explained that it is their main concern. They also told that they feel like it is more convenient for their stays. They explained as follows.

*“I think of Malaysia first because as a Muslim, we have same culture in general. So it is convenient for us. Besides, foods which is different from other religions. But in Malaysia, as a Muslim country, there is no problem with that.”*

M1

*“Besides, we share almost the same cultural value so it is convenient to stay there and deal with people. There are many Myanmar residing and working in Thailand so that it is convenient for us.”* T11

*“The main point is how their culture is familiar with us, our country including the environment, the people and the culture of the people. I believe that will reduce my anxiety up to some points while I am staying there.”* T14

These statements are in line with the previous studies by Sousa & Bradley (2008) and Gökhan Aydın & Bilge Karamehmet, (2017), which mentioned that difference in culture such as their background, values and beliefs interact with decision making process by medical travelers.

#### 4.2.12 Presence of Tourist Destinations

Medical tourism countries usually promote their medical tourism industry together with the attractiveness of famous tourism destination within the country. People usually seek for relaxation and travel opportunity while seeking their medical care abroad. Moreover, it is one of the comparable factors among the famous medical

tourism countries around the world, especially for those who are traveling together with the family.

In this study, a large number of participants which 19 out of 30 interviewees which is 63.33% of total respondents said that they chose the country which is famous for its tourist destinations and they explained that it is considerable not only for them but also for their family members who are going together with the healthcare seeker. Even though most of the participants answered that having famous tourist destinations is included in their decision making, it is not their main concern in choosing their medical tourism destination. But this is one of the considerable points as a co-factor if they have to choose between two different destination countries. They explained the reasons why they chose the country with famous tourist destinations as their choice of destination country as follows.

*“At that time, we chose Bangkok because we planned to go there together with our family. So we can go around and visit together in Bangkok as well like a family trip.”* T1

*“Actually Korea is a bit far from us to travel but I have never been there before. I planned to visit Korea also while having my operation there. Moreover, March and April which is cherry blossom season in Korea, is very beautiful. I wanted to catch that time so I chose Korea.”* K1

*“Actually I chose Bangkok because they have plenty of tourist attractions. I am a travel enthusiast and since before I followed my father, I visited one different place at each time. So it is favorable to me and shopping places are very nice as well. That’s all important to me.”* T9

*“I planned to visit their tourist destinations with my family after my operation. So this is another reason why I chose Thailand.”* T7

These statements are supportive to the findings of the previous studies by Connell (2006) and Ariwa and Syvertsen (2010) which pointed out the opportunity of medical travelers to enjoy the presence of tourist destinations within the chosen country is an additional benefit for them and they tend to choose the country with famous tourist attractions.

#### 4.2.13 Other Considerable Factors

Some of the participants mentioned another considerable factors according to their experiences as medical tourists but did not include as their decisive factors on choosing their medical tourism destination. It consists of waiting time by 2 participants, ease of local transportation by 3 participants, living expenses by 3 participants and enough consultation time with doctor by 3 participants. They shared their experiences as the followings.

*“The living cost is cheaper than other countries if you compare with Singapore or Malaysia.”* T11

*“Moreover, waiting time at the hospital is very long in Myanmar and consultation with the doctor is very rush. But in Singapore, at the hospital we chose, we didn't need to wait too long to consult with the doctor and the doctor is very patient and explained us very well about my sister's conditions and treatment of choice for her. We chose the right hospital I think.”*

S6

*“Moreover, local transportation is very good in Singapore which is very convenient for us.”* S5

*“As an experience, they use very good appointment system, so we don't need to wait too long at the hospital. We just went there at our appointment time and finished within few hours.”*

S5

Regarding to these factors, they were stated by Myanmar medical tourists as one of their considerable factors on decision making, but no one mentioned as important decisive factors for them to choose their medical tourism destination. Most of the literatures and studies were done on western developed countries where waiting time is one of the major problems for healthcare seekers and it is their main decisive factor for such citizens which is not significantly related to outbound Myanmar medical tourists. Moreover, other factors such as ease of local transportation, living expenses and enough consultation time with physician are not explained in the previous literatures and studies. But for Myanmar medical tourists, this includes in their decision making as considerable situation but not highly influence on their decision making process.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Conclusion**

The qualitative study on decision making by outbound Myanmar medical tourists is conducted by using semi-structured open-ended questionnaire to acquire the insightful information of the reason behind each decisive factors made by the medical tourists rather than collecting the most chosen decisive factors by the medical tourists in term of quantitatively research. Moreover, using this methodology provides new knowledges, information and considerable points beyond the reachable literatures by the researcher.

Regardless of the countable number, the reasons behind each decisive factor by Myanmar medical tourists which included in this study are consistent with the facts and findings stated in the previous literatures. Moreover, it is also found out that slightly mentioned and explained decisive factors in some literature are significantly important for outbound Myanmar medical tourists to make their decision on choosing medical tourism destination. Besides, new meaningful, noticeable, interesting and unexpected decisive factors are also identified from the interview.

According to the structure of the framework and the questionnaire which is designed to study the decision making on choosing destination country and selecting healthcare provider in the chosen country respectively, more than one major decisive factor for the whole decision making process were identified. Furthermore, according to the nature of complex decision making process, it is included more than one decisive factors to make the final decision according to the collected data. From which, the most relevant and influential decisive factors for each participant were identified, analyzed and discussed.

According to the findings and analysis, most of the participants clearly expressed the decisive factors to the choice of destination country and healthcare

provider, but only very few of them answered that they have only one main factor to make their decision regarding to the whole decision making.

As to conclude the overall findings, traveling convenience is significantly influenced the decision making of the participants in which the participants put into a consideration for the fact “if in case of emergency”. Following this factor, quality of care, availability of medical facilities and physician training take part in decision making overwhelmingly. These three factors together reflect the quality of the product which is “healthcare quality” for the patients where only one factor is not enough to make a decision even though each single quality-related factors are main decisive factors for the participants respectively. There is a situation of comparing between the availability of the facilities and the quality of the physician or between the quality of care provided by the hospital and the availability of the medical facilities in that hospital.

Communication barrier is also mostly mentioned as considerable factor and for this reasons, the participants tend to choose the healthcare provider which can provide language assistance for proper and better communication with the care giver. On expressing the communication, the communication at the hospital is largely concerned than communication as a daily basic outside the hospital. It also determines the level of satisfaction regarding to the service of the healthcare provider.

From the marketing perspective, presence of representative offices within the country is one of the advantages for the medical tourism countries to attract potential customers more effectively. Apart from their existence, a wide variety of medical and additional non-medical services provided by these offices can maximize the probability of choosing their hospitals.

Based on the findings of the study, the decision making of the participants is highly influenced by the information perceived from their experienced friends, family members and their attending physicians. According to the nature of the country, searching required information through internet websites or blogs or online sources are not widely used within the county and are regarded as unreliable information compared to what they got from their friends, family members and professional advises such as their attending local physicians. Word-of-mouth spreading whether good or bad information is frighteningly influenced any other sources of information. The



recommendations from those who well-experienced the services or this industry is largely influenced on the decision making of the participants.

To summarize the findings, among the factors stated in the research framework, traveling distance is the most decisive factor for Myanmar medical tourists and it is a competitive advantage for those medical tourism countries nearby such as Thailand and Singapore. Then it is followed by quality of care and services, physician training, the availability of medical facilities and services as second, third and fourth most decisive factors for Myanmar Medical tourism accordingly. It indicates that the quality and credibility of perceiving healthcare is very important and most influential factor for Myanmar medical tourists on their decision making. This reflects the actual healthcare situation within the country as well because most of Myanmar medical travelers are seeking qualified and standardized healthcare overseas regardless of very expensive healthcare expenses in the destination countries even though cost effective is the most important decisive factor for developed world such as U.S, U.K or Canada according to previous studies and literatures.

Apart from the product quality which is “healthcare”, the safety and the service assistance such as hospital representative offices are the important decisive factors for Myanmar medical tourists. Language assistance such as provision of medical interpreters favors the decision making by Myanmar medical tourists to choose their healthcare provider. Cost effectiveness is not significantly important for Myanmar medical tourist to choose the healthcare provider but considerable to compare different healthcare providers. Moreover, the reliable sources of information on perceived quality of healthcare provider such as recommendation, suggestion and experiences sharing by close friends, relatives and local physicians also takes part in decision making process.

Other important decisive factors include cultural distance in term of social values and religion, and presence of familiar faces in the destination country as a psychological factor or as a requirement to avoid possible risks during their stay, which are found to be not significantly influenced on decision making by Myanmar medical tourists.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Medical tourism industry is a shared sector between government and private organizations, and between health and tourism industry of the country. A sole investment and improvement in one single organization or single industry will not be helpful to maximize the medical tourism industry. Moreover, this emerging industry is largely involved with the professionals from different levels of skillful person from different professional fields. Medical tourism destination countries should be aware of their competitive advantages in this industry. For example, according to the findings of this study, travel distance and convenience is the profound competitive advantages of Thailand Medical Tourism in Myanmar market. In this chapter, the recommendation will be made into three categories in term of government level, organizational level and individual level based on the findings from this study.

Firstly, the government should recognize the opportunities of this emerging industry and understand the involvement of understandable characteristics of medical tourism industry. In cooperation with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism, the current and potential medical tourism countries should promote their healthcare services and tourism attractiveness in this industry. The policies and roadmaps for the development of this industry should be established with the participation of multiple organizations such as airline companies, travel agencies, local transportation authorities and healthcare organizations. For the influenced factor such as tourist destinations, the hidden potential tourist destinations within the country should be explored and promoted accordingly in a global scale. From the safety aspect of the medical tourists, the country situation should be well-informed through respective foreign embassies and how government policies and rules will protect the international travelers from any possible harms within the country. Besides, if there is any political events or situation within the country, immediate action such as public announcement or statement should be declared to ensure the security concern for the international medical travelers. In term of financial support, short-term and long-term loan plans should be considered for those who will invest in the components of this medical tourism industry such as hospitals, specialized clinics and medical institutions. Moreover, according to the findings, in fact, healthcare facilities, standard, system and its quality is specifically more significant than tourism attractiveness, the government should continuously

manage their healthcare system to be internationally standardized and well-grounded one. If it is possible, the government should also establish the rules and regulations for the cost containment as to prevent unethical business organizations within the industry and to be able to gain cost effectiveness as competitive advantage in this industry.

Secondly, at the organizational level, the healthcare providers within the countries should be aware of the decisive factors influenced on decision making by the healthcare travelers. As explained before, hence the quality of care and availability of medical facilities plays a significant role, the hospitals should not fail to follow the latest medical technology and facilities to fulfil the requirements of the healthcare seekers. In term of quality control, the hospitals should include both service quality and product quality. Service quality in term of intangible value such as customer service section, waiting time, patient flow within the hospital should be well-trained and coordinated to enhance customer satisfaction which can lead to increase re-visit rate of the patients. Product quality in term of tangible value such as medical facilities, medications, treatment quality should be monitored and standardized according to international and local treatment guidelines to prevent unnecessary malpractices and unethical situation towards the patients. The hospitals should ensure the quality of the physicians at the hospitals and hold continuous medical education seminars regularly to upgrade the knowledge of the latest medical trends and technologies.

Moreover, to resolve the communication needs of the international healthcare seekers, well-trained medical interpreters should be provided at the hospitals which will significantly benefit the reputation of the hospitals. In order to address the another decisive factor such as the presence of hospital representative offices, the hospitals should arrange to locate their representative offices in their potential targeted countries to reach the potential customers more effectively. Besides, the hospitals should enter into alliances with leading private hospitals or clinics in Myanmar through memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreement to acquire win-win situation between two parties. This will provide them the opportunities to widen and increase market share in Myanmar. The allocation of representative offices or alliances with local hospitals should not only be focused at the capital of Myanmar, Yangon. It should also manage to expand their services through representative offices at other famous cities of Myanmar. This will give a competitive advantage to achieve more market shares in Myanmar. For

cost effectiveness, cost containment should be considered in line with the services provided by the hospitals because the healthcare seekers usually look for affordable price with comparable services. For the over-charged and unethical healthcare provider, they may lose their current and upcoming potential customers because the experiences of the old patients can extensively spread by word-of-mouth news and this will hugely impact on their reputation. As word-of-mouth spreading of information and perceived experiences of the old patients plays an important role on decision making by potential customers, each and every patient should be taken customer satisfaction surveys and clarified any misunderstanding or problems at once. According to the suggestion and recommendation from the survey form, the management team of the hospitals should upgrade the services of the internal departments accordingly.

Lastly, as an individual level, the profession mainly involved in this industry such as doctors, nurses, allied health services providers should understand their values and place of existence in the development of medical tourism industry. Continuous professional trainings, certificates and degrees should be acquired through internationally recognized organizations and training centers. Besides, ethical values, standards and regulation of the respective professions should be carefully followed and respected for the sake of the reputation of the respective profession. It is crucial to the advancement of medical facilities and the skillfulness of the physician which hugely impacts the healthcare standard and credibility of this industry. Additionally, the local physician should be aware of the importance of proper communication with the patients during the consultation time. Enough consultation time and information for the patients is important not only as the patient's right but also as an indicator for quality of service from patient's perspective.

### **5.3 Limitation of the study and Recommendation for Future Research**

A number of limitations are acknowledged for this study. The most noticeable limitation is the study sample size of this study. Due to the lack of data regarding to outbound Myanmar medical tourists, the study size may be a bias with the sense that the participants will not represent the whole general population of Myanmar citizens. Due to the nature of Myanmar people and geographical constraints, some of

the interviewees requested to conduct the interview via telephone communication. Another limitation is poor resources and literatures regarding to this particular research interest and available data of the required information. No restriction on the medical tourism destination countries is another limitation of the study as most of the participants experienced as medical tourists to Thailand. This is because of the availability of accessible participants and the market nature of this industry as most of the hospitals from Thailand share a significantly large share of Myanmar medical tourist market.

However, no similar research study was found regarding to outbound Myanmar medical tourists and this can be the foundation for further research and studies on this particular interest. Besides, with the help of this study, the further research studies can be pursued about the decision making of outbound Myanmar medical tourists for each different particular destination countries or healthcare providers. This research can be beneficial to the local government as the findings can reflect the insightful understanding of the reasons behind the situation of poor healthcare system within the country. The government should conduct a qualitative study with more considerable sample size for the deeper understanding of the reason why Myanmar citizens tend to choose international healthcare provider even for the same kind of treatments. A quantitative study regarding to the decisive factors influencing outbound Myanmar medical tourists should be done with the large sample size to categorize level of influence by each decisive factors on choosing medical tourism destination.

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## APPENDIX A: Certificates of authenticity (COA)



**IPSR-Institutional Review Board (IPSR-IRB)**  
Established 1985

COA. No. 2017/04-096

**Certificate of Ethical Approval**

Title of Project: *Factors Influencing on Choosing Medical Tourism Destination by Myanmar Medical Tourists*

Duration of Project: *5 Months (February - June 2017)*


Principal Investigator (PI): *Mr. Yan Naung Soe*

PI's Institutional Affiliation: *College of Management, Mahidol University*

Approval includes:

- 1) *Submission form*
- 2) *Research proposal*
- 3) *Interview guideline*
- 4) *Participant information sheet*
- 5) *Informed consent document*

IPSR-Institutional Review Board (IPSR-IRB) met on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and decided to issue the COA to the above project.

Signature 

(Professor Emeritus Pramote Prasartkul)  
Chairman, IPSR-IRB  
Valid from April 27, 2017 to April 26, 2018

Remarks

- 1) Upon the completion of this project, the PI should inform the IPSR-IRB of such progress.
- 2) The PI is obliged to notify any modification of the research project to the IPSR-IRB.

IORG Number: IORG0002101; FWA Number: FWA00002882; IRB Number: IRB0001007

Office of the IPSR- IRB, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Phuttamonthon 4 Rd.,  
Salaya, Phuttamonthon district, Nakhon Pathom 73170. Tel (662) 441-0201-4 ext. 228

## COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

### COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS\*

\* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

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• **Curriculum Group:** Human Subjects Research  
 • **Course Learner Group:** Student Social, Behavioral & Humanity Research  
 • **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Stage

• **Record ID:** 22694826  
 • **Completion Date:** 25-Mar-2017  
 • **Expiration Date:** 24-Mar-2021  
 • **Minimum Passing:** 80  
 • **Reported Score\*:** 80

#### REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY

	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	25-Mar-2017	1/5 (20%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	25-Mar-2017	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	25-Mar-2017	5/5 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928)	25-Mar-2017	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	25-Mar-2017	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

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## **APPENDIX B: The Interview Guidelines**

**Introduction:** This interview is the part of research in order to study factors influencing on choosing medical tourism destination by Myanmar medical tourists.

**Length of Interview:** 15 – 20 minutes approximately

**Mode of Interview:** Individual face-to-face interview, Individual Interview through telephone line for those participants who are not accessible in person.

### **Interview Questions:**

1. Please mention your age, gender and marital status.
2. Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
3. When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
4. Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experiences.
5. How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
6. What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
7. What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
8. What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
9. What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - a. Economic condition
  - b. Political situation
  - c. Cultural distance
  - d. Language difference
  - e. Law enforcement and regulation
  - f. Presence of tourist destinations
  - g. Traveling convenience



10. What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
11. In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
- Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities and services
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others



## APPENDIX C: Interview Transcription Sheets

### Participant (1) – Code T1

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - Female, 31 years old and I am single
  
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my master degree already and I am working in research field.
  
- Have you ever been experienced as medical tourist?
  - Yes, but it is for my father. As my father went to go abroad and get treatment there, I arranged everything for him.
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - We went to Bangkok in 2015.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was our first time to go there as medical tourist.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - My father got chronic sinusitis for long times and got sneezing even with low level of air-conditioning. We have been seeing doctor in Yangon for long times, but it was recurrent after finishing the prescribed medicines and it's not totally cure. Then we planned to go abroad and get treatment overseas. Our doctor in Bangkok hospital checked my father's medical history and his old medications. Then he prescribed new medicine which is nasal spray and asked us to use it for long term and to come back for follow-up in every six months. Since then, my father is getting better. He is a very good and well-experienced doctor.

- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - We chose Bangkok hospital because it is famous in Myanmar for its quality of care and services. Moreover, their representative office is near our home in Yangon. So it is very convenient for us to make appointment and so on. That's why we chose Bangkok hospital.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - Mainly we asked our relatives and did a little search about the hospitals. I also checked through their advertisements as well.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - Firstly, we chose the country destination first and then selected the suitable one among the hospitals in that country. The reason is because we mainly focused on how convenient it is to travel there for us. As I mentioned, Thailand is very close to us and multiple flights are flying there everyday from here.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - Mainly we focused on how convenient for us to travel like the distance and time to travel from our country to there. Because as a medical tourist, we don't want to travel too far to get treatment.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance

- Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
- At that time, we chose Bangkok because we planned to go there together with our family. So we can go around and visit together in Bangkok as well like a family trip. We didn't think about other factors except from that.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - We looked for the facilities available at the hospitals first because we cannot available some investigations and treatments for my father's problem here.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and Services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - Being a qualified physician is important for me so that my father can get better faster and our doctor is also an expert one regarding to my father's disease.
- So what's about hospital representative office in Myanmar or medical interpreter or else?

- I think having their representative office in Myanmar is also a factor for me because sometimes my parents have to go by themselves if I am not available to go together with them. That's why I chose Bangkok hospital because they have their representative office in Myanmar.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No. That's enough for me.

### **Participant (2) – Code T2**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 57 years old, female and married. I got one child.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my bachelor degree with B.Sc(Zoology) and I am a teacher at Dagon (1) Middle School.
- As you have an experience as a medical tourist, when is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I just went to Bangkok, Thailand last week.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my follow-up visit.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - My doctor is very caring. He examined my nose first and removed the mucus inside with nasal scope as I got sinusitis problem. He prescribed me some medications and I have to go for follow-up in every two months. Last week was my second follow-up there. The medications work very well. Their facilities are good and it's worth spending for me.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your

decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.

- I got sinusitis for few years already, almost 5-6 years. I have been consulting with specialist here in Myanmar but it was not improving that much. So I decided to go abroad and get treatment overseas.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - They have their referral agents here in Myanmar. So I sent them my medical documents first and enquired for treatment plans, costs and estimated stays and follow-up visits. Then I planned my trip to go there.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - I chose country first because Thailand is our neighborhood and it is very close to us. Thailand is very developed now and it is very convenient to travel. Moreover, we don't need to apply visa anymore. So we can travel at any time we wish to. The main reason is because they are very near to our country.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - As I said before, I just chose Thailand because it is very close to us which is just one hour flying time and it is very convenient for us.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation

- Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
- Not really but I think about my safety there because I went there alone. Before I went there, I did some enquiries from my friends who have been to Bangkok whether it is safe to go alone or not.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - I chose the hospital which is famous for my medical problem. As my hospital has good reputation in treating my disease, I decided to go there.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and Services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - I had to choose my doctor very well. I looked through the doctors' profiles and selected my choice of doctor. In my case, my doctor got very well experiences and trainings in treating my problem. Moreover, I chose the hospital with fulltime medical interpreters because I cannot communicate in Thai language. So I need them to help me communicate with my doctor whenever I am at the hospital. That's why I chose this hospital.
- So did you have any other reasons or problems during your trip there?
  - No, I didn't have that much.

**Participant (3) – Code T3**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 26 years old, female and I am single.
  
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I am a teacher and bachelor degree holder.
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - Last year. I went to Bangkok, Thailand
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was my first trip as medical tourist. As my medical problem is not too serious, I still haven't been there for follow-up visit. My experience was very good. Even though it is more expensive than Myanmar, it's worth spending there. My doctor is very professional. The nurses and other staffs at the hospital are very caring too. My overall experience is excellent.
  
- Did you have any problem during your stay there?
  - Not really but only communication. But they provided me a medical translator. So the problem was solved.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - I chose based on my problem. As I want to cure my vision problem with Laser technique, I checked the hospitals on how famous they are for lasik surgery and also about their prices. Then I also chose the hospital which is in my affordable range.



- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o Especially from my friends and relatives who have already experienced with Lasik surgery.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I think about the country first. If possible, I might go to America, but it's really impossible. I have to choose the country which is easier to travel for me and it is very convenient to travel from Myanmar. That's why I chose Thailand.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o I mainly focused on my safety first on choosing the country. So that I don't need to worry while having my treatment there. If not, I have to carry those stresses to go out there. That's not very convenient for me if it was.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - o Some factors are already included in my previous answer such as traveling time and political stability which is important to sustain the safety within the country. Apart from them, I concerned about the tourist destinations within the country because I love travelling and I am a travel

enthusiast. That's why I chose Thailand as they are famous for their tourist destinations. Actually communication is important for me because I cannot speak Thai language and not very good at English language as well. So I chose the hospital which provides translator for the patients. The rest are not important for me.

- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o I focused on my doctor's qualifications, experiences and skills regarding to my problem. As to get complete cure is my primary target, I chose my doctor very carefully and he did very good job as well.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and Services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - o . Besides, I chose the hospital where they can provide the medical facilities require for Lasik surgery as not every hospital in Thailand can provide that kind of treatment because they don't have that Lasik machine. Even though you can find in some hospitals, we also have to think about how skillful the doctor is because it is a kind of specialized treatment for eyes. So I considered these two factors together on choosing the hospital.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - o No, I didn't consider that much.

#### Participant (4) – Code T4

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 29 years old, male and Single.
  
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I am graduated with B.E (Civil) and working my own business (Merchant)
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Thailand in March, 2016.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my first visit as medical tourist.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - I didn't get any trouble even though it was my first trip as medical tourist because the hospital has full-time translators and they are very helpful. At first as we don't have our own interpreter, it was a bit trouble. The doctors and nurses at the hospital are also very warmly welcome and everything went well. Especially they have Myanmar translators so it was very convenient for me.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - Especially I knew that hospital from my friend like word-of-mouth news. As our country, even though we can search the data online, I feel like it is better to ask information from the experienced friends. I chose my hospital in that way too.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?

- (skipped because already mentioned in the previous answer)
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - Mainly I chose the country. For Myanmar, my first choices are Thailand and Singapore because it is very close to us. Then I chose the hospital at those countries like which hospital serve Myanmar people more than other hospitals within the country. So I chose Thailand first.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - For me I think language is more important for me because we need to familiar with it. For example, when you go china and if you couldn't speak Chinese language, it is very difficult to communicate.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - Especially after the fact about cultural and language, availability of tourist destinations is important for me because I want to get relax after consulting with the doctor and getting my treatment. As a patient, rather than having new travel experiences and relaxation, it can also help me to cure my problem perfectly.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?

- Especially I chose the hospital with expert physician for my problem. A good hospital with low experienced physician is not helpful for me. I think most of the people who went abroad as a medical tourist are kind of rich people. So we considered to choose expert physician with enough experiences and training for our medical problem. I chose this way too.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- The main is like I said before about expert physician. The second one is about the comparable cost of the hospitals such as treatment cost, hospital room charges of the hospital. As a medical tourist, we cannot expect how long we have to stay. So I have to think about the overall expenses while choosing my hospital.
- So did you have any problem during your trip?
  - I didn't have any. Even for the communication barrier, they have full-time interpreters so that everything was fine. Another thing is like they have plenty of medical facilities and treatments for plastic surgery even for weight reduction surgery, that sort of things. As you know in Myanmar, we cannot get full range of treatments in one place. As I went to get a kind of plastic surgery, it was very convenient for me.

#### **Participant (5) – Code T5**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this

interview.

- I am 64 years old, Female and I am married.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my bachelor degree majoring in Physics and a retired from government officer as assistant manager.
- Have you ever been experienced as medical tourist?
  - Yes
  -
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Bangkok last 3 months ago.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my follow-up visit.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - Everything was okay. I went there because I have hepatitis C. I was seeing that doctor since last two years ago. As I have to go regular follow-up frequently, even the staffs at the hospital remember me very well. The doctor prescribed me some medications and injections for hepatitis C. Now I am getting better and almost completely cure. My doctor explained me very well with my condition and the treatment options. I would say everything was fine.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - My disease needs to treat many months so I had to think of the place which is easy to travel. Thailand is very close to us. So I chose Thailand. Moreover, my friends also recommended me because they had experienced with that doctor.

- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - Especially, my friends. They also recommended me like they got good treatment with that doctor. That's why I decided to go there.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - I just chose the country first. Thailand is very close to us and very easy to travel. That's all.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - The main reason is that Thailand is very close to us. So it is very convenient and easy to travel.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - As another factor, I chose Thailand because I have never been before and I wanted to visit their famous tourist destinations. That's why.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - For hospital, I enquired from their representative office in Myanmar too. That hospital is very famous and they have a good specialist for hepatitis

problem. Moreover, I heard that they can provide latest medical facilities such as investigation on hepatitis C viral load and medications for hepatitis C. The hospital is also very internationalized. That's why I chose this hospital.

- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - I have already answered most of them before. Another thing is availability of medical interpreter. I couldn't speak Thai language or English language. Being with medical interpreter is very convenient for me. That's why I chose this hospital.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No. I don't think so. That's all.
- So did you have any problem during your trip?
  - No I didn't have.

#### **Participant (6) – Code T6**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 50 years old, female and married
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.



- I got my bachelor degree already and now working at my home business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Thailand last week.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was my follow-up visit. I got cancer and since then I decided to go abroad to get treatment. Their representative office arranged everything for me since from the airport in Thailand, including accommodation and transportation as well. I admitted the hospital for 5 days. At the hospital, all the staffs including my doctor, nurses and even cleaner are very good and caring. My doctor, oncologist is very kind and helpful. I got the best treatment there.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - My problem was breast cancer. In Myanmar, my doctor said that my breast has to be removed totally. But I didn't want to remove all so I planned to go abroad. In Bangkok, they have latest treatment, technology and their facilities are very good. I didn't need to remove my whole breast. The main reason is because I don't want to get operation here.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - I asked my friend and went to enquire at the hospital representative here. They arranged everything for me such as appointment, flight ticket.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - I chose country first. Because Thailand is our neighborhood and it is very easy to travel. If in case of emergency, my family member can

follow me anytime and we can even go day trip to Bangkok. That's why I chose Bangkok.

- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o The main concern is because the distance between two countries is not too far. Many flights are going every day. The country's political situation just became settle before my trip.If not, I would choose another country because I feel like it is not safe for me if there are any political problems in the country. Moreover, they have plenty of tourist destinations and it is also one of my concerns.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - o As an another factor, I love to travel and so availability of tourist destinations is important for me.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o On choosing the hospital, the reason is because my hospital is very famous in term of quality of care for cancer patients. As a cancer patient, I decided to go there. My doctor is also specialized in cancer (oncologist) and he is very excellent.

- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- The main reason is because my doctor is very famous and he is breast cancer specialist and very experienced one. Moreover, medical facilities such as PET-CT scan for cancer is available in that hospital. In Myanmar, we don't have such kind of machine for cancer investigation.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - For me, communication is a big problem as I couldn't speak their language at all. But I didn't need to worry because the hospital takes full responsibility on that matter and provides full time medical interpreters at the hospital. The hospital arranged everything including the accommodation as well.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - Not anymore. Everything was okay there.

**Participant (7) – Code T7**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 45 years old, female and single.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.

- I got graduated with Mathematics major and now working my own business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Thailand last week.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was my follow-up visit. The hospital service is very great and I was satisfied very much. My doctor is very good, patient and explained me very well too. The hospital environment is very clean and standardized.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - The reason is because in Myanmar, I have been told that I need an operation like open-typed abdominal surgery but I don't want to do that. I heard that in Thailand, it is not needed to open the abdomen and they have advanced technology like laparoscopic surgery and recovery time is very short too. That's why I decided to go Thailand.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - I have some friends who have been there already and they said that it is very good there. So I chose to go there too.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - I chose country, Thailand first because it is not very far to travel and convenient to travel. That is the main reason to choose Thailand.

- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - The main reason is the travelling convenience for me. Moreover, they have tourist destinations and so I planned to visit them as well and decided to go there.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - I planned to visit their tourist destinations with my family after my operation. So this is another reason why I chose Thailand.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - On choosing the hospital, I mainly concerned about my doctor's qualifications and skills. My doctor is very good and I felt safe to get treatment with him.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities

- Physician training
- Waiting time
- Others
- The another reason to choose this hospital is availability of medical interpreter and it is convenient for me to consult with the doctor at the hospital. Moreover, laparoscopic surgery at that hospital is famous and advanced than other hospitals. That's why I chose this hospital.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - I didn't have because they provide us full-time medical interpreter for 24/7. It was very smooth there.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - I didn't have like this.

**Participant (8) – Code T8**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 30 years old, female and married
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my bachelor degree in M.B.,B.S and now working as Brand Manager.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - It was not for me. But for my sister. I helped and arranged for my sister when she got sick and planned to go abroad. It was in 2016 and we went to Bangkok.

- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - o It was follow-up visit and first visit is in 2015. My sister got lung abscess and didn't want to get operation in Myanmar. So we decided to go Thailand. It is very different hospital environment there. The hospital is very clean and the operation theater is very advanced as well. They have very good infection control at the hospital. That's why even the major operation like my sister's case which is one-hour duration long, didn't get any fever and recovered within few days and healing is very fast too.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o In Myanmar, Bangkok and Bumrumgrad hospital are very famous. Among them, Bangkok hospital is more famous for surgery cases and they have famous surgeon for my sister. That's why we chose Bangkok Hospital finally through their representative office here.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o Firstly, I asked my friends in Bangkok and also my friends who have experienced as medical tourist. Then I got shortlist of hospitals to choose and then I went to the hospitals' representative offices in Yangon and enquired the required information. Then I chose the suitable one for my sister.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o We chose the country first because if the country is very far, we couldn't afford for the overall expenses such as living cost and traveling cost. But for Bangkok, it is within our affordable limit. That's why we chose to go Bangkok first and then chose the hospital.

- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o Most people go to Bangkok as medical tourist. The expenses and services are acceptable and not very expensive in Bangkok. Moreover, my sister's case needs frequent follow-ups. So as an overall, we decided to go Bangkok because the expenses is seemed not to be burden for us in a long run.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - o The main reason is because the traveling distance is very short. We can go many times very easily and even in emergency situation, we can go see a doctor there. That's why we chose Bangkok. In our first visit, as my sister needs an operation, we didn't think about tourist destinations. But in the next follow-ups, it becomes very useful for us as we can go around together.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o The main reason is because our friends recommended us because they have experiences about this hospital. Their representative office helped us in very details such as accommodation, flight tickets and so on. We liked their services and that's why we chose Bangkok hospital.



- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- Usually most of the people go to Bangkok just for medical checkup. But for my sister, she needed a major operation and so we have to look for the hospital with complete medical facilities such as advanced operation theater and availability of qualified doctors. The other factors such as hospital accreditation and certification are not the things we understand well. So we didn't think much about them. We just looked for the medical facilities and chose Bangkok hospital.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - At the hospital, there was no problem because they have Myanmar translator and Myanmar staffs.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - Their representative office in Myanmar helped us a lots throughout our whole journey including follow-up visits. They served very willingly and arranged everything for us. That's one of the factors we chose Bangkok hospital because some hospital agents don't serve well here.

**Participant (9) – Code T9**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 33 years old, male and single

- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - o I got bachelor degree and working my family business.
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - o I went to Bangkok Hospital last month, April.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - o It was first time for me and I went for medical checkup.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - o My experience was very good. They also have full-time translators and it was very convenient for me because I am not a doctor and I am not familiar with medical terms. Moreover, even though my doctor is Thai nationality but he can speak Myanmar language too. It was very nice of him and he is very awesome.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o It is why because we used to go there for my father as he has cancer, since few years ago. So I just decided to go there for my medical checkup.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o One reason is because my friends usually go to Bangkok hospital for medical checkup too. So I knew from them, they recommended me and decided to go there.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.

- Actually I chose the country first because the expenses are low for Bangkok. If Singapore, it will be very expensive. Moreover, it is very convenient for us to travel because it is close to us.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - One thing is because the overall expense is acceptable for me. Traveling time is also not too long and very convenient to travel from here
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in terms of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
- Actually I chose Bangkok because they have plenty of tourist attractions. I am a travel enthusiast and since before I followed my father, I visited one different place at each time. So it is favorable to me and shopping places are very nice as well. That's all important to me.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - The quality of care at the hospital such as their services, consultation with the doctor is very good. I have been experienced that a lot since my father went to see doctor there. That's why.

- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - I don't know much about the hospital. I heard that we cannot do some investigations in Myanmar but it is possible in Bangkok and it is more correct than here. So I trusted their investigations' result more.
- So do you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - Not really. The main thing for me is that I really enjoy travelling and so their tourist attractions are included in my decision making.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - No. I didn't have because they have Myanmar translator and Myanmar staffs.

#### **Participant (10) – Code T10**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 30 years old, female and married
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got bachelor degree majoring in IT and working my own business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?

- I went last few days ago within this month to Bangkok.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was follow-up for my mother.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - Everything was smooth because we arranged our trip such as appointment and so on through their representative office here. The doctor, nurses and everyone was very good.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - My mother got breast cancer. Here is not really good. Bangkok is very close to us and convenient to travel. The cost of the treatment is reasonable and cheaper than other countries too. Moreover, my friends also recommended to go abroad for my mother's problem. In Myanmar, they said that the whole breast will be removed, but in Bangkok, it is possible to remove just the tumor from the breast. That's why we decided to go there.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - Especially from my friend.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - We enquired the information not only for Bangkok but also for Singapore as well. But the cost for the treatment in Bangkok is more suitable for us and the living cost is not expensive. Besides, it is very convenient for us to travel because it is very near to us. That's why we chose Bangkok

- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - The main concern is traveling convenient for us and we don't need to spend much time on traveling.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - We didn't think any of them. But I think they are more advanced in quality of care than us. That's why.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Especially their hospital agent in Myanmar. They are also my friend and they arranged and explained everything for us. That's why we chose that hospital.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training

- Waiting time
  - Others
- The hospital is internationally recognized one and it's very good. Moreover, the doctor is very expert in his specialty. That's why.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - No I didn't have. They have four full-time interpreters and they took care of us since we arrived the hospital and throughout the hospital stay until my mother was discharged from the hospital. We didn't even need to call freelance interpreter.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - Actually we took some investigations such as mammogram here first. But it wasn't okay. We don't like their machine and also the result. That's why we decided to go abroad because they have latest machines and technology.

**Participant (11) – Code T11**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 31 years old, male and single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got bachelor degree already and working my own business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Bumrumgrad Hospital, Bangkok last December, 2016.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was for my father to undergo an operation as he got kidney tumor. It was follow-up visit and our first visit was since last three years ago.

- Please kindly share your experience.
  - o Roughly it is very excellent even though the price is a bit expensive. My hospital is more expensive than other hospitals in Bangkok but they have better service. The doctor is very good and patient. Only waiting time at the hospital is a bit trouble for us. Sometimes we had to wait since the morning till the evening.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o It was also okay to consult with our doctor here. The reason why we went abroad is that here the investigations are not correct. When we arrived Bangkok, we had to do investigations again and the results are different. Especially we do not trust to get treatment here and moreover in Bangkok, they have more medical facilities. That's why. But it is more expensive there.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o I searched on the internet and got some recommendations from my friends.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I chose Bangkok first because we are very close and the living cost is cheaper than other countries if you compare with Singapore or Malaysia. Moreover, I feel safe to travel there. We can even travel anytime if in case of emergency because it's very close.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.



- Especially the traveling distance and time is short and can travel anytime. All the living cost and medical expenses are more cheaper than other countries.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling time
  - As I mentioned before, we are very close to each other. That's one of the main reason. Besides, we share almost the same cultural value so it is convenient to stay there and deal with people. There are many Myanmar residing and working in Thailand so that it is convenient for us.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - At first we didn't know which hospital to choose. But the specialist we want to consult can be available at Bumrumgrad hospital during our favorable date and time. That's why we chose to go there.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities

- Physician training
- Waiting time
- Others
- When I decided to go abroad and get treatment, I enquired like which doctor I should consult with. I got an information like my doctor at Bumrumgrad hospital is very famous for my disease. That's one point. Moreover, they provide more advanced and safe medical services than other hospitals in Bangkok. So I concerned for my safety first and didn't even care about the expensive price at Bumrumgrad hospital.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - No I didn't have. Because we can communicate with English language at the hospital. Moreover, they provide full-time interpreters for the patients.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No I didn't have.

**Participant (12) – Code T12**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 41 years old, female and single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got bachelor degree majoring in Chemistry and working my own business and my family business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Bangkok Hospital, Bangkok last December, 2016.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?

- It was first visit as medical tourist.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - I went together with my sister and my sister got an operation for cholecystectomy and I did medical checkup. As usual, as a woman, I have to consult with female doctor examining all my female organs such as breast, uterus. I went there as my sister's attendant as well and during my free time, I did medical checkup as they have checkup packages.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - Actually my cousin brother is working at Bangkok hospital's representative office. So we got familiar with them and they recommended me to go there. That's why we chose Bangkok Hospital.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - All the information got from my cousins who are working at Bangkok Hospital's representative office in Yangon.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - Especially we chose the country first because Bangkok is not very far to travel. Besides, we needed to apply tourist visa before, but now we don't need it anymore and we can get arrival visa and it is very fast. We can also travel at any time we want and mainly because the flight ticket to Bangkok are very easy also. We chose Bangkok.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - Mainly traveling convenient is the main point. Moreover, they have many medical translators for us at the hospital and it is very great for us

to communicate with them effectively. We can also choose Singapore but we chose Bangkok because I have my cousins at Bangkok Hospital representative office and they can help me anytime.

- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling time
  - Most of the people are traveling Bangkok now as a tourist. For me, I wanted to visit famous pagoda there such as Four Faces Statue, Emerald Buddha Image in Bangkok. That's one of my purposes.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - I chose Bangkok and the doctor was good and everything went fine. They also provide us full-time medical interpreter for us and it was very convenient. But only one thing that it's very long to wait those interpreters to consult with my doctor. Sometimes I had to wait like 3 hours for the interpreter.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services

- Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- Especially they have a very good doctor who is Thai Nationality but he can speak Burmese language very well. In other hospitals, they don't have like that. That's what I liked and I consulted with that doctor. That's their advantage for Myanmar market.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No I didn't have. But one thing is that the doctors at Bangkok hospital visit Myanmar sometimes and see their patients as OPD clinics. Besides, the hospital can send our medical documentation to Myanmar office and we didn't need to wait at the hospital for long times. That's why I chose Bangkok hospital as their services are very convenient for us.

**Participant (13) – Code T13**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 30 years old, male and single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got bachelor degree majoring medicine and working my family business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Thailand last month
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my first visit as medical tourist.

- Please kindly share your experience.
  - My problem was not a big one even though it was my first time. I went there for medical checkup and did all the required investigations and I also consulted for my skin problems. As my experience, it was very good and didn't have any noticeable problem. The reason why I chose Bangkok is because I also wanted to visit around Bangkok as my holiday trip. Besides as I am 30 years old now, I think that I should get medical checkup at least and also planned to consult for my skin aging. The hospital agent in Myanmar arranged everything for me and I asked them to make appointment for me by choosing my doctor by myself through hospital website.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - (skipped because he already answered)
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - I searched by myself on the internet first and asked for more information from their representative office in Mandalay.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - As my problem is not a serious case, I have time to think about which country I should go. So I chose country first. On choosing country, most people chose the nearest countries such as Singapore and Thailand. Among them, I chose Thailand. The reason is because it is very convenient to travel for us. That's why I chose the country Thailand first and then chose the hospital.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.

- The most important thing is about the trust like how far we can trust the health system within the country like the quality of healthcare at this country. Besides, I think how it is convenient for us to travel from Myanmar. I chose the country by considering those factors.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  
- I didn't think about economic stability as those countries such as Singapore or Thailand are already developed. Next factor I think about is political situation and before I went there, I checked whether their political situation is stable or not because sometimes they have political instability within the country. As a culture, I prefer Thailand more than any other countries. Even though we have communication barrier, the hospital I selected has full-time interpreters so that I had no problem with this. I considered those factors. But when I considered about traveling convenient even though both famous countries, Singapore and Thailand are not much different, traveling time to Thailand is shorter and it is more convenient for us to travel and it is very close to us. I like their food, their culture and their tourist attractions. Because of all these factors, I chose Thailand.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?

- On choosing hospital, firstly I think about their quality of care and how far we can trust the hospital in term of their quality. Then I considered how far the hospital is recognized by the local community and whether it is worth spending for me. Next, I checked the availability of their representative office within my country in order to arrange for me. The most importantly I checked my physician like what kind of degrees and certificates he has, what kind of training he took before and how much his experiences are. I also checked about my doctor with my friends who had been there before.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and Services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- (skipped as he answered in the previous question)
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - I didn't have communication problem at the hospital because they have full-time interpreter for the patients. Even though I can speak in English very well, it is more convenient to discuss in their native language. But I had sometimes with nurses and receptionists, but not with my doctor and everything was fine actually.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - I didn't have like that. May be I will have if my problem is big enough such as a major operation like how safe their technology is and how far



they can guarantee with their treatments. I would consider how they will take responsibility if something went wrong because I may have to spend a lot of money for such a major operation.

#### **Participant (14) – Code T14**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status.
  - I am 35 years old, Female and I am single
  
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got Bachelor degree in marketing and working as marketing manager
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Bangkok, Thailand last year as medical tourist.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was my first visit and I am planning to go again next month for follow-up visit. I went there to do medical checkup last year and my experience was as I expected which is very different from my country. Everything is clean and neat. All the staffs are so friendly and professional. The thing I like the most is that I got enough time to consult and discuss with my doctor because in my country, we could not have that chance to discuss with doctor very well.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - I just chose according to my friends' recommendation. I got some recommended hospitals from my friends. Then I contacted to their representative offices in Myanmar and asked for the information such as their services, prices and so on what I would like to know. Then I chose the most desirable one as my healthcare provider.

- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o I got the information from my friends because their family go abroad for medical treatment. As a newbie, I really emphasized on their suggestion and recommendation. And also directly from the representative offices of the hospitals.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how?
  - o I think about the country first because I do not want to travel very far just to get medical treatment. Thailand is also very famous in ASEAN region. That's why I chose Thailand. Especially it is very close and convenient to travel from Myanmar.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o The main point is how their culture is familiar with us, our country including the environment, the people and the culture of the people. I believe that will reduce my anxiety up to some points while I am staying there. That's why I chose Thailand to be my medical tourism destination. Thailand is very familiar with us and also famous in my country.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - a. Economic stability
  - b. Political situation
  - c. Cultural distance
  - d. Language difference
  - e. Law enforcement and regulation
  - f. Availability of tourist destinations
  - g. Traveling distance

- Availability of tourist destinations is important for me. This is also one of the reasons why I chose Thailand. I planned to visit other famous tourist attractions in Thailand too after I have finished consulting with my doctor there. Another factor is about traveling time. It takes only one hour to fly there and come back here. That makes us easier to get medical treatment there. As a Myanmar citizen, we do not have much countries from which we can get visa easily. But we do not have such problem with Thailand as we can easily get whether tourist or visa for medical traveler easily.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - I chose based on the standard and quality of care providing by the hospital. This is my primary concern because it is also the reason of being a medical tourist. The healthcare standard in our country is not at international level because of the lack of healthcare infrastructure.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - a. Cost effectiveness
  - b. Hospital accreditation
  - c. Quality of Care and services
  - d. Availability of medical facilities
  - e. Physician training
  - f. Waiting time
  - g. Others
  - Another important factor is about the availability of medical facilities because there are some medical facilities that cannot be available in my country. So I chose this hospital because they have wide range of medical facilities more than the hospitals in my country. Physician training is something that we usually look for even in our country. I usually prefer a doctor with many degrees, certificate and training because it means to me

that this doctor is well-trained and well-experienced. Medical interpreter is essential for me even though I can communicate in English well, I do not understand medical terms. So I chose the hospital in Thailand where they provide medical interpreter for me. That is more convenient for me to communicate not only with doctor but also with other staffs at the hospital.

- So do you have any other factor you considered to choose your healthcare provider?
  - o Another factor is the reason that they can provide better treatment for those diseases which are untreatable here. Some people got different diagnosis from our country when they get screening in Bangkok. This is not because our Myanmar doctors are not expert but this situation is going on. That's why we chose Bangkok even though we need to spend more money there.

**Participant (15) – Code T15**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - o I am 33 years old, female and married
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - o I got bachelor degree majoring in dental medicine and working as Brand Manager.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - o I went to Bangkok last year November, together with my parents.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - o It was our first visit and it was during our holiday trip. We went for checkup at Thonburi hospital because our friend in Bangkok

recommended me to go there. They have Myanmar staffs at the hospital and they helped us everything. The steps of medical checkup are very fast. We had to do investigations first and then consult with the physician. Everything was done within one day.

- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o It is because our friend recommended us. He is the owner of the apartment we stayed in Bangkok and he brought us to that hospital because my mother also has diabetes mellitus and she is needed to consult for that also. So we planned to do medical checkup during our holiday trip.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o We got from our friend.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I would say country. When I planned to go abroad as medical tourist, I think about Singapore and Bangkok, but Singapore is a bit far from us. For Bangkok, it is close to us and we used to go there before as a tourist and it is more convenient for us. In term of cost, it is more reasonable in Bangkok than Singapore.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o The main reason is because it is very close to us and very convenient to travel so it won't be a burden for us.

- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - Among them, availability of tourist destinations is included in my reasons why I went there. It makes us relax and helps us to feel better during our trip.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - For this, we chose this hospital because we can communicate within the hospital very well. Our friend is familiar with this hospital and they also have Myanmar staffs to help us so it makes us feel more comfortable. Moreover, the price is reasonable too.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others

- Among the factors you mentioned, I would say that availability of medical facilities is supportive to my decision. I like this hospital and chose because they can provide many medical facilities for us and it makes me feel safe to go there.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - I didn't have any special reasons. Mainly because our friend is strongly recommended for us. After that visit, my sister also went there for her operation too because the service is very good. Another favorable factor for us is that it is very convenient to communicate at the hospital because they have Myanmar staffs and interpreters.

**Participant (16) – Code T16**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 30 years old, female and single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got bachelor degree majoring in physics and working my family business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - Last six months ago, I went to Bangkok as medical tourist.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my first visit as medical tourist. I went to do surgery for my nose, like cosmetic surgery.
- Please kindly share your experience.

- As my experience, the hospital is very good and the service is excellent. The doctor is very patient and explained me very well about the treatment options. Overall, it was very good.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - Bangkok is very close for us to travel and if in case, it's very easy to go there at once. Moreover, plastic surgery is not good here and my friend recommended me to go there. That's why I chose to go there.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - I also searched the information by myself like which is famous for plastic surgery. Many places are famous for plastic surgery but Bangkok is very close to us. Besides, I got recommendation from my friend who got nose surgery there and she said that it is very good in Bangkok. Then I decided to go there.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - I think both together first like which country is good and which hospital is famous. And I asked my friends for the famous places for plastic surgery. Then I chose Bangkok. So I would say I chose country first.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - We don't need tourist visa anymore to travel Thailand and it is very easy to travel like urgently. Especially because of this convenience, I chose Bangkok.



- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - My plan was like to go shopping, enjoy my holidays there by going around and getting my nose done there together. So I decided to choose Bangkok.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - For hospital, I chose the hospital which has their representative office here. The reason is because if anything else, I can ask them to arrange for me and they also explained me very well for enquiry. That's why.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - Before I made a decision, I considered about the cost I have to spend for my nose surgery whether it is within my affordable range or not. Plus, I

asked for their quality of care such as their success rates, hospital environment to make sure for me.

- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - o No I didn't have. They have full-time Myanmar interpreters for patients.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - o Especially I asked some old patients who are my friends from that hospital about their operation and about the hospital agent whether they are willing to help for the long-run or not. That's all.

**Participant (17) – Code S1**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - o Yes. It's ok. I am 34 years old, Male and I am married.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - o I got my bachelor degree already and now working in my home business.
- Have you ever been experienced as medical tourist?
  - o Yes
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - o I went to Singapore last month.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - o It was my first time to Singapore as medical tourist because I got back pain. My experience was very smooth and the doctor explained me very well. The hospital is very clean and I feel so satisfied. As an overview, I have to say that it is very good experience.

- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o I emphasized whether the medical care is good or not. I got strong recommendation from my doctor like that hospital is good at treating for the back pain which made me more interested in this hospital. Besides, some treatments and facilities are not available here but available in Singapore. That's why I chose this hospital in Singapore.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o Mainly I got recommendation and suggestion from my attending physician in Myanmar. Before I make a decision, I asked my friends and my brother in Singapore about the hospitals which is famous in treating back pain problem.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I chose the country Singapore first and then chose the hospital there. The reason is because my attending physician suggested me to choose between Singapore. Moreover, my brother is also there and so it is easier for me and I also want to visit him. Besides, we don't need to apply visa anymore to go Singapore as it used to be very difficult process for us in the past. So I decided to go there and visit Singapore also because I have my brother there.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o As I said earlier, we don't need to apply visa anymore to go there and it is easy and near to go Singapore. As I have never been there before, I heard that they have many places to visit so I chose Singapore to visit

and do some shopping together at the same time. That's why I went there.

- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - Not really because I don't understand much about the economic and politics situation. Regarding to the language, even though it seems to be a problem but everything went fine because we can communicate in English. Moreover, they provide medical translator so it was very convenient to discuss with the doctor. At first, I was worried about the communication but at the end, everything was okay.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Mainly I focused on their quality and efficiency of care whether it is standardized or not. It was the main factor because I want to feel safe and make sure that they can provide their best healthcare service for my problem.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation

- Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- Like I said, I think about the quality of care at the hospital because I heard that they are famous for back pain treatment which is my concern. The rest factor like cost is not the main reason because I already known that it is more expensive than Myanmar. Waiting time is a bit long but it is better than Myanmar. I don't know much about the certificates and accreditation of the hospital. I just chose because my attending physician and friends recommended me. As they also have medical translator, it is very convenient for us and everything went very well at the hospital.
  - So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
    - No. I don't think so. I just would like to say that if you want high quality of care, you should go Singapore.

**Participant (18) – Code S2**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 62 years old, Male and I am married.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I am graduated and now working as merchant (family business).
- Have you ever been experienced as medical tourist?
  - Yes. I went to Singapore.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - One month ago. Singapore.

- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit
  - o It was my follow-up visit.
  
- So when was the first time?
  - o Last four years ago.
  
- Please kindly share your experience there in Singapore.
  - o It was very convenient trip there because my son lives in Singapore. So everything during my stay there such as transportation went very well because he is like my guide all the times.
  
- So what's about the experiences regarding to the doctors, treatments and the hospital itself?
  - o Overall, I have to say that my experience is very good. It is better than Myanmar and their service is very good.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o My story is like this. Firstly, I was seeing my doctor in Myanmar. Then he referred me to Singapore because he said that I should get an operation there. Moreover, I also have my son in Singapore. This is also one reason that my doctor suggested me to go there.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o Especially my doctor (professor). Professor referred me to that hospital directly because he knows about this hospital very well. I got all information from him.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.

- I chose the country first I would say. The reason is that it is also needed to be convenient in travelling such as traveling distance because as a patient, I don't want to take a flight too far. Then I chose the hospital. But in my case, my professor helped me a lot and recommended me to go there. So I don't even need to think too much.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - One reason is because I have my son there. Another one is the fact that the country is not an under-developed country and also the security within the country is very good. That's what the way I think and I feel it's safe for us to travel there. If not, I would not think of this country because I concern about my safety.
- So you mean that you mainly think about the safety there?
  - Yes. Security is very important.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - I think all the factors are important. But most important one for me is political situation within the country. Because if they have civil war within the country or unstable political situation there, no one would think of going there and I won't go there too.

- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - On choosing the hospital, firstly I think about the expenses at the hospital. I have to think about the cost of treatment whether it is within my affordable range or not.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - Apart from the cost factor, I think about the physician quality whether they are skillful in their specialty regarding to my problem. So that I can feel safe and confident to get their treatments.
  
- What's about other factors such as hospital accreditation, medical interpreters and so on?
  - For me, as I can communicate in English, that is not much considerable for me. For those who have language problem, that would be an important factor for them.
  
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No. I didn't think about other factors.

**Participant (19) – Code S3**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.



- I am 35 years old, Male and I am single.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my bachelor degree in business management and now working as sales and marketing manager.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - Last three months ago and I went to Singapore
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my first time as medical tourist.
- Please kindly share your experience about your trip.
  - In term of my experiences, as the country is very developed, the hospital is very advanced and their medical technology is very high too. The service was very good and also my hospital was one of the top hospitals in world ranking, so their quality of care is excellent and everything went fine.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - Before my trip to Singapore as medical tourist, I got my back pain for few months and was having treatment with specialist in Myanmar. But it was not getting better and my doctor told me that I need to get an operation. I was thinking like the risk of operation is high if I get an operation here. Even though having an operation abroad is more expensive, they have latest technology and post-operation complication is low. So I decided to get an operation abroad.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?

- For the information, I mainly enquired from the hospital representative in Myanmar. Moreover, I asked the experiences from my friends and their suggestions as well.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - Between the country and the hospital, I chose the country of destination first. As a medical tourist, to travel in another country, I concern about my safety, travelling convenience, communication and the standard of medical care within the country randomly. So that I would feel secured myself to get treatment there.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - The most concern is how convenient I can travel from my country and within the country as I am a tourist there and travelling. I would say that my safety in the foreign country is the most important and I think it is related to their political situation as well. If not, I would not be convenient for us to travel there. That's why I chose that country.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - For me, it is important to be a tourist friendly country, but I do not think much about tourist destinations because my primary focus is to get cured

regarding to my problem. So I mainly concerned about the quality of care for my trip.

- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - The main focus factor is how much they are famous in quality of care for my kind of medical problem and also much they have good image in term of success treatments for my medical problem. Because I think that it is necessary to get full information about these factors and I don't want to worry myself during my visit there.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - Quality of care is the most important for me, not only doctor but also nurses who will take care of me. The experiences and training of my doctor is also important for me because only if they are skillful, I would get better as soon as possible.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No. I didn't have other reasons.

#### **Participant (20) – Code S4**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.

- I am 40 years old, Female, Single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I have already graduated bachelor degree and I do my own business.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - About last 3 months ago. I went to Singapore as a medical tourist.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my first visit as a medical tourist but I have been there several times as a tourist before.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - I have to say that my experience was awesome. Since my first day at the hospital, the doctor did the required investigations for my problem. And they explained me about the treatment options available for my medical problem and asked my choice of treatment among them. Besides, they also gave me information about the estimated cost of each treatment option and the nature of each treatment and their consequences. So I chose Laparoscopic surgery to remove my uterus and tumor inside. I admitted at the hospital for three days. Before, during and after admission to the hospital, all the staffs including my doctor and nurses took care of me very well. I feel very satisfied with this.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - My period was overflown and too long at that time. So I went to consult with gynecologist in Myanmar. After the ultrasound examination, my doctor told me that I need an operation to remove the tumor inside my uterus. But the operation here is open type and also I need to take rest for few days. As I have my own business to take care of, I could not stay at

the hospital that long. Moreover, I heard that it is very painful here and the operation is like they will open my abdomen and remove the uterus. So I decided to go abroad and get laparoscopic surgery.

- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o I have a friend who experienced same problem with me and she went abroad to get treatment. She said that her operation in Singapore is with laparoscopic surgery and not very painful. So I decided to go there as well because she shared her experience with me and recommended me to go there.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o For me, I chose the country first because Singapore is very familiar to me as I used to go there many times. Besides, I have my close friends and relatives there too which is very convenient for me. I think that it is more convenient for me to travel there and so I chose Singapore.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o Anyhow, we have to think about our safety first. I think that the safety for the tourists in Singapore is very good. Moreover, it is very convenient in public transportation in Singapore and it is very advanced too. In term of language, as I can also speak Chinese very well, it is not much difficult for communication there which is very favorable to me. That's why I chose Singapore.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability

- Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
- (skipped as she already mentioned before)
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - The hospital I admitted in Singapore is very famous for medical problem of mine. Apart from them, they are well-known in laparoscopic surgery in Singapore.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- For me, I have to compare between their quality of care and their cost of treatment. I want to get a treatment which is affordable within my range and also it is important that their quality of treatment is in line with their cost. So that it might be beneficial for me. Moreover, they have full-time medical interpreters at the hospital even though I can communicate in both English and Chinese. They are very helpful whenever I need them.
- So did you face with any communication problem there?

- No. I didn't. The medical interpreters are very patient, helpful and willing to help at any time whenever they were in need.

**Participant (21) – Code S5**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 31 years old, female and I am married.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got M.B.,B.S and I am a doctor (own clinic)
- Have you ever been experienced as medical tourist?
  - Yes
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Singapore in 2016.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was not my first time to Singapore but as a medical tourist for my father, it was the first time. As an experience, they use very good appointment system, so we don't need to wait too long at the hospital. We just went there at our appointment time and finished within few hours. The doctor gives us more time to discuss if compared with doctors here in Myanmar. In term of service, the hospital environment is very good and it is very different from the hospitals in Myanmar. That's all.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - We planned to do medical checkup while visiting Singapore with our family. My uncle has a sudden heart attack last month. So we concerned

about family history of heart disease and planned to do heart checkup for my father. Moreover, my sister lives in Singapore so that she is very helpful for us. That's why we chose Singapore. Even if we were not on planned trip, we will choose Singapore also because quality of care in Singapore is more famous and has higher ranking in global level. Moreover, local transportation is very good in Singapore which is very convenient for us.

- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o I did some researches about the hospitals on the internet.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o We don't have like this because we have already planned to travel Singapore as a family trip. But if I have to say, I would say that I chose country first because we have already planned our family trip to visit Singapore at that time.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o I would say how familiar the country is. We have much friends and relatives there. So if in case, I can ask their help anytime.
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations



- Traveling distance
  - Among them, language distance is important for me. We didn't choose Bangkok even though it is famous because we cannot speak Thai language and it is difficult to communicate in English there. Besides, as we planned to travel as a family trip, their tourist destinations are considerable for me. Because we didn't go just to do medical checkup, but for the holiday trip as well. As my father's case was not an emergency case, I didn't think about traveling time.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Mainly on their credibility like how far we can trust on their services and quality of care. We didn't choose the hospitals which are not very well-known even to local community.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
    - Hospital accreditation
    - Quality of Care and services
    - Availability of medical facilities
    - Physician training
    - Waiting time
    - Others
  - As I am a doctor and can speak English well, there is no communication problem for me. Waiting time is not very long at the private hospital in Singapore which is also my concern. Actually I did consider all of these factors together while choosing the hospital.
- So what factor is more important for you among them?

- Physician training. Because they have many doctors at the hospitals and we couldn't know which doctor is good or famous. What we can know only is about their qualifications like certificates, degrees and trainings on their profiles. I chose the doctor in this way.
- So did you encounter any problem during your visit at the hospital?
  - No. I didn't have
- Was there any other factor that put into your consideration for your trip?
  - No. I didn't have.

**Participant (22) – Code S6**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 23 years old, male and single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my bachelor degree already and now working at private company.
- So you arranged everything for your sister, right?
  - Yes
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Singapore in last month, April.
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was our follow-up visit.
- So when was the first time?
  - It's in March this year.
- Please kindly share your experience.

- As my experience, the hospital is very standardized. The quality of care is very excellent. The nurses and doctor are very caring and timely. It was also very convenient to stay in Singapore as well. My overall experience was very great.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - My sister was recently ill and we went to consult with the specialist here. The doctor performed abdominal ultrasound examination and found a tumor inside the abdomen. As a next step, CT abdomen was done and the result is a cancer. The doctor here said that the cancer is already in advanced stage and couldn't get complete cure. The only treatment of choice is chemotherapy. But the doctor suggested that we could get better treatment in Singapore for my sister's condition. That's why we decided to go Singapore.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - When the doctor said that Singapore is suitable for my sister, we enquired the hospitals in Singapore through their hospital agents in Myanmar.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - We chose Singapore first because it is well-known for cancer treatment. Moreover, as a cancer patient, we understand that we need frequent follow-ups so we chose Singapore because it is not very far and easy to travel from our country. Traveling convenience is the main reason why we chose Singapore.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.

- (skipped because it was mentioned in the previous answer)
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
- Moreover, as the country's situation is stable, it is very safe for us to travel there. Besides, communication is also done through English Language which is our advantage as we can speak English well. The living expenses is within our budget so it won't be a burden for us. These are the factors how we considered to choose Singapore.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - On choosing the hospital, having their representative office in Myanmar is one of the reasons. Besides, they have a famous doctor(oncologist) for my sister's problem so we chose that hospital in Singapore.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and facilities
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training

- Waiting time
- Others
- We heard that our selected hospital serves a lots of cancer patients around the global. The quality of care at the hospital is very excellent and in line with international standard which is very different from our country. Moreover, waiting time at the hospital is very long in Myanmar and consultation with the doctor is very rush. But in Singapore, at the hospital we chose, we didn't need to wait too long to consult with the doctor and the doctor is very patient and explained us very well about my sister's conditions and treatment of choice for her. We chose the right hospital I think.
- So did you have any problem while your trip in Singapore?
  - No we didn't have any problem because their representative office arranged everything for us not only for hospital appointment but also accommodation in Singapore as well. They also provided a medical interpreter while seeing doctor at the hospital.

**Participant (23) – Code S7**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 34 years old, male and single.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got a master degree from NUS, Singapore and now working my own company in Myanmar together with my brother.
- As far as I know, you helped your sister chose the hospital, right?
  - Yes. I helped her and decided to choose the hospital for her trip.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?

- We went to Singapore in December, 2016
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was our follow-up visit.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - In Singapore, we took appointment first to consult with the doctor. If not, we have to wait a bit as a walk-in patient, depending on the number of patients on that day. As my sister got breast cancer, we consulted with the specialist at Mount Elizabeth Hospital and got an operation. The doctor did ultrasound examination, mammogram and then consulted with the doctor. So we had to go there since the morning and did the required tests first. We had to spend almost two third of the day. They provide an interpreter for us, but as we can communicate in English, we don't have to.
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - As I used to live in Singapore, I did a little research on the internet when my sister planned to go abroad. I chose Mount Elizabeth hotel and then selected the specialist which is appropriate for my sister.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - I searched by myself on the internet.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - In my case, I fixed the country to go first. Then I selected the hospital and the specialist for my sister.

- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o Because Singapore is very safe for the tourist as the main point. There are many flights flying from Myanmar to Singapore everyday so it is very easy to go there. The transportation system within the country is very good. Moreover, our family members also want to go shopping in Singapore and they have many tourist destinations to visit. That's why we chose Singapore.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - o The main factor is about our safety. The rest is as I explained before. That's all.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o Mainly we considered on their facilities such as medical equipment at the hospital. And also how convenient to take queue for appointment at the hospital.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness

- Hospital accreditation
- Quality of Care and services
- Availability of medical facilities
- Physician training
- Waiting time
- Others
- We considered about the medical facilities first. Then we chose our doctor depending on their qualifications and experience which is relevant for my sister. As a patient, we want to make sure ourselves regarding to the safety of our patient.
- So did you have any problem while your trip in Singapore?
  - We didn't have because I used to live in Singapore before. So everything went fine.
- So did you have any other factors to consider on choosing your medical tourism destination?
  - I don't think so. Those factors are the majority.

**Participant (24) – Code S8**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 30 years old, female and married with one child
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got master degree majoring in IT and now helping my home business and taking care of my child at home.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Singapore for my grandpa in 2016.



- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - o It was our first visit as medical tourist.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - o As we arranged our trip through their representative office here, everything went smooth. My grandpa got lung cancer and the doctor is specialized in it and we liked the recommendations we got regarding to our doctor. The hospital name is Mount Elizabeth Hospital and it is very good.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o When we knew our grandpa got lung cancer, we decided to go abroad and get treatment. We know that hospital' representative here personally and they helped us arrange everything for the trip. Another thing is like we got very good recommendation about the hospital from our friend who just came back from that hospital. Moreover, my friend told me that the doctors there are highly experienced and the hospital itself takes full responsibility for their quality of care. With all these reasons, we chose that hospital.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o We arranged through their representative office. We knew one patient who got same problem with my grandpa and he is also having treatment at Mount Elizabeth hospital. That's why we chose this hospital.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o For us, we have two choices, Bangkok and Singapore. But we chose the country, Singapore first. Because we like Singapore more and we feel safe to go there. That's why.

- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o The main reason is that we feel like we can get better treatment in Singapore. Moreover, in Singapore, the hospital can guarantee their quality of care and take full responsibility on it if we compared with other countries. Moreover, we can even communicate in English and so it is very convenient for us. That's why we chose Singapore.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling time
  - o Firstly, it's about the communication as we can easily communicate in English. Moreover, the country is already developed and we feel safe to go there with our security even we want to go out at night. For the patient attendants like us, we can go many shopping places in Singapore as well. That's why.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o Especially because their hospital agent arranged everything for us. That is very convenient for our trip. That's why we chose Mount Elizabeth hospital.

- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
    - This hospital owns a wide range of medical facilities that makes us feel very safe for our grandpa. Moreover, our doctor has good certificates and experiences in his specialty and this is why we chose that hospital.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - No we didn't. We didn't face with any communication problem at all.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - Not really. We enquired the information and asked our grandpa like what he wanted to do. Then we decided to go there and chose this hospital. That's all.

**Participant (25) – Code S9**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 41 years old, male and married
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got bachelor degree majoring in medicine and working my own business as a GP clinic (family doctor).

- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - o I went to Singapore in 2014.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - o It was my third follow-up visit because I got new medical problem.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - o When I planned to go there, my friend working at that hospital in Singapore helped us everything and I got all the information from her. The hospital name is Mount Elizabeth Hospital. As my friend is the staff of the hospital, I didn't have any problem there. My problem was liver abscess and at that time I was also consulting with the physician here. But I wanted to know more about my disease such as underlying cause for liver abscess so that I decided to go there. Since we arrived at the hospital, they did blood tests, X-ray and CT-scan. It took only four hours and got all the results afterward. Then I consulted with the doctor and told me that I just need antibiotic treatment for my problem and no need to be hospitalized. So I had to go hospital for four days continuously for antibiotics injection and then I came back Myanmar.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o For me, as a doctor, I have my friends who are working as a doctor in Singapore. So it is not that difficult for me and I got information from my friends. As to choose the hospital, Mount Elizabeth hospital is very famous for its quality of care in Singapore. That's why.
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o (skipped because already mentioned)

- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o For me, I chose the country first. I chose Singapore because in Southeast Asia, I trust more about their care than other countries.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o On choosing the country, the main factor is that I assume their healthcare standard is very high according to the information I got from my friends living there.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural and Language distance
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling time
  - o Among them, I considered about their political situation. I concern about my security so that it would be safe for me to go around Singapore. Besides, I assume that Singapore don't have much bad people cheating tourists like other countries.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o For my age, I have friends in almost all the hospitals in Singapore. But I am more familiar with my friend from Mount Elizabeth hospital. That's why I chose this hospital because she can help me very well and she is the reason why I chose Singapore as well.

- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Long waiting time
  - Availability of medical interpreter
  - Others
- I chose the hospital with the main consideration on their quality of care because I trust them on their hospital quality for the patients and it is very famous too. Actually I didn't know well about my hepato-biliary surgeon.
- So did you encounter with communication problem there?
  - As I mentioned earlier, I have my friend working at the hospital so I didn't have that kind of problem.
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - I didn't have like this. For me, since before my problem, I usually refer my patients to go Singapore also.

#### **Participant (26) – Code S10**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 30 years old, female and I am married.
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got master degree majoring in IT and working at IT company now.

- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - o I went to Singapore in 2014.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - o It was my first visit as a medical tourist.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - o It was for my back pain problem. I have been consulting with my doctor in Myanmar for long times. But lately I got my back pain getting worse like I couldn't sit well and walk well. I feel pain even while walking and couldn't continue to walk. Then I planned to went abroad and I heard that orthopedics at Raffles hospital in Singapore is very famous for back pain. Moreover, my friends also recommended me. Then I decided to go there.
  
- What's about your experience at the hospital?
  - o I made an appointment first. On the appointed day, MRI scan was done first and then the doctor explained me the result of the scan. He told me that I got disc prolapse at my spine and gave me some medications and suggested me to do physiotherapy. At the same day, I made another appointment with physiotherapist at the hospital and I went there like 3-4 times for physiotherapy later on. Then it became better.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o (skipped because explained already)
  
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o My friend's aunty is a nurse at that hospital and so she recommended me to go there. Moreover, my cousin used to go there for her medical

problem as well. So I chose to go there because of their suggestion. And I also have my relatives in Singapore.

- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I chose the country first because in Singapore, I have my relatives and friends there. So if in case, I can ask their help any time and it is very convenient for me. Then I decided to go Singapore.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o The main reason is as I explained before.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
  - o Especially I have my relatives and friends there. Moreover, as you know, it is very convenient to travel from my country to Singapore. They also have many tourist destinations and shopping places to go around. That's why I chose Singapore.
  
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o Especially because my friends' recommendation. If government hospitals, it is difficult to make appointment and have long waiting time.



Moreover, as my friend's aunty was also working at Raffles hospital, they told me that the doctor is very famous and I should consult with him. That's why I made appointment at that hospital.

- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- I didn't check about hospital certificate or accreditation. But I looked through the doctor who my friend recommended me, about his degree, certificates and reviews on his treatment whether he is good in giving care or whether he is patient or not. Some stuffs like this. Especially I searched about my doctor's qualification and experiences.
- So did you have any problem while your trip?
  - Not really. Even waiting time is not too long. As an overall, everything went fine.
- So did you consider any other factors on choosing your medical tourism destination?
  - Generally, No.

### **Participant (27) – Code I1**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 32 years old, Male and I am married.

- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I finished my bachelor degree in Physics and now I am working at pharmaceutical company.
  
- As I got an information, I heard that you helped and decided for your father's trip to get medical treatment abroad. So when is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - My father and I went to Apollo Hospital in India last two years ago. The city is Vizag City in India.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was my first time. My father has Parkinsonism disease and we were seeing neurologist here in Yangon. The problem we encountered here is about the medication. The dose of the medication here is very low in milligram and high dose formulation is not available in Myanmar. So the doctors cannot prescribe the suitable drug so my father's situation is not getting better. So we planned to go abroad and get treatment there. Here in Myanmar, Bangkok, Singapore and India are famous as medical tourism destination. So when we enquired them for the expenses, India is suitable for us and the estimated expenses is within our affordable range. Moreover, as we are Indian ethnic in Myanmar, it is very convenient for us that we can communicate very well in India. So we took our father to India to get treatment. Before our trip to India, we sent our father's medical profile first to Apollo hospital through their representative office in Myanmar and they replied treatment of choice, available treatments and estimated cost through email. Then we flied there and customer service is very excellent over there. We registered first and planned for appointment on next day. Waiting time was not too long and not too overcrowded at the hospital. Our doctor there also examined thoroughly and proper history taking was done. Then we stayed there until next two-weeks follow-up. We did all the investigations there which we couldn't

get here in Myanmar. Even till now, we have email contact with the doctor to upgrade the condition of my father. Unlike in Myanmar, doctor-patient ratio is proper and not overloaded for the doctor. All the staffs there take full responsibility for their jobs which is a bit differ from our country situation.

- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o (skipped because already included in the previous question)
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o I enquired at the hospital representative offices in Myanmar. I gave them my father's medical profile first and depending on their reply, we made a decision to choose the hospitals. They are very helpful to us.
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o For me, as far as I know in my knowledge, I chose the country. As I heard that Singapore has the most famous for medical tourists, I enquired for Singapore first, then Thailand and lastly India. The reason is to compare whether it is convenient to travel or not and suitable for my father's problem or not.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o The most important is about their reply on our enquires such as available treatments and their estimated cost. But it was not much different between those countries. But we chose India because their price is not too high and it was within our affordable range. That's why.

- What you just answered is regarding to the hospital's quality and their services. So what do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance
- I would say about the traveling time and traveling convenient from our country to India and also within the country. That's our primary concern choosing the country. So that it won't be a burden for my father. So we just chose India based on traveling situation and also about the expenses we have to use.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - For me, I don't have main reason but before I chose the hospitals, I considered some factors such as the quality of care of the hospitals such as their success rate regarding to my father's condition. And also the available state-of-the-art facilities at the hospital so that we can assure the quality of treatment at the hospital. And also how efficient our physician is in term of training, success stories and experiences on treating same cases like my father. Moreover, the services provided by the hospital to help us during our stay in India such as accommodation, transportation was also in our consideration. We chose our hospital based on these factors.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?

- Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
- (Skipped because already answered in the previous question).

**Participant (28) – Code I2**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 64 years old, Female, Single
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I am a bachelor degree holder and now retired from government officer as assistant manager at Myanmar Economy Bank.
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to India last 3 years ago as my first visit.
- So was there any last visit as follow-up?
  - Yes. Last six months ago. I went there as follow-up visit. I have to go there like every four to six months as follow-up visit.
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - I went India for kidney transplant. I had to stay there for few months. My doctor is very caring. As I had to do many steps for kidney transplant, I had so much worries about it before I went there. But in India, they work very systematic and arranged everything steps by steps. At the end,

everything went very well. But I still need to go for follow-up as regular visit.

- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - o The reason why is because India is very famous for kidney transplant surgery according to the information from the patients who have experienced before. Before going there, we can also consult with their doctor in Myanmar at their representative office. Only if the consultation went well, we can just plan our trip to India. Their representative office arranged everything for me. So I decided to go there.
- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o (skipped because already mentioned in the previous answer)
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I didn't choose in this way like country first or hospital first. For me, I have to go wherever it is to get resolved with my problem. The main reason why I went India is because they are very famous for kidney transplant. That's all.
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o I don't have like this. I just concerned where I can get good treatment for my problem.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - o I chose Apollo hospital because they are very famous in their quality of care for kidney transplant surgery. I asked thoroughly from some

patients who got kidney transplant there before. They also said that it is very good. That's why I chose this hospital.

- So the main reason is because they are very famous for their quality of care, is it?
  - o Yes.
  
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - o Especially, to get best treatment for my problem. Another thing is about communication barrier as I couldn't speak English well, I couldn't speak Indian language well too. But I can get medical translator from that hospital and they can help me at any time we need. That's why I went there. Moreover, they have full range of facilities for the operation like kidney transplant. Also the experiences, certificates and reviews about my doctor is also one of the factors I put into consideration. For these reasons, I chose Apollo hospital to get my treatment.
  
- So did you have any problem while your trip?
  - o No I didn't have because they arranged everything so well.
  
- So did you have any other factors to consider on choosing medical destination?
  - o No I don't have

**Participant (29) – Code M1**

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 65 years old, female and Single
  
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I got my bachelor degree already and now a retired from government officer.
  
- Have you ever been experienced as medical tourist?
  - Yes
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - One year ago. I used to go Malaysia for my knee joint pain.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit? Please kindly share your experience.
  - It was my first time. I got chronic knee joint pain and didn't get better even though I was giving some medications from my doctor in Yangon. So I decided to get treatment in Malaysia. The hospital is very clean and very standardized. The doctor explained me very well how I can get treatment and how to stay to reduce pain. It was okay.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - My knee joint pain is getting worse and my doctor here said that I might need knee replacement surgery. So it is a kind of major operation. Knee joint is also important as it might interfere with my daily activities. Then I decided to choose getting qualified and advanced treatment abroad in Malaysia.



- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - As usual, the friends who have experienced before and the people who also got operation abroad. I asked them and based on their suggestions, I chose the hospital in Malaysia.
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - I think of Malaysia first because a Muslim, we have same culture in general. So it is convenient for us. Besides, foods which is different from other religions. But in Malaysia, as a Muslim country, there is no problem with that. Moreover, Malaysia is not very far from us and convenient to travel. They also have famous destinations for us, Muslim people and we wanted to visit those places too.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - As I explained before, especially, I would say it is because we share the same cultural value.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political stability
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance

- These are already mentioned before such as traveling distance is not very far, we have same cultural as a Muslim and so they have famous tourist destinations. That's why I chose Malaysia.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - I asked my friends and hospital representative offices here before I made a decision. I got to know that they have latest technology for knee operation and my doctor is very specialized for that. My doctor also has good reputation and high success rate for knee operation. That's why I chose this hospital.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - The price is also reasonable for an operation than other hospitals Especially the doctor and hospital is very good for their quality of care. This is more important for me.
- So did you encounter any problem during your trip?
  - No I didn't
- So did you have any reasons apart from the factors stated in the questions?
  - No I didn't have other reasons. I got many information from my friends also and then I chose by myself.

### Participant (30) – Code K1

- Please mention your age, sex and marital status. And please let me record this interview.
  - I am 28 years old, female and single.
  
- Please indicate your educational background and occupation.
  - I am a bachelor degree holder and working my home business now.
  
- When is your last time going abroad as medical tourist and what is your destination country?
  - I went to Korea last month.
  
- Is it your first visit as medical tourist or follow-up visit?
  - It was my first visit as a medical tourist.
  
- Please kindly share your experience.
  - In Korea, they have many famous hospitals for plastic surgery. I chose the hospital which has their representative office in Myanmar because it is more convenient for me. The hospital is very clean. The doctor and nurses are very kind. As I have to do an operation for my face, I was worried a bit but they explained me very well with the translator. I was very satisfied with their services and I did an operation finally. As an overall, it was very great.
  
- How do you choose your medical tourism destination? Please explain your decision making process of choosing medical tourism destination.
  - As it is a plastic surgery, it is not very famous and also few specialists are available in Myanmar. Honestly I was afraid to get an operation here. So I decided to go abroad for that. On choosing the hospital, you can see many advertisements of foreign hospitals in Myanmar. For me, I asked my friends who used to have experiences before and enquired at their

recommended hospitals. Among them, I chose the hospital which is famous for nose surgery in Korea.

- What are the sources of information to help you choose your medical tourism destination?
  - o (skipped because already mentioned in the previous answer)
  
- What do you choose first between your choice of destination country and your choice of healthcare provider? Please explain me why and describe how.
  - o I have to say I chose the country first. The reason is that Korea is very famous for plastic surgery. That's why I went there.
  
- What is your primary concern on choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? Please explain me why.
  - o Mainly, I considered like Korea is very famous for plastic surgery. As you know, in Korea, not only actors and actresses, even general public are also having plastic surgery as a normal operation for them. Moreover, they have latest technology and treatments regarding to plastic surgery. This specialty is very advanced and developed in Korea. That's why I chose Korea.
  
- What do you think about the following factors regarding to choosing your choice of medical tourism destination country? How does it relate to you in term of supportive factors to choose your choice of destination country?
  - Economic stability
  - Political situation
  - Cultural distance
  - Language difference
  - Law enforcement and regulation
  - Availability of tourist destinations
  - Traveling distance

- The other factors are not really important for me. Actually Korea is a bit far from us to travel but I have never been there before. I planned to visit Korea also while having my operation there. Moreover, March and April which is cherry blossom season in Korea, is very beautiful. I wanted to catch that time so I chose Korea.
- What is your main focus factor on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - I think most of the hospitals in Korea have more or less the same technology. But for me, I want to get a very beautiful nose so I chose the hospital where they have very specialized plastic surgeon in nose. I chose my doctor at that hospital because my friends also recommended me to do so.
- In the followings, what are the other factors that support your decision on choosing your healthcare provider in your choice of destination country? And why?
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Hospital accreditation
  - Quality of Care and services
  - Availability of medical facilities
  - Physician training
  - Waiting time
  - Others
  - As an another fact, especially the agent. They arranged everything for me regarding to my trip, including the interpreter for me. They helped me choose the best doctor for me as well. This is the main reason. Also the cost is within my budget. That's why
- So did you have any problem while your trip in Korea?

- Mostly it was very ok. But we have communication problem but the hospital provided a translator for us. So it's not a problem and we made sure about this since before our trip.

