

**KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INTERNATIONAL  
PATIENT SATISFACTION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF  
MEDICAL TOURISM IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS, THAILAND**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
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Thesis  
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**ABSTRACT**

As increasing numbers of people go overseas for medical care, medical tourism has become an expanding section of the tourism industry. Thailand also has a significant growth potential in the medical tourism business, although Asian countries being among the top destinations for medical tourists due to the availability of low-cost healthcare and high-quality services. The objectives of this investigation are to assess the level of foreign patients' satisfaction with medical travel to Thailand's private hospitals and to identify the factors which influence that satisfaction. The scope of this study covers Myanmar medical tourists who visit Thailand's private hospitals. In this study, a quantitative research design has been used and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regressions.

The study found that medical tourists from Myanmar are very satisfied with their experiences in Thailand. Additionally, the results of the analysis of multiple linear regressions revealed that patient satisfaction was significantly and positively influenced by service quality and country image. By providing a detailed understanding of the factors and relationships that influence the satisfaction of Myanmar medical tourists in Thailand, this study contributed to the knowledge for better management of private hospitals.

**KEY WORDS:** Medical Tourism/ Patient Satisfaction/ Service Quality/ Medical Costs/ Thailand

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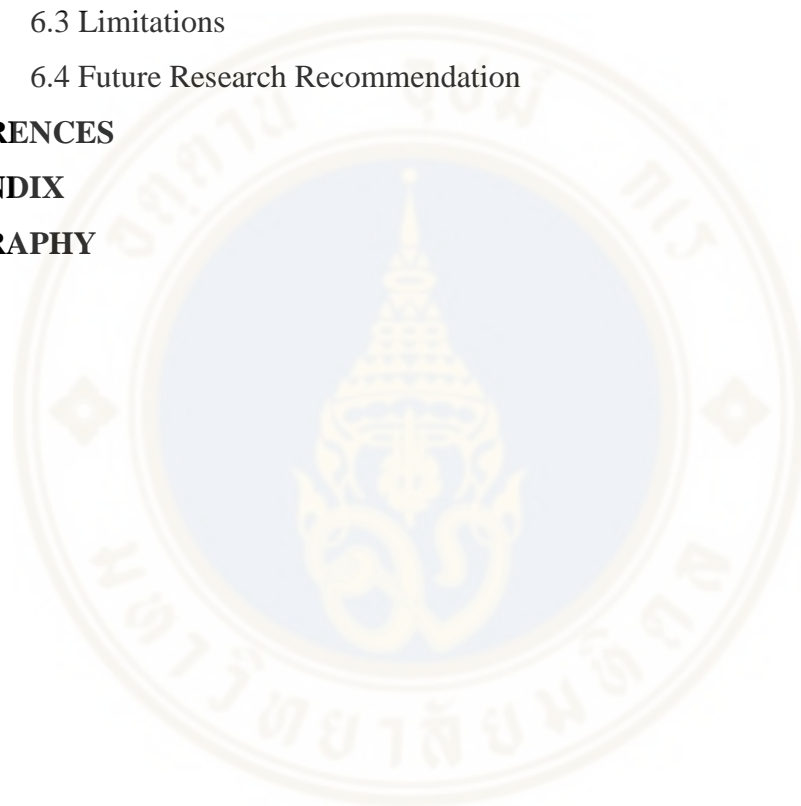
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Medical Tourism means a journey that involves crossing foreign boundaries to seek a variety of medical treatments and various meanings. Carrera and Bridges (2006) defined medical tourism as "the organized travel outside one's local environment for the maintenance, enhancement, or restoration of an individual's well-being in mind and body". It often includes wellness and health-care services as well as leisure, pleasure, and relaxation activities. People who are interested in saving money on their medical expenses attend hospitals abroad to have dental, medical, and surgical procedures which are less expensive there compared to the costs at residence. (MacReady, 2007). Patients have been travelled from developed countries to developing countries due to many issues, such as lower costs with receiving qualified medical services. These factors led to some nations' better outcomes in attracting medical tourists.

In the last decade, there was a marked increase in medical travel to developing countries (Khan et al, 2016). Due to medical tourism, advanced medical facilities are expanding in developing nations in an effort to draw in foreign tourists, which is driving the rapid growth of the healthcare infrastructure. Medical tourism packages that include everything from hotel accommodations to medical insurance are also increasingly offered by healthcare groups. Advanced medical facilities and services are increasingly offered to overseas patients, particularly in developing nations. The potential economic benefits of this worldwide business in medical services are significant (Bookman, 2007). With an annual average growth rate of 20%, the international expense for medical tourism has been worth US\$60 billion with the annually 20% growth rate (MacReady, 2007).

Mainly in South-East Asia, industry of medical tourism is one of Thailand's most rapidly expanding industries, particularly in Bangkok, with its globally approved

facilities and top-notch medical services. The market has grown not just for clients from Asia but also from the Eastern Mediterranean. This industry has been expanding quickly as an outcome of globalization. This industry benefits from having less restrictions on overseas travel since it may attract more customers (Heung et al., 2011).

In 2018, Thailand achieved the market of medical tourism because of its significant disparity between medical costs in Thailand and developed nations. There were 2.4 million people visited Thailand for medical care in 2017 due to the nation's accessible and high-quality healthcare options. On the other hand, Singapore, Colombia, Taiwan, and Spain represented as countries with the fastest growing medical tourism industries while Thailand came in at number 18 (The International Healthcare Research Center's Medical Tourism Index, 2016).

United Arab Emirates (21,568 patients), Bangladesh (8,443 patients), the USA (7,855 patients), and Myanmar (7,568 patients) are the top 4 countries that contributed to medical tourism in Thailand (Reiling et al., 2008). The majority of Myanmar patients travel to Thailand, Singapore, and India for medical care and the medical travel from Myanmar to Thailand is growing in popularity. It was expected that when visa policies between Myanmar and Thailand become better and there will be an increase in the number of patients from Myanmar. Due to liberal economic policies and changes in market demand, Myanmar today provides innovative private hospitals. However, it appears that the tendency of medical tourism abroad is growing. It was also mentioned in a study that there is an unmet demand, particularly for the wealthy families, specifically on service satisfaction that leads to health seeking behavior abroad.

Since many years ago, there has been an evolution in Thailand's position to medical tourism. In addition to providing medical services, hospitals nowadays offer comfort and flexibility. As a result of significant developments in hospital administration, patients now receive immediate, comfortable service with a range of options. According to Reiling et al. (2008), competition among private hospitals has increased as well as the quality of services offered.

## 1.2 Problem Statements

Medical tourism is a global term with the purpose of patients traveling to other countries seeking medical treatments at a lower cost and often with higher quality of care. According to its state-of-the-art healthcare facilities, affordable prices, and high patient satisfaction rates, Thailand has become a leading medical tourism destination (Chitthanom, 2020). The challenge to get attention from potential foreign patients to receive the comparable quality in healthcare services at their home country, makes the biggest obstacle for the medical tourism industry in developing countries. The authors told that the perception of developing country as a destination for medical tourism may indicate a lower standard of goods and services (Bies & Zacharia, 2007).

One challenge is that communication between international medical tourists and doctors and nurses might be difficult due to cultural and linguistic limitations. Both the patient and the caregiver may happen miscommunication or misinterpretation (Ben-Natan et al., 2009). Some Asian cultures communicate more subtly and with clues, and in some Asian nations, doctors are rarely questioned. In contrast, North American patients communicate more openly with their doctors, frequently challenging the expertise, and anticipating honest feedback. In contrast to Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia, where English is widely spoken, language communication skills are seen to be an ongoing challenge in Thailand, with the field of nursing, customer service, and other related employees being the main targets of concerns (Wong et al., 2014).

However, there are several challenges that Western countries face in ensuring patient satisfaction during the medical tourism journey. One challenge is the lack of familiarity with the local healthcare system and cultural differences. Patients from Western countries may have different expectations when it comes to communication, privacy, and medical practices, which can lead to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction. (Lunt & Carrera, 2010).

Another challenge is the quality and safety of medical treatments. Patients from Western countries may be skeptical about the quality of healthcare in Thailand, particularly if they are not familiar with the medical facilities and accreditation

standards. Concerns about hygiene, infection control, and medical errors can also arise, leading to lower patient satisfaction rates (Julchoo et al., 2021).

Thailand's hospitals have embraced cutting-edge medical procedures and purchased the newest technology to give their patients the best treatment possible. MarketWise's research from 2010 found that medical tourists' satisfaction with Thailand's medical innovations and medical professionals was quite high. Thailand also offers transportations, such as roads, airports, in addition to these completely established medical facilities.

Thailand is known as "land of smiles," for the nation and traditional hospitality that its citizens extend a cordial welcome to visitors. Moreover, the medical tourists choose Thailand as their destination for medical tourism because of the attentive treatment provided by skilled and competent professionals (Rerkrujipimol & Assenov, 2008). This is beneficial to build international patients' confidence and trust.

While Thailand become a popular medical tourism, there are several challenges that medical tourism faces in ensuring patient satisfaction in competition with its rivals. By addressing these challenges and meeting the requirements outlined above, healthcare providers in Thailand can ensure that international patients receive high-quality medical treatments and care.

### **1.3 Objectives**

Exploring the key factors influencing international patient satisfaction during the process of medical tourism to Thailand is the fundamental goal of this study, with a focusing on factors such service quality, cost, culture, country image, and safety. The study's specific objectives are:

1. To analyze the relationship between medical service quality and patient satisfaction in the Thai medical tourism sector
2. To explore the relationship of medical costs with patient satisfaction
3. To analyze the relationship between destination image and patient satisfaction during medical tourism
4. To study the connection of culture with international patient satisfaction in medical tourism
5. To analyze the relation of safety upon patient satisfaction during the

journey of medical tourism in Thailand.

Overall, the objective of this study is to explore the strengths and limitations of international patients' satisfaction at private hospitals, Thailand, since the Thai medical tourism industry is upgrading their services to meet with the requirements and expectations of foreign patients by looking at various factors of service quality, cost, culture, country image, and safety. The study additionally aims to offer suggestions for enhancing patient satisfaction, upgrading the standard of healthcare services, and strengthening Thai medical tourism sector at global market.

#### **1.4 Scope of the study**

The study aims to focus mainly on medical tourists, who travel to Thailand from Western countries, Arab nations, China, and Asian nations like Cambodia and Myanmar to seek medical care in Thai hospitals as well as to travel throughout Thailand. Samples will be surveyed by the researcher by performing in-person interviews with international patients who took medical treatment in Thailand before and providing questionnaires via different online platforms (such as the Facebook Messenger, Viber, or Line programs). The study will also focus on discovering the factors influencing how satisfied international patients are with Thai medical services, particularly medical quality, cost, country image, culture, and safety.

#### **1.5 Significance of Research**

This study will analyze the influencing factors on international patient satisfaction with regards to healthcare tourism, particularly in private hospitals, Thailand. The results of this study may be utilized by healthcare managers or policymakers to understand the factors influencing foreign patient satisfaction and how they might be addressed to enhance overall patient satisfaction and thus, to increase the competitiveness of Thailand's medical tourism business. The findings will enable to be used on international patient satisfaction in other hubs for medical tourism.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Medical Tourism**

The phrase "medical tourism" is a broad word which includes a variety of different activities and has many definitions. According to Centers for Disease Control (2020), visiting to other nations regarding a medical treatment is referred to as medical tourism. Smith et al., 2011 also identified medical tourism as "the practice of traveling to another country with the intention of receiving health care (elective surgery, dental treatment, reproductive treatment, organ transplantation, medical checkups, etc.)" and is typically divided into medical emergencies that occur abroad and planned medical treatment.

On the other hand, the authors described medical tourism as "the process of "leaving home" for medical services and treatment in another country which is an emerging phenomenon in the health care industry" (Keckley et al. 2008). Health tourism means "the organized travel outside one's local environment for the maintenance, enhancement or restoration of an individual's well-being in mind and body" (Carrera and Bridges, 2006). This term represents medical tourism as "organized travel outside of one's usual geographic area for the purpose of enhancing or restoring one's health through medical intervention".

Global medical tourism is a multimillion-dollar industry that is still growing and positioned as a global phenomenon. The value of health caused the interest of many countries to enhance the wellbeing of their population (Herrick, 2007). Medical tourism refers to the act of people who travel to other nations with the attention of receiving best and affordable medical care services (De Arellano, 2007).

Tourist may take a travel for taking medical treatment with lower costs due to referrals from friends or family or plan of jointed vacation and healthcare services with a preference of care from medical professionals who has competency to understand the traveler's culture and medical treatment issue (CDC 2020). Due to a variety of reasons, individuals may go to other countries for lower medical expenses,



prompt treatment and actions with high qualified treatment therapy and professionals (Crooks et al., 2010). Due to medical tourism, advanced medical facilities are expanding in developing nations in an effort to capture foreign tourists' attention, promoting the rapid development of the healthcare infrastructure. Additionally, healthcare organizations now offer complete medical tourism services that cover everything from hotel accommodations to healthcare coverage.

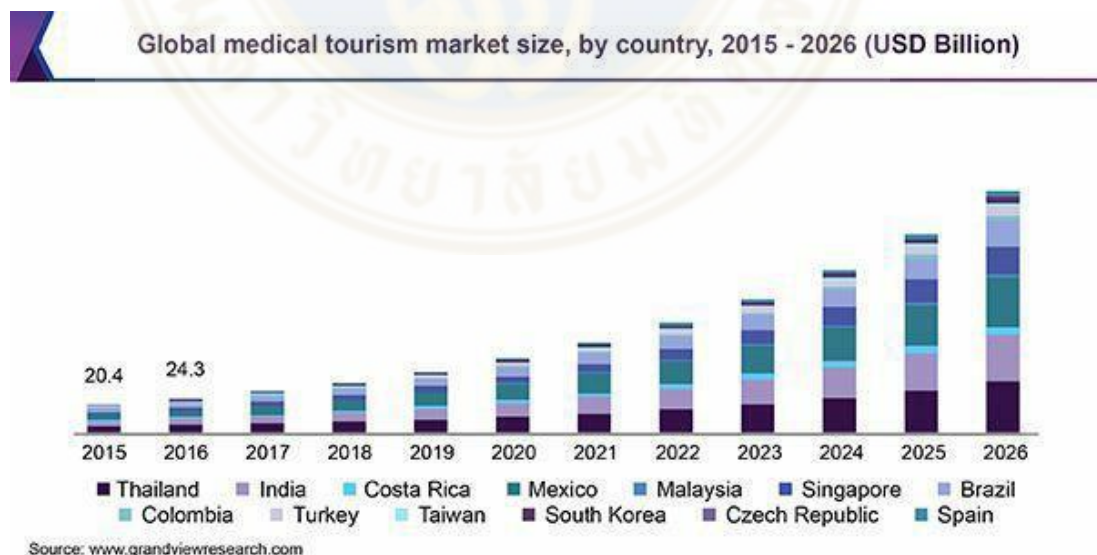
Some of the markets with the fastest increasing medical tourism include Singapore, Colombia, Taiwan, and Spain. With sophisticated healthcare infrastructure and competent labor to serve foreign patients, medical tourism industry made is major income for many nations. The first and biggest private hospital in Asia, Bumrungrad International Hospital was the first JCI accredited hospital that is located in Thailand. Moreover, the International Healthcare Research Center's Medical Tourism Index for 2016 revealed that Thailand was at rank 18 in medical tourism services.

Medical tourism earnings make up a considerable share of global international tourism because of the size and complexity of the health business today (Ehrbeck, 2008). Analysis of Grand View Research, Inc. 2019 showed that the size of the worldwide medical tourism market is anticipated to increase USD 179.6 billion in 2026, achieving 21.9% of Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) throughout the projected period (Fig. 1). Direct foreign exchange income from medical tourism supports the growth of any economy overall. For locals, it also offers job and business prospects. Additionally, it promotes the expansion of related industries including pharmaceuticals, medical technology, and tourism. Presence of government assistance to preserve the overall reputation and political stability of the host nation also plays on important factors in medical tourism sector.

The most significant challenge happened to medical tourism was Covid-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 epidemic, there was closures of public transportation around world which resulted negative impact upon global tourism. Asia-Pacific has lost 33 million visitors according to the report (Shukry 2020). Each year, one million outbound medical tourists and one million health tourists travel from China to South Korea, Japan, and the United States being the top three destinations. Every year, 350,000 medical tourists go to South Korea with highest number of Chinese medical tourists. Beyond Southeast Asia, Iran also got 350,000

medical tourists, 90% of whom are from neighboring nations and the Gulf, an area with a rising COVID-19 infection rate. Over 600,000 people travel to Italy for medical purposes, a very small fraction (Yusof, 2020).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023) reported in their latest World Tourism Barometer report that medical tourism return back to its stronger position as soon as the restrictions were reduced. 182 percent year-on-year in Q1 2022 was increased in its industry and a 64 percent increase from 2021 was recorded in Asia Pacific region. Restoration of Country borders opening results into high support for medical travelers who depend on international healthcare. Medical tourism sector is predicted to grow rapidly at the end of 2022 after the international patients come back for their expected medical services at foreign regions. With increasing demand, investors across the Southeast Asia region especially in three foremost medical tourism destinations such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, are investing in healthcare infrastructure for competitive advantage in both international and local medical tourists.



**Figure 1. Global medical tourism market size (2015-2016) (Grand View Research)**

## 2.2 Medical Tourism in Thailand

Thailand is one of the most outstanding Asian countries for medical tourism destination. For individuals, especially in the South-East Asia region, providing the healthcare services to international patients plays one of Thailand's most rapidly expanding businesses, particularly in Bangkok, with its globally approved facilities and top-notch medical services. The market has grown not just for clients from Asia but also from the Eastern Mediterranean. This industry has been expanding quickly as an outcome of globalization. This industry benefits from having less restrictions on overseas travel since it may attract more customers (Heung et al., 2011).

According to Reiling et al. (2008), the top 4 nations who come for the purpose of medical tourism in Thailand were United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, the USA and Myanmar. World Health Organization research (Noree et al. 2016) found that 7,568 patients from Myanmar and 14,730 patients from South-East Asia travel to Thai hospitals for medical care. Due to the substantial variation in medical expenses between Thailand and developed countries, Thailand achieved the leading market with high revenue in 2018. Because of the country affordable high- quality medical services, 2.4 million individuals traveled to Thailand for medical treatment in 2017.

Since many years ago, there has been an evolution in Thailand's position to medical tourism. In addition to providing medical services, hospitals nowadays offer comfort and flexibility. As a result of significant developments in hospital administration, patients now receive immediate, comfortable service with a range of options. According to Reiling et al. (2008), competition among private hospitals has increased as well as the quality of services offered. Thailand presently has more than 450 private hospitals, which will rise sharply in the future. According to the 2016 Medical Tourism Index, Thailand was placed on the same ranking for the quality of facilities and services from its well-established healthcare infrastructure and a burgeoning population of medical professionals. The international hospitals in Bangkok Bamrungrad and Samitivej hospitals received the Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation as the pioneer in Southeast Asia (Thailand Board of Investment 2014). From 1997 to 2022, Thailand's tourist arrivals averaged 1435822.93, with a record high

of 3930800.00 in December 2019 and a record low of 0.00 in April 2020 (Thailand Tourist Arrivals, 2023).

According to *Medical Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis by treatment insight 2022- 2030*, most people prefer Thailand for cosmetic and bariatric procedures. Breast augmentation, laser tattoo removal, liposuction, Botox, hair transplants, and Coolsculpting are a few of the popular medical operations in Thailand. Cosmetic surgery is the most popular medical intervention in Thailand. Thailand provides a number of medical services and procedures such as dental, cardiac and neurological surgeries, cosmetic and eye surgery and medical checkup which are offered at much affordable price compared to those in European countries. In contrast, medical operations like knee, hip, and gastric bypass are less expensive in India than in certain other wealthy countries like the U.S. and the UK. (Thailand Board of Investment, 2014).

Thailand's economic growth is influenced by a variety of factors including the presence of a well-developed tourism industry, an increase in the number of private healthcare providers, and affordable healthcare expenses. The medical tourism growth is also influenced by better personal care standards and the use of cutting-edge treatment technology. It is home to Asia's largest private hospital and has more than 1,000 hospitals. According to the Thai Ministry of Commerce, 1.2 million foreign patients used Thai healthcare services in 2006 which generated an estimated US\$ 1.1 billion, or about 9% of Thailand's projected overall tourism expenses. Thailand was predicted to have earned US\$7.5 billion from medical tourism between the beginning of the year 2004 and the end of 2008 (Thailand: medical hub of Asia, 2010). The potential of medical tourism as a source of income in currencies is recognized by the Thai government. It was predicted that medical tourism will contribute to 0.4% of Thailand's GDP in 2011, according to projections. Beside these economic advantages, there is a good deal of concern about just how medical tourism may impact fairness, particularly in regions with developing health systems where resources may need to be transferred to treat patients from abroad (NaRanong & NaRanong, 2011). In addition, the difference between those who believe that medical tourism has positive economic consequences and those who believe that it

has negative effects on health systems is now huge because the argument depends on inadequate real information (Hanefeld et al., 2014).



**Figure 2. Thailand Tourist Arrivals ( From 1997 to 2022) . Available from <https://tradingeconomics.com/thailand/tourist-arrivals>**

### 2.3 Patient Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction is the experience of a patient in an emotional state of happiness or satisfaction during the healthcare journey. Good medical experience is hence every health service provider's primary responsibility (Li, 2012). It is a subjective indicator that may be impacted by many reasons such as healthcare standard, the patients' interactions with healthcare professionals, the services' accessibility, and the general patient experience. Moreover, Sharew et al. (2018) found that there are three components that make up patient satisfaction: emotive, cognitive, and behavioral.

One successful company or government policy has good satisfaction level, which can only be achieved by providing excellent service quality in which effective service delivery, cost allocation, and management techniques are essential for carrying out those improved provisions (Sun & Li 2006). The modification of the performance of a healthcare service should be had more attention since it is a tool for analyzing the effectiveness of the healthcare that the patient received (Mohd & Chakravarty, 2014).

Several studies have shown that patient satisfaction is linked to better healthcare outcomes, including improved adherence to treatment, better health outcomes, and decreased healthcare costs (Chang et al, 2006). The potential of

hospital and clinic population growth increases as medical tourism in Thailand develops. This might result in longer wait times, less access to care, and worse service. As a result, patients may become dissatisfied, and the reputation of the sector could be negatively impacted (Hudson & Khan, 2017).

Misunderstandings and treatment mistakes can occur as a result of poor communication between patients and medical professionals. Because patients may not speak the local language and may not be aware of cultural variations in medical practices, this problem is particularly common in medical tourism (Khan & Hudson, 2018). Thus, patient satisfaction is greatly influenced by effective communication. Research has indicated that people are more delighted with their care when they believe that their healthcare practitioners engage with them well (Fenton et al., 2012).

Healthcare providers must consider the financial impact of patient satisfaction. According to a number of studies, patients who have high satisfaction are more likely to come for follow-up appointments, which can enhance healthcare professionals' income. While contented patients tend to have fewer hospital readmissions and emergency room visits, patient satisfaction has also been linked to reduced healthcare expenses (Fenton et al., 2012). Satisfied patients are more likely to seek further medical care in Thailand for themselves as well as their family and friends, which boosts the number of clients and financial success of the sector (Kim & Kang, 2020).

According to Kosaiyakanont and Breen (2017), positive word-of-mouth and online reviews from satisfied clients may boost Thailand's image as a destination for medical tourists and raise their interest and confidence. As satisfied patients are more likely to recommend a medical tourism destination to others and to return for additional medical care, patient satisfaction is crucial to the development of the medical tourism industry. Additionally, a medical tourism destination's reputation can be improved by having high patient satisfaction rates, which can increase demand and revenue (Lunt et al., 2011).

Numerous studies have shown how patient satisfaction contributes to growth of the medical tourism sector. For instance, a study carried out in Turkey discovered patient satisfaction leads to find more medical care as well as suggest the place of care recommendation (Zikusooka et al., 2022). There are concerns about the

standard of patient treatment considering the growing expansion of medical tourism in Thailand. Malpractice and poor care have happened, which can have a detrimental effect on patient satisfaction and deter potential medical tourists (Connell, 2013).

While patient satisfaction plays a significant role in growing Thailand's medical tourism sector, there are also potential drawbacks that need to be taken into consideration in order to ensure sustainable growth and moral behavior. It is a crucial factor in determining the level of healthcare services provided, with impacts that are experienced by both patients and healthcare professionals. Individuals who are satisfied with their medical care typically have better health outcomes, greater treatment compliance, lower healthcare expenditures, and good communication, comfort, and security.

## **2.4 Service Quality**

The concept of service quality describes how well a service satisfies the requirements and desires of the consumer, up to or above those expectations. Depending on how the consumer views the service, the definition of service excellence would differ. Gronroos (1984) defined service quality as "the consequence of the comparison that customers make between their expectations about a service and their perception of the way that service is actually delivered." Service quality is also described by Zeithaml et al., 1990 as "the overall evaluation of a service based on a comparison of perceived service quality with expected service quality." According to previous research, customer expectation and perception are the primary two leading factors that influence service quality and customer satisfaction (Awuah, 2014).

High standard of good healthcare is defined as "consistently delighting the patient by providing safe, effective, and productive healthcare services according to the latest clinical guidelines and standards, which meet the patient's needs and satisfy providers" (Mosadeghrad, 2013). In medical tourism, quality of healthcare service is a critical factor that can influence patient satisfaction. Patients will respond with satisfaction that they will receive high-quality care when they travel for medical treatment.

Therefore, healthcare providers must maintain high standards of care and ensure that their facilities and staff are up to par with international standards

(Horowitz et al, 2007). Medical treatment quality is also a significant factor in determining patient satisfaction in Thailand's medical tourism industry. Patients who considered the quality of the good medical care were pleased with their medical tourism experience in Thailand, according to a study by Buhalis & Foerste (2015). Chen et al. (2018) investigated that responsiveness and reliability appeared as connection between patient satisfaction and service quality in Taiwanese medical tourism. Hanefeld et al. (2019) explored that patient-provider communication and access to healthcare services were the two main factors that substantially impact on satisfaction in response to service quality in India's medical tourism industry. The study also emphasized how crucial it is to deliver individualized treatment and fulfill patients' expectations.

The healthcare service quality satisfies the patient's needs when the patient's perception meets their expectation. As a consequence, it will result in better service and more patient satisfaction. However, several researchers have demonstrated that patient dissatisfaction happens when there was particular variation between the patient's expectation and perception (Hossain & Leo, 2009).

The results of research indicate that patient satisfaction in medical tourism is significantly impacted by service quality. The main factors influencing patient satisfaction were found to be effective communication, customized care, availability to healthcare services, and staff performance. In order to improve patient satisfaction and guarantee the expansion of medical tourism, it is also essential to meet patients' expectations of receiving high quality of services.

**Hypothesis 1:** Service Quality offered by the healthcare professionals and services from various departments is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.

## 2.5 Medical Costs

For many medical tourists, the cost of the procedure is important. When patients believe they got a fair price, they are more satisfied. A study of Lee et al. (2013) found that patients who felt they got excellent value for their expenses were satisfied with their medical tourism experience. The cost related to patient satisfaction is an important factor that healthcare providers and stakeholders must consider.



Medical costs are the expenses incurred for medical operations and treatments, including the price of medicines, medical equipment, supplies, and other healthcare services. Direct medical costs and indirect medical costs are the two primary types of medical expenses, according to he (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2021). The term "direct medical costs" refers to the expenses that consumers pay for medical services and treatments, such as hospitalization, surgery, and medication. On the other hand, indirect healthcare expenses include those borne by patients such as the severity of illness or injury, neglected earnings, disability compensation, and travel costs (The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service, 2021). Cost variations are the main reason mentioned by Smith and Forgione (2007) for American medical tourists traveling abroad. The rapid growth of global medical tourism was influenced by the obvious variation in medical care between many developed nations and many growing medical tourism destinations. Thailand is a popular destination because it offers cost-effective healthcare at charges that are frequently lower than those in the patients' own countries. According to Sonpiam (2015), medical tourists from Australia, New Zealand, and Europe visit Thailand seeking cheaper medical care than they would elsewhere. Medical tourists expect to obtain high-quality care in addition to inexpensive therapy. In comparison to different countries that provide services of a similar standard, the Thailand medical tourism industry also benefits from affordable healthcare costs as mention in table (Medical Tourism Association (MTA), Krungsri Research).

Table 3. Comparison Medical Treatment Costs (2019)

Procedure :	USA	India	Thailand	Singapore
Coronary Angioplasty	28,200 \$	5,700 \$	<b>4,200 \$</b>	13,400 \$
Heart Bypass	123,000 \$	7,900 \$	<b>15,000 \$</b>	17,200 \$
Hip Replacement	40,364 \$	7,200 \$	<b>17,000 \$</b>	13,900 \$
Gastric Bypass	25,000 \$	7,000 \$	<b>16,800 \$</b>	13,700 \$
Hysterectomy	15,400 \$	3,200 \$	<b>3,650 \$</b>	10,400 \$
Lasik (2 eyes)	4,000 \$	1,000 \$	<b>2,310 \$</b>	3,800 \$
Dental Implant	2,500 \$	900 \$	<b>1,720 \$</b>	2,700 \$
Breast Implant	6,400 \$	3,000 \$	<b>3,500 \$</b>	8,400 \$

**Figure 3. Comparison of Medical treatment costs of UAS, India, Thailand and Singapore in 2019**

**Source:** Medical Tourism Association (MTA), Krungsri Research

Patients who come for medical tourism felt higher satisfaction because the cost of the treatment is significantly cheaper than their home country with achieving the higher or comparable quality of medical care. Even while the overall cost was less than amount at their home country, patients reported lower levels of satisfaction if there were unexpected or hidden costs. Therefore, healthcare providers in medical tourism destinations must ensure that their costs are cheaper with presence of price transparency and accuracy while providing high-quality care to their patients (Hanefeld et al., 2015).

The cost of travel and accommodation is another factor that can affect patient satisfaction in medical tourism. Patients must factor in the cost of flights, accommodation, and transportation when deciding to travel for medical care. Therefore, medical tourism stakeholders must ensure that patients have access to affordable and convenient travel options and accommodations (Turner, 2010). Patients may encounter unexpected costs such as additional tests, procedures, or medication that they did not anticipate. These hidden costs can lead to a negative experience for the patient and affect their overall satisfaction. Therefore, healthcare providers must be transparent with patients about the costs involved in their treatment to avoid any misunderstanding (Sandberg, 2017).

The cost is not the only element that affects patient satisfaction in medical tourism that can also be significantly impacted by additional factors, such as healthcare quality, provider communication, and cultural sensitivity (Hsu et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been shown in certain research that people are prepared to pay greater medical expenditures in exchange for higher-quality care and more individualized service. In summary, cost plays a crucial factor in achieving patient satisfaction in medical tourism. Patients must have received affordable medical treatments and services with transparency of their medical costs and higher standards of care to ensure that patients have a positive experience with higher satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2:** Cost is positively/negatively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.

## 2.6 Country Image

A person's opinions of a country are composed of beliefs, ideas, and judgements, and these impressions are referred to as their destination image (Higginbotham, 2011). On the other hand, the country image is a broad formation with cognitive, emotional, and cognitive factors, by Gartner and Shen (2016). The affective dimension represents people's emotional responses and attitudes toward the nation, whereas the cognitive dimension relates to people's knowledge and opinions about a country. The cognitive component focuses on how people behave and act toward the nation. In a variety of fields, such as tourism, trade, investment, and diplomacy, people's perceptions and conduct are greatly influenced by their impressions of a country. A favorable country image may boost a nation's attractiveness and competitiveness, whilst a bad one might damage its reputation and power.

Several tourism scholars have examined that the destination image construct impacts on travelers' behavior, the decision-making process, and enjoyment with their travels (Horton & Cole, 2011). A survey of the medical tourism literature reveals that a nation's reputation is shaped by a number of factors. The attributes that make up the medical tourism destination image include tourist attracted locations, infrastructures, hospitals' reputations, hospitals' service quality, medical amenities, social environment, transportation, lodging, supportive services, food, safety, and

communication (Jotikasthira, 2010; Khan et al, 2016a). Political instability creates a risk to the highly positive image of the medical tourism sector and might make people reluctant to visit such a nation. Medical tourists are the top priority for tourism safety, according to Smith and Forgione (2007), both in terms of healthcare and travelling safety.

Overall satisfaction of medical tourism in South Korea was shown to be significantly positively impacted by a favorable country image, according to a study by Lee and Kim from 2021. On the other side, a 2015 study by Kocak and Abacioglu discovered that medical tourists' satisfaction in Turkey was significantly impacted by the country's poor reputation. These studies emphasize the significance of the nation's image in affecting medical tourists' satisfaction in various nations.

Cheung and Wilson's (2019) study looked at how Thailand's poor reputation affected medical tourists' plans to travel there for treatment. The study found that worries about safety and security, political unrest, and environmental problems had a negative impact on Thailand's country image and decreased medical tourists' intentions to travel there.

Muntaner-Mas et al. (2014) also highlighted in the study that unfavorable media coverage of events including political unrest, natural catastrophes, and disease outbreaks had a detrimental impact on Thailand's country image and patient satisfaction levels. For instance, Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami caused significant negative impact to Thailand's tourism infrastructure, including hospitals and medical facilities (Phua & Chiang, 2013). The tragedy decreased the demand for medical tourism and tarnished the nation's reputation as a safe place to receive medical treatment. According to a study by Fetscherin and Heinrich (2018), medical tourists to Thailand were more likely to choose to have treatment there if they had a favorable perception of the nation. The survey found that Thailand's reputation for providing outstanding medical services, reasonable pricing, and a kind and welcoming culture made it seem like a desirable destination to travel.

Suntikul and Butler (2018) conducted research to further examine the impact of national perception on medical tourists' experiences in Thailand. A favorable country image boosted the satisfaction of patients, increased the chance of the long run visits, and pointed out people's perceptions of medical services. The satisfaction

with international patients considering medical tourism is significantly influenced by the nation's reputation. A favorable national reputation may boost the reputation of the travel location, boost patients' satisfaction in the standard of healthcare services, and enhance their entire experience. In contrast, a poor reputation for a nation might discourage travelers from picking a certain location and cause them to be unsatisfied with the medical care they get (Ghezeljeh et al., 2021).

**Hypothesis 3:** Country image is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.

## 2.7 Culture

Culture may be defined as the interaction of many factors, such as behaviors, rituals, beliefs, values, and institutions (Mays et al, 2002). Patients' impressions of the value of medical care are influenced by culture. Patients may assess medical treatments in accordance with their cultural norms and values, which might vary from one culture to another. The cultural dimension of daily life affects how we communicate with diverse groups of people from various backgrounds, with views and cultural traditions that may be in opposition with their culture. In the same way, Sousa and Bradley (2008) claim that sociocultural influences are a significant regional preference in medical tourism, which creates various medical hotspots across the world. Additionally, according to Gökhan and Bilge (2017), cultural and linguistic differences will make it challenging for potential foreign clients to choose a spot and are determined to have a big impact on consumer behavior. This added burden of being in a new, unfamiliar setting may thus cause patients to experience unnecessarily high levels of stressful situations.

By providing assistance to people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds in evolving their own cultural influences, understanding the health knowledge and skills of consumers, and lessening decision-making delays, cultural competence benefits the healthcare industry. Furthermore, it promotes communication and interaction between patients and medical professionals during consultation and taking the medical service. Patients are consequently more likely to follow medical doctor's advice, and malpractice and adverse effects from medical care are minimized (Cicourel, 1982).

For medical tourists choosing destination of their medical tourism, language also plays a role as an important aspect of one's culture. According to Connell (2013), the majority of Mexicans and Americans frequently go back home for healthcare services since their native tongues allow them to communicate more effectively. Without an arrangement for interpretation, language barriers are a significant obstacle for patients. Language challenges becomes negative impact in order to get patient satisfaction in Thailand, according to a study by Pratoomsot et al. (2018).

Patient Satisfaction also depends on effective communication between healthcare professionals and patients. Gaining guidance from cultural awareness in the key performance measures, or interacting with different levels of cultural sensitivity are all examples of ways to increase competencies in the healthcare system (Goode & Jones, 2004). According to Glinos et al. (2017), patient satisfaction in medical tourism might be impacted by cultural communication disparities. To increase patient satisfaction, healthcare professionals should get training on how to recognize and accept cultural variations in communication methods.

The friendliness and hospitality of a nation's culture may have a favorable effect on patient satisfaction in medical tourism. Kim and Kim (2019) told that medical tourists' satisfaction with their experiences in Korea was significantly influenced by the hospitality of Korean culture. The value of hospitality should be emphasized, and staff members should be trained to deliver excellent customer service. According to research by Jabbari et al. (2020), Iranian medical tourists' satisfaction was significantly impacted by cultural facilities including cuisine, music, and art. To improve the whole medical tourism experience, healthcare providers and policymakers should think about providing cultural amenities and activities.

Thai culture is renowned for its kind disposition and generous hospitality. It has been discovered that this component of Thai culture has a favorable effect on patients' pleasure in medical travel. The warmth and friendliness of healthcare professionals were highly valued by Thai medical tourists, according to research by Pongpirul et al. (2018), and this was a strong predictor of their overall satisfaction with medical tourism services. The holistic approach to healthcare, which takes into account both the physical and spiritual facets of welfare, is highly valued in Thai

society. In conclusion, there may need to improve the required services to achieve high patient satisfaction of medical tourists despite Thailand has a kind and generous culture as one of its tourist attentions.

**Hypothesis 4:** Culture of country is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.

## 2.8 Safety

For survival of the tourism industry, safety and security are essential (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1996, Ayob & Masroni, 2014). Safety was defined as the likelihood that visitors may run into illegal behavior (such as pickpocketing), environmental hazards (such as earthquakes), or violence (Tan et al, 2017). Smith and Forgione (2007) told that medical tourists are the top priority for both in terms of healthcare and travel safety. In order to achieve high levels of patient satisfaction in international medical tourism, patient safety plays a key factor. According to studies, patients are satisfied with the treatment provided when they feel a better degree of safety and security throughout their medical tourism experience (Dudasova et al., 2019).

Global medical tourism business faces difficulties in maintaining uniform safety standards across all healthcare providers and locations, despite attempts to improve patient safety. Some healthcare professionals might not adhere to global safety standards, which increases the likelihood of unfavorable outcomes and poor patient experiences (D'Mello et al., 2021). In some cases, incidents of medical malpractice, infections, and other unfavorable occurrences can result in poor patient outcomes and harm the standing of medical tourism destinations and service providers (Lunt et al., 2015).

In the case of a patient who passed after following cosmetic surgery in a Bangkok clinic, for instance, there was unfavorable media attention and concerns raised about the safety protocols in Thailand's medical tourism business (The Guardian, 2018). There are still challenges to guaranteeing uniform safety standards across all healthcare providers in Thailand's medical tourism business, despite attempts to improve patient safety.

To guarantee that patients receive safe and high-quality treatment, certain nations have enacted legislation and standards, including accreditation by

international organizations like the Joint Commission International (JCI) (Durieux et al., 2019). The legal framework for medical malpractices as well as law enforcement are essential for medical tourists since it will safeguard them against unprofessional behavior displayed by medical staff. In the majority of developing countries, there aren't similar malpractice rules that protect clients as in developed countries. Due to the absence of appropriate legislation in the destination countries, tourists seeking high safety standards that are governed by laws may get discouraged to choose (Gökhan and Bilge, 2017).

Patient satisfaction levels in medical tourism can be significantly impacted by a country's security such as Thailand. For instance, Thailand has a reputation for being a safe and inviting destination for medical tourists because of its stable political climate, low crime rate, and well-established healthcare infrastructure. On the other hand, safety incidents like weather-related catastrophes, infectious disease outbreaks, or political unrest might have a detrimental effect on patient satisfaction in Thailand's medical tourism sector. In 2018, the boat tragedy in Phuket, which resulted in the deaths of 47 Chinese tourists, many of whom were traveling for medical treatments, is another illustration of how safety concerns affect patient satisfaction in Thailand's medical tourism business (Chaisiri et al., 2021). Chinese medical tourists to Thailand decreased as a result of the tragedy, which prompted questions about the safety practices of the country's tourism sector. According to research by Wibulpolprasert et al. (2019), medical tourists' satisfaction with their experiences in Thailand was significantly impacted by safety concerns.

Patient satisfaction and trust in medical tourism business are strongly influenced by safety. Despite the good work being done to raise safety standards and increase patient satisfaction, there are still dangers and obstacles that need to be managed if all overseas patients are to get safe, high-quality care. In conclusion, patient satisfaction in Thailand's medical tourism sector is greatly influenced by safety. Despite the good work being done to raise safety standards and increase patient satisfaction, there are still risks and obstacles that need to be managed in order to provide all foreign patients in Thailand with safe, high-quality care.



**Hypothesis 5:** Safety of country and healthcare service is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.

## 2.9 Conceptual Framework

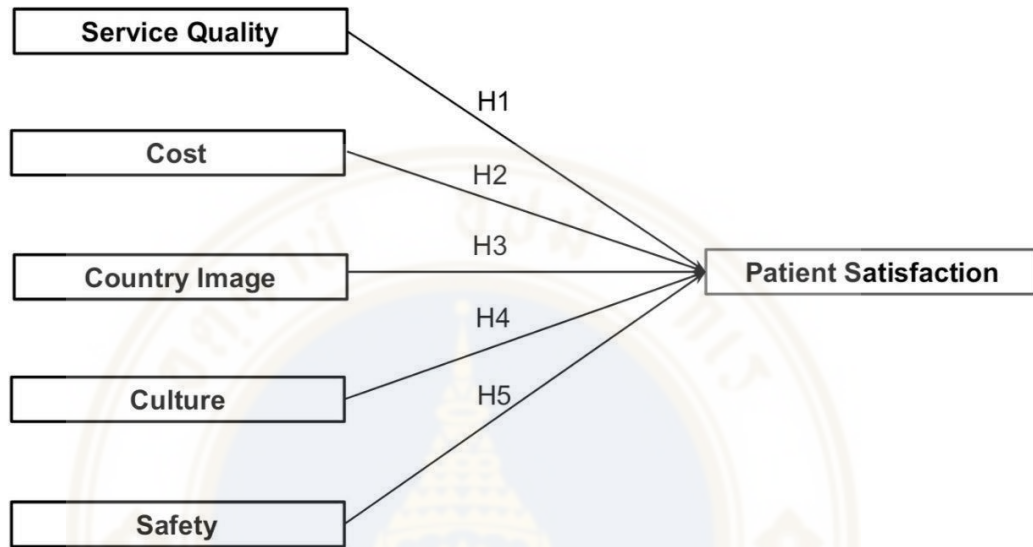


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework of the study

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Method**

In the study, a quantitative research approach with questionnaires will be used to collect data on the key factors affecting patient satisfaction in medical tourism at private hospitals in Thailand. The researcher searched for records, hypotheses, and other studies that include theories. The online questionnaires were used to find the information about the factors influencing the satisfaction of international patients and measure the relationship among unreliable variables and reliable variables.

##### **3.1.1 Independent variables**

I. Demographic factors include international patients who had taken healthcare services in Thailand (Asian, Arabic and European countries, etc.), gender, age, status, education.

II. Key factors influencing the patient satisfaction in medical tourism at private hospitals in Thailand include

1. Service quality
2. Costs
3. Country Image
4. Culture
5. Safety

##### **3.1.2 Dependent variable**

Patient satisfaction is the dependent variable that was influenced by the independent variables.

#### **3.2 Population and Sample Size**

Population and sample size determination play an important part in the research design, ensuring the validity and reliability of study findings. The study aims to investigate international patient satisfaction within medical tourism in private hospitals in Thailand. An essential step in conducting this research is defining the

target population and calculating an appropriate sample size. This section provides a comprehensive explanation of the population selection and sample size calculation using Yamane's formula.

### 3.2.1 Population

The study's participants were patients who had recently or currently undergoing medical treatment in a private hospital in Thailand, together with their family members so that we can completely comprehend the satisfaction and experience of the international patients with the participation of both the patients and their families. Additionally, in order to comprehend and properly reply to the research questionnaire, participants in the study must be at least 18 years old.

### 3.2.2 Sample Size Calculation

To determine the appropriate sample size, Yamane's formula is used to get the desired level of precision or margin of error. For this study, we assume a 5% margin of error as the confidence level is 95% to maintain an acceptable level of precision in our findings.

For calculating the sample size, the formula is as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = margin of error (as a decimal)

In this case, we use the population statistics of patients entering private hospitals in Thailand in 2019, which amounted to 68.2 million individuals (Ninkitsaranont, 2020). Applying the margin of error of 0.05, the calculation proceeds as follows:

$$n = 68,200,000 / (1 + 68,200,000(0.05^2))$$

$$n = 68,200,000 / (1 + 68,200,000(0.0025))$$

$$n = 68,200,000 / (1 + 170,500)$$

$$n = 68,200,000 / 170,501$$

$$n \approx 400.35$$

In the study, the population size of patients entering private hospitals in Thailand in 2019 was 68.2 million. By calculating the sample size using Yamane's formula with a margin of error of 5%, we arrived at a sample size of approximately 400 participants. This sample size is deemed sufficient to capture the diversity and experiences of international patients seeking medical treatment in private hospitals in Thailand.

The rationale behind using Yamane's formula lies in its ability to provide a representative sample size from a large population while maintaining an acceptable margin of error. The formula accounts for the inherent variability in large populations, ensuring that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics and experiences of the entire population.

### **3.3 Instrument Development**

The research tool utilized in this study is a questionnaire created by analysis of academic papers and related research. The questionnaire aims to collect data on international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism in private hospitals in Thailand. The questionnaire is designed to capture various dimensions that influence patient satisfaction. By utilizing this questionnaire, we seek to understand the factors that contribute to international patient satisfaction and provide valuable insights for private hospitals to enhance their services. This study will provide information that can be applied to make business strategic plans and healthcare management processes on the factors determining patient satisfaction in the Thai medical tourism industry. As a result, private hospitals will know their own pain points or vulnerabilities in the way they influence the medical tourism industry. According to the trend, technologies, and client needs, it will be necessary to update the preparation for sustainability as well as the enhancement of service quality and treatment approaches in the long term for improving international patient satisfaction. Due to the fact that the patients are foreigners, they may have several difficulties during their whole medical journey. Therefore, in addition to the upgraded therapies and high-quality services, reasonable costs, culture, country image with safety including such as the provision of important support services such as transportation, communication, and language barriers will be a crucial step to strengthen the

customer satisfaction in the context of medical tourism in Thailand. The following sample questionnaire is provided as a reference and can be customized accordingly.

The research's questionnaire is broken into two sections, which are

Section 1: demographics of the respondent as they emerge. The information about the respondent's demographics is described in this section.

1. Nationalities such as Asian, Arabic and European countries
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Marital status
5. Education status
6. Have you ever visited Thailand for medical tourism purpose?
7. Have you received medical treatment in private hospitals before?
8. Which department did you taken medical services?
9. Which hospital have you taken medical services?

Section 2: There are 6 sections with total 28 questions that are intended to represent the five independent variables and one dependent variable in determining the degree of patient satisfaction with their medical tourism experiences at private hospitals in Thailand. The research will use a five-point Likert scale from "Poor to Excellent" for all questions from section I to part V. Three questions are included in section VI to measure patient satisfaction and will use the Likert sale from "Strongly agree to Strongly disagree". (Scale from Section 1 to Section 5: a. 5= strongly agree b. 4= agree c. 3= Neutral d. 2 = disagree e. 1= strongly disagree)

**Table 1. The variables in determining the degree of patient satisfaction with their medical tourism experiences at private hospitals in Thailand**

Section I: Quality During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand	References
1. The medical professionals are skilled and well-trained.	(Youssef, 1996; Sohail, 2003; Taner & Antony, 2006)
2. The hospital offers prompt medical care, diagnostic tests, and other services with detailed explanations.	(Youssef, 1996; Sohail, 2003; Taner & Antony, 2006)
3. The presence of several hospitals that have received accreditation from prestigious international organizations, such as the JCI Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.	Capar et al, 2020

**Table 1. The variables in determining the degree of patient satisfaction with their medical tourism experiences at private hospitals in Thailand (cont.)**

4. The hospital offers patients specific treatment and tackles concerns.	(Youssef, 1996; Sohail, 2003; Taner & Antony, 2006)
5. They have updated amenities (Parking lots, wards, etc.) as well as equipment and technology (equipment, machinery, and labs, etc.)	(Youssef, 1996; Sohail, 2003)
<b>Section II: Medical Costs During Medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
1. The medical services in Thailand are at a reasonable price.	(Çapar, H. and Aslan, Ö., 2020)
2. The medical services in Thailand are offered at a cheaper price than other countries.	(Çapar, H. and Aslan, Ö., 2020).
3. Thailand delivers medical services that are both cost- effective and efficient.	(Çapar, H. and Aslan, Ö., 2020).
4. Thailand has fair costs of transportation and living expense for medical tourists.	(Çapar, H. and Aslan, Ö., 2020).
5. Thailand is a cost-efficient and appropriate destination to travel.	(Çapar, H. and Aslan, Ö., 2020).
<b>Section III: Destination Image During Medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
1. Thailand is a destination with natural beauty and tourist attractions.	Izadi et al., 2012
2. Thailand has many reputation hospitals.	Lei Win, K., 2021
3. Thailand has high level of safety for medical tourism.	(Abramowitz et al., 1978; Smith & Forgione, 2007)
4. Thailand has political stability.	Lajevardi, 2016
5. Natives in Thailand are friendly and helpful.	Lei Win, K., 2021
<b>Section IV: Culture During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
1. Thailand has welcoming and friendliness in culture	Bagga et al., 2020
2. My destined country has culture similarity with my country.	Izadi et al., 2012
<b>Section IV: Culture During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
3. Staffs in the hospital are compassionate and caring during the medical tourism.	(Youssef, 1996; Sohail, 2003; Taner & Antony, 2006)
4. There is no language barrier during the journey of medical tourism.	Bagga et al., 2020
5. Variations in culture are taken into account by assigning a proficient English-speaking staff or specific language translators at the hospital.	Moghadam 2021

**Table 1. The variables in determining the degree of patient satisfaction with their medical tourism experiences at private hospitals in Thailand (cont.)**

<b>Section V: Safety During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
1. My medical tourism destination offers a secured environment for tourists.	Capar et al., 2020
2. My medical tourism destination has accredited training programs for the medical professionals.	Momeni et al., 2018
<b>Section V: Safety During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
3. My medical tourism destination country has international hospitals which commit to the achievement of the treatment and strictly adhere to any related rules and regulations.	Capar et al., 2020
4. My medical tourism destination country has safety against crime and terrorist attacks for tourists.	Bagga et al., 2020
5. In accordance with accredited international standards and treatment guidelines, the destination country constitutes numerous hospitals that offer safe healthcare services.	Izadi et al., 2012
<b>Section VI: Patient Satisfaction During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>References</b>
1. Overall, I am satisfied with the hospital during my medical tourism trip.	Lajevardi, 2016.
2. Overall, I am satisfied with the medical treatment during my tourism trip.	Lajevardi, 2016.
3. Overall, I am satisfied with the destination I traveled.	Lajevardi, 2016.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The researcher will collect data through surveying 400 samples. Data will be collected from 400 medical tourists (all foreign patients) by conducting in-person interviews with the researcher and sending questionnaires through various online platforms (such as Facebook, Messenger, Viber, or Line applications). The research tool utilized in this study includes a questionnaire with closed-ended questions to examine the variables affecting patient satisfaction at Thailand's private hospitals during medical tourism. The researcher will fill out and collect the surveys, and they will provide the respondents privacy for their comfort. Additionally, it will be stated that in order to respect their privacy, their name and contact information will not

be shared. The data collected will be stored in a password-protected file folder, with the researcher who can be accessible.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

During the collection of data from 400 sets samples, the data will be examined for dependability and effectiveness. After all the questionnaires have been filled out and collected, data analysis will be carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to examine statistics (percentage, means, and SD), as well as cross tabulations to investigate the relationships between the components. Part 1 demographic data will be computed and analyzed using frequency and percentage. The mean score will be used to examine the degree of five influencing factors and patient satisfaction in Part 2, sections I through VI. To measure each of the five aspects, a five- point Likert scale will be used. One is the lowest score and five is the best. Through correlation analysis and hypothesis testing, the research will examine how the dependent variables and independent variables relate to one another. In order to merge data, an Excel sheet is utilized, and SPSS software will be used for analysis.

The duration for data collection will be approximately 1 month. The samples will be collected from the international patients who received the medical services at private hospitals such as Bumrungrad Hospital, Vejthani Hospital, Thonburi Bamrungmaung Hospital, Thonburi Hospital and other private hospitals in Bangkok, Thailand. The data will be collected in confidentiality and with the participants' informed agreement. An IRB-assessed assessment of subject risk/benefit will be carried out in order to make sure that risks to participants are kept to a minimal and that those risks are justified by the advantages of the study.



## CHAPTER 4

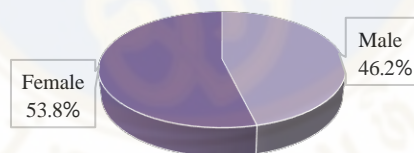
### DATA ANALYSIS

Data for this study were gathered from 326 respondents using electronic-based questionnaires. The largest number of respondents (303 respondents) are from Myanmar, and the other nations include 23 respondents from China, Viet Nam, Kenya, and the United States of America. On conclusion, our study will focus on the main respondent group (Myanmar), excluding respondents of other nationalities.

#### 4.1 Demographic Studies of the respondents

In order to present the frequency, percentage, mean value, bar charts, and line charts, descriptive statistics on our sample of 303 respondents were used. Demographic factors include the gender, age range, educational attainment, and previous medical trips to Thailand experience of the patients.

##### 4.1.1 Gender



**Figure 5. Respondents' demographic profile: Gender**

**Table 2. Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile: Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
male	140	46.2
female	163	53.8
Total	303	100.0

Out of the total number of 303 respondents, 163 women (53.8%) and 140 men (46.2%) completed the survey questionnaires. In this survey, the gender ratio of respondents was approximately 6:4 (male: female) (Table 2).

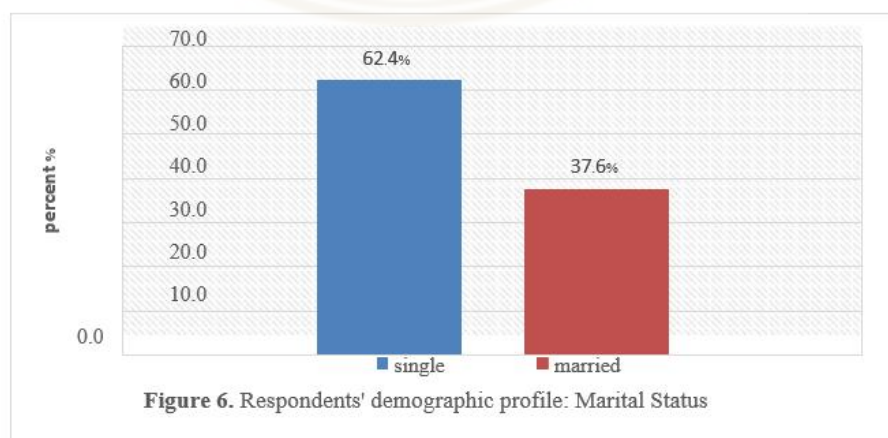
### 4.1.2 Age Range

In this study of table 3, there are seven different age ranges for the respondents. Most of the participants coming for medical tourism in Thailand were within the age range of 45-54 years old which represent 23.4 % of total respondents (71 out of 303). The 25-34 years old age range and 55-64 years old range take at second and third rank among all respondents who like to take medical tourism. The remaining age groups of 45 – 54 years, 65-74 years and 19- 24 years old respondents take place as a percentage of 17,8%, 9.4 % and 6.3 % respectively. In contrast, the lowest respondents coming for medical tourism are seen within the age of over 75 years and above (1.7%).

**Table 3. Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile: Age Range**

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
19-24 years	19	6.3
25-34 years	64	21.1
35-44 years	54	17.8
45-54 years	71	23.4
55-64 years	61	20.1
65-74 years	29	9.6
75 years and above	5	1.7
Total	303	100.0

### 4.1.3 Marital Status



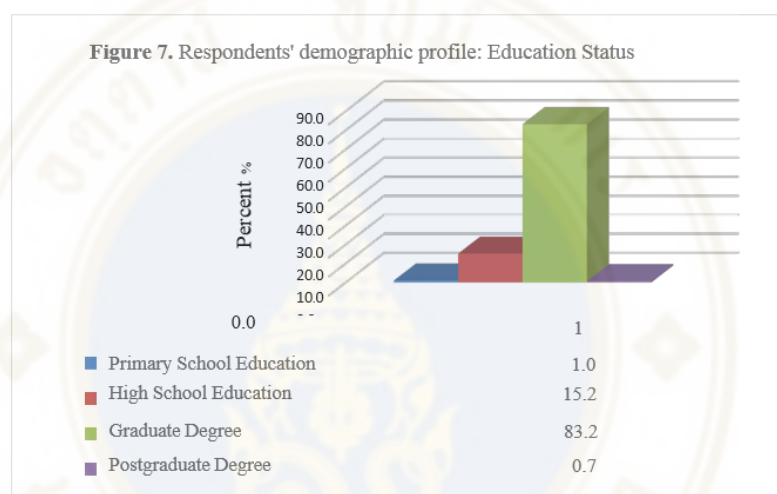
**Figure 6. Respondents' demographic profile: Marital Status**

From table 4 and figure 6, the study found out that 62.4% of respondents are single and 37.6% are married among 303 respondents.

**Table 4. Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile: Marital Status**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	189	62.4
Married	114	37.6
Total	303	100.0

#### 4.1.4 Education



**Figure 7. Respondents' demographic profile: Education Status**

From the data collection of table 5 and figure 7, we found that the majority of respondents, 83.2%, were bachelor graduates while 0.7% were postgraduate candidates. Only 1% of respondents has the background of primary school education.

**Table 5. Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile: Education Status**

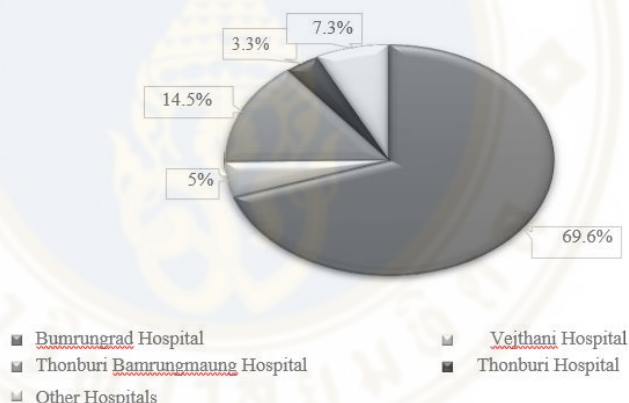
Education Status	Frequency	Percent
Primary School Education	3	1.0
High School Education	46	15.2
Graduate Degree	252	83.2
Postgraduate Degree	2	0.7
Total	303	100.0

#### 4.1.5 Hospitals

According to our analysis from table 6 and figure 8, the most visited hospital among the private hospitals is Bumrungrad Hospital. Thonburi Bamrungmaung Hospital takes place at second rank that the respondents went for medical tourism. The other hospitals represent 7.3% of all respondents from which include Payathai hospital, Bangkok Hospital, Rama 9 Hospital, Paolo Hospital and Rajavithi Hospitals.

**Table 6. Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile: Hospitals**

Hospitals	Frequency	Percent
Bumrungrad Hospital	211	69.6
Vejthani Hospital	15	5.0
Thonburi Bamrungmaung Hospital	44	14.5
Thonburi Hospital	10	3.3
Other Hospitals	22	7.3
Total	303	100.0

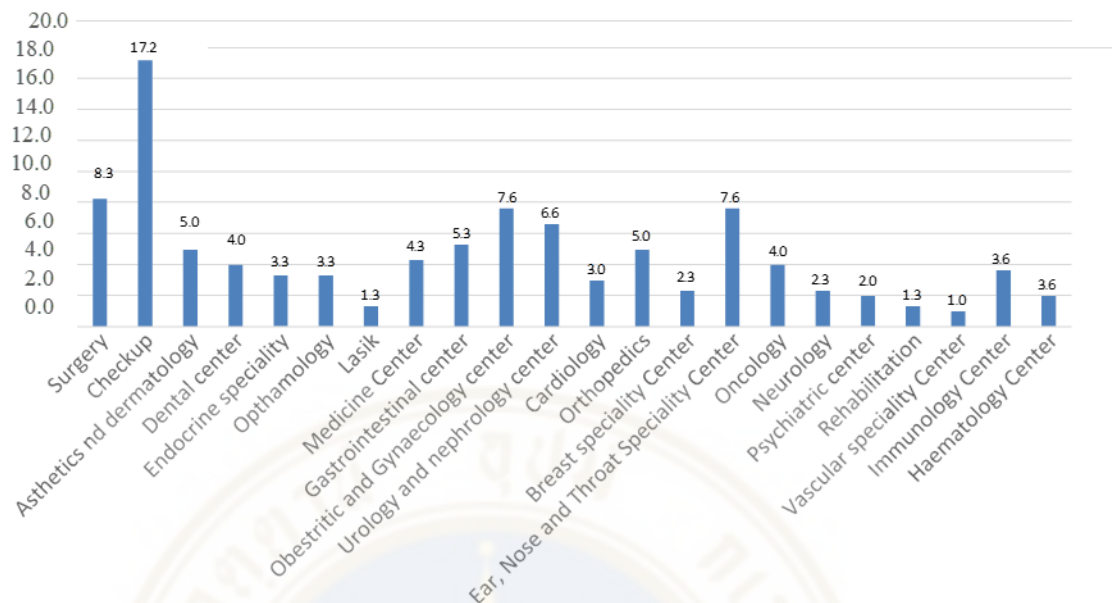


**Figure 8. Respondents' demographic profile: Hospitals**

#### 4.1.6 Special Clinics

From the figure 9, our respondents went the following special clinics and treatment purpose at respective hospitals. The checkup center is the clinic most of respondents prefer to take treatment with 17.2%. Secondly, the surgery takes 8.3% as the second highest percentage that medical tourists take the medical tourism services. The lowest clinics visited by the medical tourists (lower than 3 %) include Lasik center, breast center, neurology, psychiatric center, rehabilitation, vascular center and hematological center.

### Special clinics



**Figure 9. Respondents' demographic profile: Special Clinics**

## 4.2 Reliability Test

In order to confirm the validity of the questions included in the survey for the media tourism, this study started with reliability testing. In this test, the dependent variable, patient satisfaction, and all independent variables, including service quality, medical costs, country image, culture, and safety, were examined.

While exploring the value of Cronbach's alpha of each variable, the alpha values revealed more than the threshold of 0.7 stated in table 7. In depth analysis of questions of each variable, there are strong indication of acceptable value for all of them. On conclusion, the table 6's results show that all of the variables have adequate reliability values.

**Table 7. Reliability Statistics**

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Service Quality	.973	5
Medical Costs	.901	5
Country Image	.918	5
Country Culture	.933	5
Safety of Healthcare and Country	.952	5
Patient Satisfaction	.974	3

### 4.3 Mean Scores

The 28 questions were included in the study to gauge how satisfied patients were with the five independent variables of safety, safety, medical costs, country image, and safety expenses. To further examine patient satisfaction with medical tourism in Thailand, three additional questionnaires were included. Each of the mean values in tables 8 and 9 below shows how satisfied patients were with their medical tourism experience. The participants share comparable concerns about each of the independent variables, as evidenced by the high mean scores of all the components, which are over 4.0.

According to table 8 and table 9, highest average means of satisfaction on service quality of having updated amenities (parking lots, wards, etc.), equipment and technology (equipment, machinery, labs, etc.) from service quality and the country's image of having many reputed hospitals and “natural beauty and tourist attractions are 4.64 which indicate the medical tourists are satisfied with their medical journey in Thailand. Secondly, the service quality of having internationally accredited hospitals represents the mean value of 4.63 which is the second strongest agreed among 28 questions. The lowest agreement on the factor was the presence of political stability since it has only a small amount of mean value (4.05).

**Table 8. Mean of Patients’ Satisfaction with the Factors**

	Factors	Mean
Service Quality		
1	The medical professionals are skilled and well-trained.	4.61
2	The hospital offers prompt medical care, diagnostic tests, and other services with detailed explanations.	4.62
3	The presence of several hospitals that have received accreditation from prestigious international organizations, such as the JCI Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.	4.63
4	The hospital offers patients specific treatment and tackles concerns.	4.62
5	They have updated amenities (parking lots, wards, etc.) as well as equipment and technology (equipment, machinery, and labs, etc.).	4.64

**Table 8. Mean of Patients' Satisfaction with the Factors (cont.)**

Medical Costs		
1	The medical services in Thailand are at a reasonable price.	4.40
2	The medical services in Thailand are offered at a cheaper price than other countries.	4.59
3	Thailand delivers medical services that are both cost-effective and efficient.	4.37
4	Thailand has fair costs of transportation and living expense for medical tourists.	4.20
5	Thailand is a cost-efficient and appropriate destination to travel.	4.51

**Table 9. Mean of Patients' Satisfaction with the Factors**

	Factors	Mean
Country Image		
1	Thailand is a destination with natural beauty and tourist	4.64
2	Thailand has many reputation hospitals.	4.64
3	Thailand has high level of safety for medical tourism.	4.45
4	Thailand has political stability.	4.05
5	Natives in Thailand are friendly and helpful.	4.31
Country Culture		
1	Thailand has welcoming and friendliness in culture.	4.26
2	My destined country has culture similarity with my country.	4.50
3	Staffs in the hospital are compassionate and caring during the medical tourism.	4.55
4	There is no language barrier during the journey of medical	4.38
5	Variations in culture are taken into account by assigning a proficient English- speaking staff or specific language translators at the hospital.	4.54
Safety of Healthcare and Country		
1	My medical tourism destination offers a secured environment for tourists.	4.47
2	My medical tourism destination has training programs and proper monitoring for the medical professionals.	4.26

**Table 9. Mean of Patients' Satisfaction with the Factors (cont.)**

3	My medical tourism designated country has international hospitals which commit to the achievement of the treatment and strictly adhere to any related rules and regulations.	4.56
4	My medical tourism designated country has safety against crime and terrorist attacks	4.47
5	In accordance with accredited international standards and treatment guidelines, the destination country constitutes numerous hospitals that offer safe healthcare services.	4.60
Patient Satisfaction		
1	Overall, I am satisfied with the hospital during my medical tourism trip.	4.43
2	Overall, I am satisfied with the medical treatment during my medical tourism.	4.46
3	Overall, I am satisfied with the destination I traveled.	4.46

## 4.4 Hypotheses Testing

### 4.4.1 Correlation Analysis

The associations between independent variables and the correlation between the independent and dependent variables were found from analysis by using a correlation analysis. The value range of the multiple correlation coefficients R is from -1 to +1. Perfect positive associations are represented by +1, and perfect negative associations are represented by -1. Zero correlation coefficient demonstrated that there was no association. As mentioned in Table 10 above, the association between all the independent variables and dependent variables were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The values of correlation coefficients R between each variable are seen in positive values which mean that there are positive correlations among independent variables and between independent and dependent variables.

Among them, patient satisfaction was most strongly correlated with service quality and safety with the correlation value of 0.723 and 0.705. In addition, all of the factors revealed significant relationships with each variable. The study proved that there were more significant correlations between service quality and other independent variables and moderate correlation of quality with medical costs while safety was associated more strongly with other variables than an independent variable of medical costs.



**Table 10. Correlation between Variables**

Correlations							
		Service quality	Medical costs	Image of country	Culture of country	Safety of healthcare service and country	patient satisfaction
Service quality	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	303					
medical costs	Pearson Correlation	.552**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000					
	N	303	303				
Image of country	Pearson Correlation	.864**	.522**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000				
	N	303	303	303			
Culture of country	Pearson Correlation	.867**	.545**	.931**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000			
	N	303	303	303	303		
Safety and healthcare service of country	Pearson Correlation	.882**	.528**	.901**	.936**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	300	300	300	300	300	
patient satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.723**	.472**	.702**	.698**	.705**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	303	303	303	303	300	303

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.4.2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

An analysis technique called multiple regression is used to look at a linear relationship between a number of independent factors and a dependent variable. In this study, multiple regression was used to assess the strength of the linear association between patient satisfaction and the five independent variables of service quality, healthcare expenses, national image, culture, and safety. The multicollinearity problem between each variable was analyzed by the value variance inflation factor testing. Since there were many correlations between independent variables with risk of having the multicollinearity problem, the study analyzed the invariance inflation factor

(VIF) to identify the problem followed by the multiple linear regression analysis. Consequently, we tested the regression analysis by incorporating all of the variables according to invariance inflation factor. After that, we will select the most suitable model by choosing the highest percentage of variation in dependent variables (highest R<sup>2</sup> value).

### Model 1: Regression including all variables

**Table 11. Model 1: Regression including all variables –Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.745 <sup>a</sup>	0.555	0.547	0.45585

In table 11, the value of adjusted R square in this model is (0.547), it indicates 54.7% of the total variation which represents the percentage of reliability in analyzing the regression of international patient satisfaction while taking medical services in Thailand according to model 1. The P value is less than 0.05 which indicates the model is reliable.

**Table 12. Model 1: Regression including all variables - Anova**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	76.129	5	15.226	73.271	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	61.093	294	0.208		
Total	137.222	299			

**Table 13. Model 1: Regression including all variables - Coefficients**

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.685	0.249		2.746	0.006		
service quality	0.362	0.092	0.353	3.948	0.000	0.189	5.292
image of country	0.197	0.114	0.194	1.719	0.087	0.119	8.433
medical costs	0.116	0.064	0.085	1.799	0.073	0.672	1.487

**Table 13. Model 1: Regression including all variables – Coefficients (cont.)**

culture of country	0.008	0.125	0.009	0.062	0.950	0.082	<u>12.235</u>
Safety of healthcare service and country	0.151	0.111	0.166	1.366	0.173	0.103	9.702

If the VIF value is more than 10, it represents the significantly severe multicollinear problem. In table 13, the VIF of culture is 12.235 which means the presence of a severe multicollinearity problem in this model. Secondly, the value of safety of healthcare service and country was 9.702 and that of country image and medical service quality are also more than 5. If VIF value is less than 10, there is no severe multicollinearity in the model and the problem was not found in other variables except the country culture. Therefore, the multiple regression was retested again with the exclusion of country culture.

#### **Model 2: Regression Analysis excluding culture of country**

Four independent variables (service quality, medical cost, national image, and safety) were used for further multiple linear regression in model 2. This model does not include national culture. The adjusted R square value for this model is (0.549) in table 14, which indicates that it can account for 54.9% of the total variation in the dependent variable. In addition, it is significantly dependable since its p-value is <0.05.

**Table 14. Model 2: Regression excluding culture of country – Summary**

Model 2	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.745 <sup>a</sup>	0.555	0.549	0.45508

**Table 15. Model 2: Regression excluding culture of country – Anova**

Model 2	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	76.128	-	19.032	91.898	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	61.094	95	0.207		
Total	137.222	299			

**Table 16. Model 2: Regression excluding culture of country – Coefficients**

Model 2	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.682	0.246		2.775	0.006		

**Table 16. Model 2: Regression excluding culture of country – Coefficients**

service quality	0.362	0.091	0.354	3.964	0.000	0.190	5.277
image of country	0.200	0.096	0.198	2.080	0.038	0.167	6.006
medical costs	0.116	0.064	0.086	1.821	0.070	0.681	1.468
safety of healthcare service and country	0.155	0.093	0.170	1.667	0.096	0.146	6.858

Comparing the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> values of the two models, Model 2's adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value was 0.549 and Model 1 had an adjusted value of 0.547. The factors in the model 2 can explain approximately 54.9% of the variation in patient satisfaction during medical tourism that represents a higher value than the model 1. Therefore, Model 2 was selected as the best model to account for our regression findings. The p-values for the service quality and nation image were less than 0.05 based on the significant (Sig) column in table 16. This showed that the patient satisfaction was significantly correlated with only these two criteria. Table 16's findings indicate that the service quality variable had the greatest influence on patient satisfaction since it had the highest Beta value (0.354), followed by the country image at 0.198. The other variables (medical costs, country culture, and healthcare and country safety) did not significantly affect patient satisfaction during medical travel to Thailand.

#### 4.4.3 Hypothesis Results

The results suggest that Hypothesis 1 (service quality) and Hypothesis 3 (country image) are supported by the positive impact of these measures on patient satisfaction. Yet, since their p-values were not significant, hypothesis 2 (medical costs), hypothesis 4 (country culture), and hypothesis 5 (safety) were not supported. (Table 17).

**Table 17. Hypothesis Results**

	Content	Significance P < 0.05	Direction of Relationship
H1	Service Quality offered by the healthcare professionals and services from various departments is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.	Yes	Positive

**Table 17. Hypothesis Results (cont.)**

H2	Cost is positively/negatively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.	No	Positive
H3	Country image is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.	Yes	Positive
H4	Culture of country is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical tourism.	No	Positive
H5	Safety of country and healthcare service is positively influenced to international patient satisfaction within the context of medical	No	Positive



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

This chapter of our study compares the outcomes of recent research with those from previous studies, while discussing the research findings through data analysis. Based on the analysis, the level of patient satisfaction and the factors impacting the patients' satisfaction with medical tourism in Thailand are explored.

#### **5.1 Service Quality**

The results of the multiple regression analysis on the correlation between patient satisfaction and service quality demonstrate a positive association (standardized coefficient = 0.354;  $p < 0.05$ ) between the two variables with the confirmation of the hypothesis. The perspectives on the standards of health care provided by medical professionals have positive relationship when receiving treatments during medical tourism at Thailand's private hospitals. It means that more international patients have concerns about the service quality they took from the hospital.

The finding is aligned with the previous studies of Horowitz (2007), which mentioned quality of healthcare service plays as a critical factor that can influence patient satisfaction with high-quality care when they travel for medical treatment and high standards of care from healthcare providers. In addition, high healthcare service quality satisfies the patient's needs when the patient's perception meets their expectation, resulting in more patient satisfaction. (Hossain & Leo, 2009).

Myanmar patients seek for the higher quality healthcare services in Thailand than their own country since some people did not feel satisfied with healthcare services available in their own country due to some limitations of technology and accessibility of modernized healthcare treatment procedures in Myanmar. Thailand can provide high service quality such as the diagnostic techniques, treatment procedures, qualified healthcare staff and other facilities and as a consequence, it makes Myanmar medical tourists satisfied.

## 5.2 Medical Costs

There is no causal relationship between medical expenditures and patient satisfaction during medical tourism in Thailand, according to the research's findings ( $p = 0.070 > 0.05$ ). This study has no support for hypothesis 2. It shows that patient satisfaction is unrelated to medical tourism expenses, and this finding suggests that medical costs had no impact on the patient's satisfaction in this study. Several studies proved that medical tourists felt higher satisfaction if they can receive medical treatment cheaper than their countries Hanefeld et al. (2015) and higher patient satisfaction is related with medical expenses (Hsu et al., 2018). However, the correlation is not supported in the context of patient satisfaction in medical tourism, Thailand. Despite the medical cost plays an important role in medical tourist's satisfaction according to the past study, most of the sample size collected from this study have history of visiting to Bamrungrad Hospital. So, most of the respondents are likely to have no concern about the medical fee which results into the lack of correlation between the medical costs and patient satisfaction.

Although the medical costs are also important for Myanmar medical tourists for their decision to choose the destination of medical tourism, the service quality provided cannot ensure to be at high ranking. However, Myanmar medical tourists expect to receive the high quality of healthcare regardless of how much the treatment will cost. If the medical costs were cheap with the availability of the poor quality of healthcare services, Myanmar patients will choose the hospitals or destination country which can provide the good healthcare services. Due to the fact that, the medical costs do not have an impact on patient satisfaction of Myanmar medical tourists.

## 5.3 Country Image

From this research, Patient satisfaction among medical tourists is significantly influenced by the country's image. According to previous research, Lee and Kim (2021) support the concept that a positive country image has a positive impact on medical patients' overall satisfaction. In contrast, Ghezaljah (2021) suggests that a country's bad reputation may cause dissatisfaction from medical tourists. The causal association between country image and patient satisfaction was investigated in this study using the findings of multiple regression analysis. The findings demonstrate

a significant association between nation image and patient satisfaction (standardized coefficient =0.198;  $p=0.038$ ; 0.05). The third hypothesis is accepted.

International patients' satisfaction with their treatment in Thailand is influenced by the destination country's reputation. Medical tourists are more likely to feel satisfied if they feel that their destination country for medical tourism has a good reputation. When the medical tourists search their destination of medical tourism, they will look at a good country image with any available attractive insights and services. Although medical tourists come for healthcare services, they would like to enjoy exploring new trips or experiences in a safe environment. As Thailand is well known as a land of smiles with the presence of many attractive places and can provide a safe environment, many medical tourists feel satisfied with it and choose Thailand as their destination country.

#### **5.4 Country Culture**

According to the previous study by Glinos 2017, the country culture impact the patient satisfaction. In addition, different culture may cause the dissatisfaction of medical tourists during medical tourism (Connell, 2013). In this study, Most of the respondents did not have difficulty with the culture of Thailand due to culture similarity and friendliness of the natives. In addition, the language barrier issue was not found during the medical tourism since the hospitals provide the interpreters and translators for convenience of the medical tourists. The study result will depend upon the different cultures between destination countries for medical tourism. On conclusion, there is no correlation between country culture and patient satisfaction.

#### **5.5 Safety of Country and Healthcare Services**

Regarding the findings of regression analysis, there is no association between safety and patient satisfaction. Hypothesis 5 is not supported. The result shows that the safety of the country and healthcare services does not influence the patient satisfaction of medical tourists during medical tourism in Thailand. The study by Dudasova et al., 2019 stated that the safety of healthcare treatment will result in higher patient satisfaction and the lack of safety measures at the country would cause the patient dissatisfaction with medical tourism according to research by Wibulpolprasert



et al. (2019). However, the result from this study did not show any relationship between safety and patient satisfaction. Safety is an important issue for medical tourists to feel secure along their medical journey. But it does not impact patient satisfaction since safety will encourage tourists for repeated intention to seek for further medical services in the future. Presence of good results from medical treatment with high quality services will make patient satisfaction more than the presence of safety.

## **5.6 Demographic Characteristics**

In this study, 303 respondents are valid for data analysis and their age, gender and education level were analyzed. According to the demographic analysis, the women population has the higher percentage than men coming for medical tourism in Thailand while the single marital status represents the higher population compared to the married respondents. In age range analysis, the majority of the respondents are within the age range of 45-54 years while the age of 75 years and over has the lowest percentage among them. The graduate degree candidates significantly take place at the highest percentage in contrast with respondents with other education backgrounds. The Myanmar medical tourists seeking medical service in Thailand are middle aged population with graduate degree education background. There may be an increase in this age group since this age group has many connections with their business partners, friends and family to say word of mouth of Thailand medical tourism. In the future, the age range of 25-34 years will also be increased because they are the working age group and nowadays, most of these people have concerns about their health and like to spend money on their beauty and healthcare issues.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

The objectives of this study were to identify the factors influencing international patient satisfaction at private hospitals in Thailand from Myanmar medical tourists' perspectives. This study evaluated the following factors such as service quality, medical costs, country image, country culture and safety of country and healthcare services. According to the structure of the framework and the questionnaires are designed to study the patient satisfaction of medical tourism in Thailand. Among the factors stated in the research framework, service quality of medical services is the most influencing factor of patient satisfaction followed by the country image. Other factors such as medical costs, country culture and safety of country and healthcare services are found to be not significantly impacted on the patient satisfaction of Myanmar medical tourists during medical tourism in Thailand.

Quality of healthcare service is the most influencing factor in patient satisfaction of medical journey in Thailand. This reflects the actual preference of Myanmar medical tourists since they search more qualified healthcare services regardless of the high expenses if the destination country can provide their healthcare requirements. The result from the study is the same direction of the previous study from Hossain and Leo (2009) which stated that the healthcare service quality can result satisfaction when the patient expectation was the same as the service provided. Horowitz (2007) suggested that the healthcare providers must practice to be skillful with ability to provide high standards of healthcare services.

The impact of the destination image define on traveler behavior, decision-making, and enjoyment has been studied by a number of tourism scholars (Horton & Cole, 2011). From this study, the country image influenced upon the medical tourism in Thailand by Myanmar medical tourists. Myanmar medical tourist prefer the good reputation of the destination country since that will make them satisfaction during their journey. According to a review of the medical tourism literature, a country's reputation is influenced by a variety of aspects, including infrastructure, social

environment, transportation, lodging, supportive services, food, safety, and communication. Other factors include hospitals' reputations, service quality, medical amenities, and social environments (Khan et al, 2016a).

According to this study, patient satisfaction with medical tourism at private hospitals in Thailand from Myanmar respondents is not influenced by variables such as medical prices, country culture, safety of the nation, and healthcare services. While it has been suggested that there is no discernible relationship between medical expenditures and satisfaction for patients in this study, Sonpiam (2015) found that medical tourists preferred high-quality care regardless of the medical expenses.

The culture between Myanmar and Thailand has similarity which results in convenience during medical tourism journeys in Thailand. Increasing qualities in the healthcare system can be accomplished in a number of ways, including receiving strategy from cultural awareness in the main indicators of success or interacting with individuals who have different levels of cultural sensitivity (Goode & Jones, 2004).

As Thailand is a safe nation for medical tourists, there was no significantly influenced upon medical tourism in this research. Despite attempts to increase patient safety, the global medical tourism industry has trouble maintaining consistent safety standards across every medical center and region. Unfavorable results and unsatisfactory patient experiences are anticipated when healthcare professionals fail to adhere to international safety standards (D'Mello et al., 2021). There are still risks and obstacles that must be controlled in order to give all international patients in Thailand to get an opportunity for taking reliable and excellent treatment, despite what is currently being carried out to strengthen safety standards and boost patient satisfaction.

## **6.2 Recommendation**

Medical tourism is an industry that is still expanding and regarded as a worldwide phenomenon with the interest of many nations to seek their worth of health (Herrick, 2007). To thrive in the marketplace in medical tourism industry, managers from Thailand's healthcare sector need to have a broad awareness of their market and continually monitor the activities of their rivals. The findings of this study offer quantitative data on the characteristics, attitudes, and satisfaction of Myanmar medical tourists. The result in this study strongly recommends that private hospitals in Thailand

should focus more on patient satisfaction of Myanmar medical tourists through main factors of service quality and country image. Below are the recommendations for managers of private hospitals.

Thailand has been a popular destination for medical tourists from Myanmar due to its top-notch healthcare system and qualified medical staff. Not only will Myanmar medical tourists benefit from Thailand's ongoing commitment to enhancing service quality, but the industry's long-term growth and sustainability additionally. The hospitals should promote the attainment of international accreditation of the hospital by respected organizations like JCI (Joint Commission International) and the management team should make strategic plans with the healthcare service providing team to easily access the qualified medical treatment process and highly technical equipment in order to provide more accurate and convenient medical services.

The professional skills and knowledge of healthcare staff should be monitored and evaluated by the associate department manager or supervisor and create the training and feedback system in the healthcare system in order to manage the suitable management style and create the programs needed for quality assurance and accreditation of healthcare staff. Additionally, a feedback system on service quality should be established to collect information from Myanmar medical tourists and implement their recommendations and the prompt solution and long term planning of good customer services need to be suggested by the customer service manager and department manager.

In order to continue to attract Myanmar medical tourists, a favorable country reputation is essential. In addition to its outstanding healthcare services, Thailand's medical tourism business must guarantee that potential patients have a positive impression of it. It is urged to develop marketing campaigns that highlight cultural sensitivity and the similarities between Thai and Myanmar traditions, as well as tailor promotional and marketing tools that address the cultural and healthcare preferences of Myanmar medical tourists. A positive image of the nation could help Thailand's medical tourism business by drawing more patients from Myanmar and fostering the industry's long-term growth and success.

When picking Thailand as their destination for medical treatment, Myanmar medical tourists take medical prices into serious account. To draw and keep

patients from Myanmar, it is critical to offer open and affordable solutions. The construction of cost-effective package for medical tourists from Myanmar will be made with the recommendation of a transparent pricing and billing system. A convenient and affordable pricing range should also be set up for services like lodging and transportation. Using this strategy will support the growth of client satisfaction while taking into account of medical tourism as an appealing choice for Myanmar patients seeking high-quality treatment abroad.

Managing cultural issues and fostering a welcoming atmosphere are vital for ensuring patient satisfaction and a positive healthcare experience. Medical tourism will be more accepted and valued owing to the creation of collaborative cultural events and initiatives. In order to ensure respectful and supportive interactions with Myanmar medical tourists, healthcare professionals and support workers ought to participate in training or courses that share them about Myanmar culture and traditions. Decoration and suitable food choices are additionally in line with Myanmar tradition. As a consequence, Thailand is capable of creating a welcoming and equitable healthcare community.

Safety is an essential aspect of medical journey, and it applies to both the local environment and medical services. The hospitals are working to improve their services and facilities within established guidelines, such as Joint Commission International accreditation, monitoring of healthcare facilities to ensure compliance with the safety and quality standards, and quick compliance for reporting safety concerns related to healthcare services. By producing patient safety information materials in the appropriate language, patient safety education programs for medical tourists will be conducted among the population. In order to improve security procedures, raise individual awareness of personal safety, and handle any safety concerns in busy tourist locations, hospitals work together with local law enforcement organizations.

In order to guarantee Myanmar medical tourists' satisfaction inside Thailand's medical tourism business, this thesis approach suggests a comprehensive recommendation above. Thailand can develop a good medical tourism destination for Myanmar medical tourists by improving the healthcare quality and nation image, country culture, medical prices, and safety of healthcare industry.

### **6.3 Limitations**

This study had some limitations even if it provided knowledge and made contribution to the field of medical tourism. A convenience sample of Myanmar medical tourists was used for this study. Future research discoveries could be better if the data can be collected from many nations. As a consequence, there is little scope for generalizing the results. The study could only be conducted for a limited period of time, therefore only 303 medical tourists were used to base the conclusions. The use of a larger sample size and a random sampling technique was advised for future research. The quantitative research method served as the foundation for the study's questionnaires. It was difficult to know the respondents' insights in detail. It would be preferable to include a qualitative approach when understanding stakeholder perspective information.

### **6.4 Future Research Recommendation**

According to the discussion in the study's limitations, qualitative research on the variables affecting the level of patient satisfaction among foreign patients participating in medical tourism should be carried out in the future. Due to time constraints, the researcher concentrated primarily on five variables that have a significant impact on patient satisfaction in this study. In the future, other independent variables can be added to analyze the patient satisfaction to seek further gaps and information to help the medical tourism process. Nevertheless, additional study on customer satisfaction should be done with a larger sample size in the future if time and resources enable. As this study was based on Myanmar medical tourists, another future research is recommended to make the study from many countries to understand the potential medical tourists and establish the further different needs and strategic plan for Thailand's medical tourism industry.

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## APPENDIX

### Research Questionnaires

#### Objectives

Exploring the factors that influence international patient satisfaction during the process of medical tourism to Thailand is the fundamental goal of this study, with a focusing on factors such service quality, cost, culture, country image, and safety. The study's specific objectives are to:

1. To analyze the relationship between service quality and foreign patients' satisfaction in the Thai medical tourism sector
2. To explore the relationship of medical costs with patient satisfaction in medical tourism
3. To analyze the association between destination image and patient satisfaction in medical tourism
4. To study the connection of culture with international patient satisfaction in medical tourism
5. To analyze the relation of safety upon patient satisfaction during medical tourism.

#### Section 1: Patient sociodemographic data

**Please choose an answer for each of these questions, filling  $\surd$  in the blank or checking the appropriate box.**

1. Nationalities

- European Countries
- Asian Countries
- Southeast Asian Countries
- Arabic Countries

Please kindly write the country name -----

2. Age

- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55 – 64 years
- 65 – 75 years
- 75 years and above

## 3. Gender

- Male
- Female
- LGBT

## 4. Marital status

- Single
- Married

## 5. Education status

- No education
- Primary School level
- High School level
- Graduate Degree
- Post Graduate Degree

## 6. Have you ever visited private hospital, Thailand for medical tourism purpose?

- Yes
- No

## 7. Have you received medical treatment in private hospitals before?

- Yes
- No, this is my first time
- No, haven't

## 8. Which department did you taken medical services?

- Surgery
- Check-up
- Cosmetic surgery
- Dental treatment
- Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. Which hospital have you taken medical services?

- Bumrungrad Hospital
- Vejthani Hospital
- Thonburi Bamrungmaung Hospital
- Thonburi Hospital
- Others Please Specify -----

**Section 2: Patient satisfaction and its Influencing Factors**

Kindly choose the kind of hospital that would offer the highest level of care based on your experience. Please check "1" if you consider the hospital's level of patient care is extremely low. Please mark "5" if you believe that the hospital service at the one you visited is high standard you. There is no right or wrong response,

and we truly appreciate in the information that accurately reflect your emotions and the opinions you have.

(Scale from Section 1 to Section 5: a. 5= strongly agree, b. 4= agree, c. 3= Neutral, d. 2 = disagree, e. 1= strongly disagree)

<b>Section 1 : Service Quality During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. The medical professionals are skilled and well-trained.					
2. The hospital offers prompt medical care, diagnostic tests, and other services with detailed explanations.					
3. The presence of several hospitals that have received accreditation from prestigious international organizations, such as the JCI Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.					
4. The hospital offers patients specific treatment and tackles concerns.					
5. They have updated amenities (parking lots, wards, etc.) as well as equipment and technology (equipment, machinery, and labs, etc.)					
<b>Section 2 : Medical Costs During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
The medical services in Thailand are at a reasonable price.					
The medical services in Thailand are offered at a cheaper price than other countries.					
Thailand delivers medical services that are both cost-effective and efficient.					
Thailand has fair costs of transportation and living expense for medical tourists.					
Thailand is a cost-efficient and appropriate destination to travel.					
<b>Section 3 : Destination Image During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Thailand is a destination with natural beauty and tourist attractions.					
2. Thailand has many reputation hospitals					

3. Thailand has high level of safety for medical tourism.					
4. Thailand has political stability.					
5. Natives in Thailand are friendly and helpful.					
<b>Section 4: Culture During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Thailand has welcoming and friendliness in culture.					
2. My destined country has culture similarity with my country.					
3. Staffs in the hospital are compassionate and caring during the medical tourism.					
4. There is no language barrier during the journey of medical tourism					
5. Variations in culture are taken into account by assigning a proficient English-speaking staff or specific language translators at the hospital					
<b>Section 5: Safety During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. My medical tourism destination offers a secure environment.					
2. My medical tourism destination has accredited training programs for the medical professionals.					
3. My medical tourism destined country has international hospitals which commit to the achievement of the treatment and strictly adhere to any related rules and regulations.					
4. My medical tourism destined country has safety against crime and terrorist attacks for tourists.					
5. In accordance with accredited international standards and treatment guidelines, the destination country constitutes numerous hospitals that offer safe healthcare services.					
<b>Section 6: Patient Satisfaction During medical Tourism at Private Hospitals, Thailand</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Overall, I am satisfied with the hospital during my medical tourism trip.					

2. Overall, I am satisfied with the medical treatment during my medical tourism.					
3. Overall, I am satisfied with the destination I traveled.					

