

A CASE STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE AND
FACILITATE MEDICAL TOURISM IN THAILAND WITH REGARD TO
SERVICES PROVIDED BY HOSPITALS



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AND FACILITATE MEDICAL TOURISM IN THAILAND WITH REGARD TO
SERVICES PROVIDED BY HOSPITALS



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Title: A CASE STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE AND FACILITATE
MEDICAL TOURISM IN THAILAND WITH REGARD TO SERVICES PROVIDED BY HOSPITALS


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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand reasons behind the growing medical tourism industry in Thailand. By studying the attributes that make the hospitals in Thailand more attractive to medical tourist we can better our hospitals and our services. Since medical tourism contributes significantly to the economy of Thailand and its benefits pour into other sectors of the tourism industry it is an important subject of study. The study also will be helpful in the future when ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) comes into being in 2015 which might create more competition for this industry in Thailand. Medical tourism is technology oriented but also has a big service factor to it. Medical patients who arrive in a new country find these factors make them more comfortable and secure especially when they are faced with serious medical problems.

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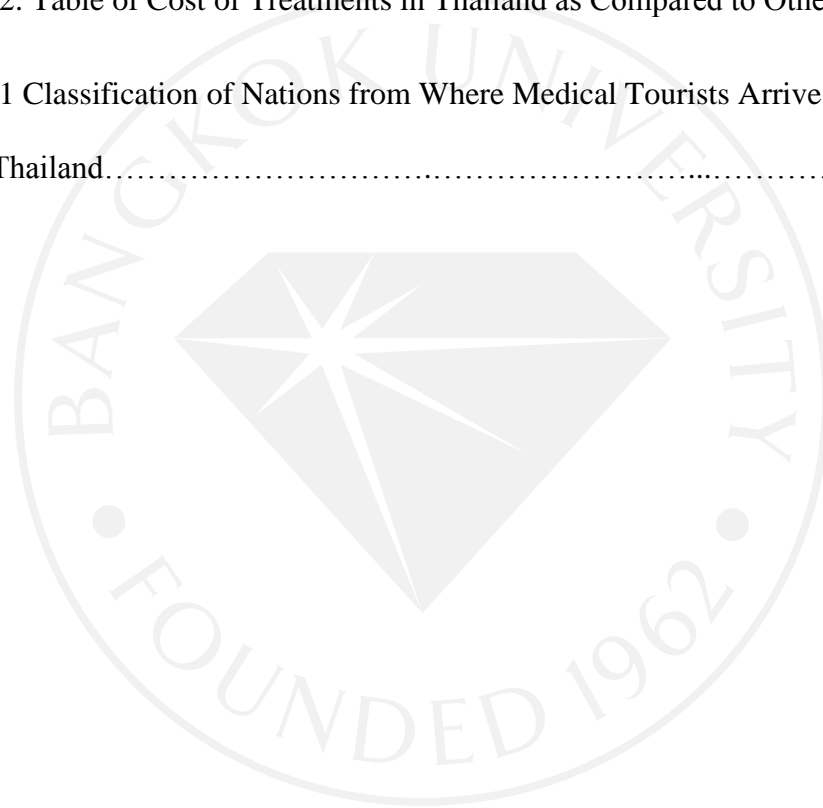
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 What is Medical Tourism?

Medical tourists are people who cross international borders for the exclusive purpose of obtaining medical services. The medical tourism industry has been growing worldwide because of rising medical costs in the west, cross border medical training and widespread air travel. It involves about 50 countries in all continents and several Asian countries are clearly in the lead. In Asia, medical tourism is highest in India, Singapore and Thailand making up 90% of the medical tourism market share in Asia. (NaRanong & NaRanong, 2011)

People in developed countries in the West are finding it difficult to rely on their own country's state health care systems are nonexistent and private treatments very expensive. In many countries where health care systems exist people have to wait far too long to receive medical treatment. Even simple procedures like dentistry are very expensive. Insurance companies do not cover elective procedures like IVF treatment and hence for many, Thailand offers a safe and affordable solution along with the fact that Thailand is renowned for its hospitality. ("Bangkok health tourism," n.d)

Health insurers in the United States are offering packages with the option to receive cheaper treatment in overseas centers which is one of the factors helping medical tourism. (" medical tourism," 2010).Patients in the US are able to take advantage of the cost effective treatments outside their home country and the insurance companies have the advantage of paying less from their own pockets. Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina has a deal with Bangkok's Bumrungrad hospital as well as three hospitals in Singapore and with hospitals in Turkey, Costa Rica and Ireland. ("Major health," 2013)

In Asia the new middle class are rich but ageing and they are able to afford high quality medical care and are willing to receive it if not available in their own country. Availability of cheaper budget airlines within Asia has made it easier for Asian medical tourism to expand. The traditional source of patients in Singapore in the past came from Indonesia and Malaysia, now patients are coming from other Asian countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Myanmar with some patients coming from as far away as the Middle East and the Ukraine. (" medical tourism:" 2010).

Popular medical travel worldwide destinations include: Argentina, Brunei, Cuba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, and recently, Saudi Arabia, UAE, South Korea, Tunisia, Ukraine, and New Zealand. In Europe Belgium, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine are also breaking into the business. South Africa promotes medical tourism as medical safaris. . ("Medical tourism," 2014)

The Asian medical tourism market comprises India, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Korea. Research and analysis have revealed that cost competitiveness is one of the major factors in making Asian countries a preferred destination for medical tourists. Also medical tourists are seeking alternative traditional treatments like Ayurveda, naturopathy, aromatherapy, homeopathy, meditation and yoga. The point of medical tourism is to provide medical treatment in a more relaxed and exotic surrounding. Other contributing factors are health-care standards convergence and the increasing adoption of sophisticated medical technology by hospitals in Asia. It also helps people to explore other nations' culture and its people. ("Asian medical tourism," 2013)

Joint Commission International (JCI) is an accreditation group in the United States that has been inspecting and accrediting health care facilities and hospitals outside of the United States since 1999. Many international hospitals obtain accreditation from them so as to be able to attract patients from the United States. ("Medical tourism," 2014)

1.1.2 Risks involving Medical Tourism

Many countries do not view medical tourism very positively. Some countries like India, South Africa, or Thailand have very different infectious disease-related epidemiology to Europe and North America. Patients who visit these countries could be exposed to these infections without having built a natural immunity to them. The quality of post-operative care also varies from country to country and can be different from the U.S or Europe. Travelling home soon after a major operation can lead to a lot of

complications like developing deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism. Scars could become darker and more noticeable if they sunburn while healing.

The limited nature of litigation in various countries is one reason for the lower cost of care overseas. In many countries there is no way to get the help of courts to sue for medical malpractice. To support the medical tourism another service industry has grown on the side.

1.1.3 Ethical Issues in Medical Tourism

Illegal purchase of organs and tissues for transplantation had been alleged in countries like India and China prior to 2007. In India and Thailand it has been noticed that medical tourists receive better treatment than the locals. ("Medical tourism," 2014)

1.1.4 Is the Market for Medical Tourism growing?

Yes. The worldwide medical tourism market is growing at a rate of 15-25%, with rates highest in North, Southeast and South Asia. The world population is ageing and also becoming more affluent and many nations are not able to provide quality healthcare to all their citizens at cheaper prices without it adding to their ever-increasing resource burdens. Elective procedures are very expensive in many countries and not covered by Insurance companies or there are long waiting lists forcing patients to go across national borders in search of quality healthcare at affordable prices. ("Medical tourism statistics," 2013)

1.1.5 How much can you save?

The following is what one can save using US costs across a variety of specialties and procedures as a benchmark, average range of savings for the most-traveled destinations:

Brazil: 25-40%

Costa Rica: 40-65%

India: 65-90%

Korea: 30-45%

Malaysia: 65-80%

Mexico: 40-65%

Singapore: 30-45%

Taiwan: 40-55%

Thailand: 50-70%

Turkey: 50-65%.

("Medical tourism statistics," 2013)

1.2 Overview of Thailand as a Medical Tourism Destination

Thailand has benefited because of its proximity to Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, where medical facilities have not developed so far. Patients from Myanmar are second largest group at Bangkok's Bumrungrad hospital. Thailand is also vying to capture the Chinese and Russian market for medical tourism since the Chinese are interested in anti-ageing treatments, fertility treatments and stem cell treatments while the Russians are interested in weight loss. ("Thailand leads asia's," 2012)

Statistics compiled by Thailand's Ministry of Public Health show that, in 2012, foreign visitors sought medical services here on more than two million trips. Medical tourists to Thailand doubled from 2008-2012, and they came from the UK, the US, the Middle East (UAE, Kuwait, and Oman), Germany, Australia, Japan, and Thailand's fellow ASEAN countries.

1.2.1 Revenue for Thailand from Medical Tourism:

Year	Revenue (Billion Baht)
2008	52.00
2009	58.00
2010	65.00
2011	97.80
2012	121.60

The Kasikorn Survey Center found that 60% of Thailand's tourists – 1.48 million persons – visited Thailand in 2012 with the intention of receiving medical care or treatment. 45% of these medical tourists – 670,000 patients – had a 1:1 ratio of accompanying party traveling with them; i.e., an additional 670,000 visitors to Thailand. The primary destinations for medical tourism in Thailand include, but are not limited to, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, KohSamui, Pattaya/Chonburi, and Phuket. Treatments sought by medical tourists in Thailand range from cosmetic, organ transplants, and orthopedic treatments to dental and cardiac surgeries. ("Medical tourism," 2014)

Treatments also include spa, physical and mental therapies, as well as procedures that are considered more along the lines of alternative medical practices. Bangkok is known as the "Spa Capital of Asia," generating income through traditional Thai massage, beauty treatment services, and alternative medicine, thereby creating a sales channel for herbal products used in spa treatments. Apart from Bangkok, such major tourism destinations as Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Samui offer inclusive medical spa resorts and wellness retreats, as well. ("Policy of developing," 2013)

1.3 Rationale and Problem Statement

Thailand is a hub for medical tourism in Southeast Asia. The primary destinations for medical tourism in Thailand include Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, KohSamui, Pattaya/Chonburi, and Phuket. There are about 30 JCI accredited hospitals in Thailand. Of these 21 are in Bangkok .Medical tourists have the choice among these many

hospitals. The purpose of our study is to see if the hospitals in Thailand are prepared to welcome the growing number of medical tourists. To study this I have chosen hospitals in Bangkok which provide a great many medical services and what specific services they offer to medical tourists other than costs and technology. I will also contact the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand to find out how the Government of Thailand is assisting this industry.

This study will help me find out what medical tourists value in the hospitals the results of which I shall generalize for Thailand. This study should help us to understand what priorities like service, cost, recommendation, specializations do people take into consideration in their choice of hospitals.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to understand the factors that promote and facilitate medical tourism in Thailand with regard to services provided by hospitals.

1.5 Assumptions

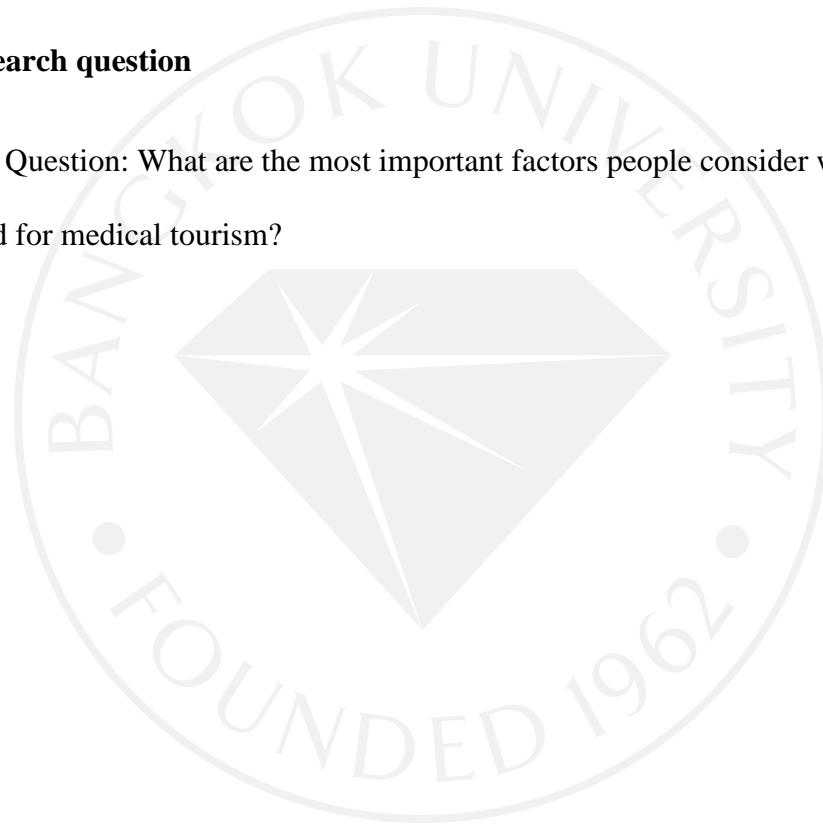
The following assumptions were made for this study as the data has been received from hospitals and the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

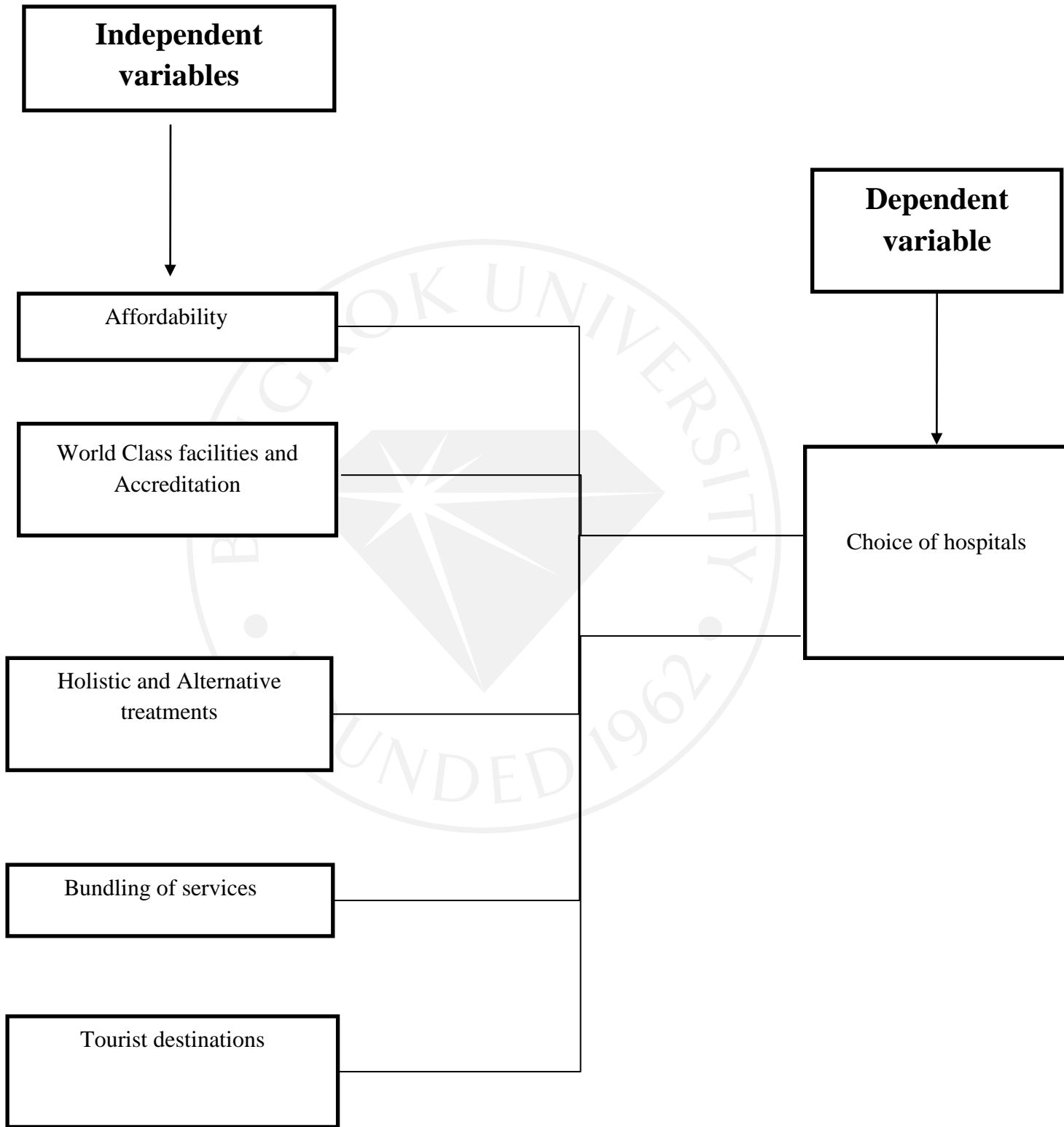
1. Since patients cannot be directly approached, we assume the hospital records are accurate as regards preferences, reasons for choosing Thailand, etc.

2. The data collected gives the data only for medical tourists and does not club together expatriates, medical tourists and business or holiday travelers receiving medical treatment.
3. The data collected from the hospitals in Bangkok can be extended to Thailand as a whole.

1.6 Research question

Primary Question: What are the most important factors people consider when they choose Thailand for medical tourism?





1.7 Scope of the study

The study focuses on attributes which make the medical tourists choose Thailand (and the particular hospital) as their destination for medical tourism. For the purpose of doing this study I plan to collect information from primary sources, by visiting the marketing department of hospitals, and through email correspondence with the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand. I also plan to collect information from secondary sources on the internet from hospitals' websites.

1.8 Limitations to this research

There however will be significant limitations to this study as information is being collected from hospitals, in Bangkok, and generalized for the whole country. It can be a limiting factor because of the fact that medical tourists could prefer to come to Bangkok which is the capital more than visit other smaller cities. Hospitals in Bangkok have different budgets and therefore some might perform better than others.

Also hospital administrators may or may not be willing to share information as hospitals are very particular about patient's privacy or confidentiality about business secrets.

1.9 Significance of the study

Medical tourists are the tourist group most likely to affect the country in a major way. Medical tourists tend to seek more intensive and costly treatments than other foreign patients, as a result of which their effect on the country is more profound. This study will

help us find what is good about the medical tourism industry in Thailand and prepare the country and hospitals for the time when ASEAN economic Community comes into being. This will help the whole industry to better itself so that it can continue to cater to medical tourist and improve the Thai economy in the process and provide jobs to a number of associated industries. Since competition in South Asia among the countries to develop medical tourism is increasing studying this industry is important.

1.10 Definitions of terms

1. **Medical tourism** - also called health tourism or medical travel, is a rapidly growing industry catering to patients who travel across national borders to receive medical treatments.

2. **Medical tourism cluster**-All the medical tourism stakeholders, such as hospitals, doctors, Ministry of Health, Tourism, Economic Development, Tourism Operators, Hotels and more must work together to promote this image of high quality of healthcare to establish a “brand” name for the location throughout the world.

3. **JCI accreditation**-The United States oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care evaluates organizations and inspires them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value.

4. **HA accreditation**:-A self-assessment and external peer assessment process used by health care organizations to accurately assess their level of performance in relation to established standards and to implement ways to continuously improve.

5. **AEC-ASEAN** Economic community

6. **ISO 9001** is a quality management system, implementing a systematic and process driven approach to managing your business.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 History and growth of medical tourism

Medical tourism is not a new phenomenon. It has been around in ancient Greece, where worshippers of Asclepius, the Greco-Roman god of medicine, made pilgrimage to his temple in Epidaurus to undergo healing. In the 17th century spa towns emerged like Pyrenees which were visited by wealthy people from Europe. In modern days to attraction for spas and health resorts has increased. There is a growing demand for health services because of economic development and because of demographic change mostly due to an ageing population requiring medical services and rising incidence of chronic conditions. Reasons like longer waiting times and availability of cheaper alternatives in developing countries, has lead new healthcare consumers to seek treatment overseas. However travelling abroad for surgery is a relatively new phenomenon. In 2010, for example, nearly 1.5 million Americans traveled outside their country for medical care—nearly twice the number from just three years earlier. (Medical tourism,2013)

Insurance status of an individual plays a big role for people leaving US for treatment outside. Other reasons for medical tourism being long waiting time for elective surgery, privacy, and undergoing a surgery that is not allowed in the home country or going for a procedure not approved in the home country. Some individuals in the US prefer to go to their home country because they want to return home to their countries of

origin and receive care within health care systems that share their language and culture. (Tseng, H. 2013).

In Southeast Asia, the health sector is expanding rapidly, and becoming a lucrative business and countries are offering medical packages with tourism. Politicians in Singapore have reasoned that in order to recruit and retain specialists in a country with a small local population like Singapore they have to attract medical tourists. Thailand has established a niche for cosmetic surgery and sex change operations, whilst Singapore has made a name for itself by offering advanced treatments like cardiovascular, neurological surgery and stem cell therapy. (Pocock and Phua,n.d)

In south-east Asia active government support, modern technology, effective marketing and an existing infrastructure with evolving links to hospitality, tourism and transport industries have been invaluable in contributing to medical tourism industry. In some Asian countries medical tourism is marketed as part of the tourist industry, and generally facilitated by new medical tourism coordinators who function like travel agents. (John, C ,n.d). In Asian countries rise in medical tourism is because of an ageing population like in Japan and because of rapid economic development like in countries like china and India. (Lin et al.,2009)

Table 2.1: Competitive Advantage in Medical Services between Thailand and Overseas

Competitive advantage	Thailand	Singapore	India	Malaysia	South Korea
Service/hospitality	xxx xx	xx	x	x	X x
Hi-tech hardware	Xxx x	Xx xx	xx	x	X x
HR quality	Xxx x	Xx xx	xx	xx	xx x
JCIA	28	22	20	9	34
Preemptive move	xx	xxx	x	xx	X x
Synergy/Strategy partner	xxx	xx	x	x	X
Accessibility/ Market	xx	xxx	x	xx	X x

channel					
Reasonabl e cost	Xxx x	xx	xxx	xx	X

Note: X number means competitive advantage is better

Resource: the liberalization of trade and health services in ASEAN, 2013

2.2 Literature review of the conceptual framework

Different articles provide different reasons for patient's choice of medical tourism destination. A medical tourism destination could be renowned for tourism, physicians and surgeons, quality of medical infrastructure, availability of accommodation or because of better, country conditions. Some people look for accredited hospitals, some compare prices of surgery, whereas some take advice from family and friends who have travelled abroad, some listen to the testimonials of other patients, and some are helped by medical tourism providers like global medical tourism associations and medical tourism associations of various countries.(Medhekar,et al.,2012) The reason Thailand is popular as a medical tourism destination is because of the availability of world class medical treatment at fraction of the cost of what one can get in Australia, Europe, US the Middle East and some parts of Asia. It is not the only reason however as Thailand boasts of good quality service, trained medical professionals, latest technology and equipment, and

facilities that resembles five star hotels along with a chance to recuperate in scenic surroundings. (Ho, H, 2011).

2.2.1 Affordability

The medical tourism industry does not have a stable demand as demand depends on a number of factors and these affect patient choices of destinations and hospitals. One of these factors could be the exchange rate of the country the patient is looking to go to. As fluctuations in the exchange rate can cause destination to be attractive or unattractive by either increasing costs or decreasing costs currency exchange rate plays a role in destination choice. The worsening economic conditions in the patient's own home country could also affect the patient's decision. The Health care system is very expensive forcing many to go outside for medical travel ("Medical tourism: Types," 2014).

In 1990 Thailand was experiencing great economic growth and Thai citizens were also having an increase in personal income and were looking for good quality health care. Hence many hospitals in Thailand grew to accommodate this increasing demand. According to the Ministry of Public health the number of hospitals in Thailand increased from 422 to 491 from 1990 to 1997 and there was a big increase in the number of beds available. But the economic crisis of 1997 meant that people were not able to afford the expensive health care .Another by product was that labor cost became low and since the currency was devalued Thai healthcare proved to be very cheap for the citizens of United States even after taking into account the travel and accommodation costs. Private

hospitals in Thailand looked outside of Thailand to make up for their loss and started inviting patients from outside.

Bumrungrad Hospital got a new management team so that they could manage all arrangements for foreign patients and also became the first internationally accredited hospital. In Thailand medical tourism was factor driven as people traveled to avail of the health services at lower cost. Patients are keen on the total health care and they see the travel costs and treatment using current exchange rates (Harryono , Huang , Miyazawa & Sethaput, 2006)

One push factor for people undertaking medical tourism is related to cost because many people lack insurance or are underinsured. If insurance does not cover their procedure people are forced to look for treatment outside where it is cheaper (Crooks et al., 2010). Thailand offers extensive savings on procedures ranging from cosmetic and dental work to complex cardiac procedures. In the U.S. a heart bypass surgery costs about \$50,000, whereas in Thailand it is about \$21,000, and it is performed with the same equipment and knowledge as it would in America or Europe. Hair plant surgery costs about \$1,800 in Thailand, while it is \$9,600 in the US, and this means a patient gets a saving of more than 80 percent. Medical procedure costs are also less hence leading to number of medical tourists choosing Thailand ("Thailand: An exotic ,n.d").

In the US lack of affordability was the main reason for people to go outside for treatment. Even wealthy millionaires believed when they could save on treatment they would not pay more. US has a growing ageing population who are in need of

orthopedics, cardiac surgeries and these people can save more if they travel Far East. Cost becomes a critical factor in cases where people are considering cosmetic surgery and it is more so since the segment of the US market who are interested in cosmetic surgery are not covered by insurance. The other segment for which cost becomes important includes underinsured or uninsured patients who need surgery to better the quality of their lives, or need treatment for life threatening diseases. When comparing the two segments cost savings is important for those undergoing treatment for life threatening disease but not so much for those going in for cosmetic surgery cost especially if they were going for just a single procedure and hence to get maximum savings they usually try to bundle services(Karuppan et al.,2011). Some employers and insurance companies also encouraged their people to access cost effective treatment abroad because they found that even when travel costs were added it proved cheaper to travel abroad for treatment. (Crooks et al.,2010). BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina and Blue Choice of South Carolina, both US based healthcare insurance providers, have formed an alliance with one of Bangkok's premier hospitals to promote medical tourism to its 1.3 million member(Thailand: Asia's medical hub,2007).

						
Medical Procedure	USA	Mexico	Cost Rica	India	Thailand	Korea
Angioplasty	Up to \$57,000	\$17,100	\$14,000	\$10,000	\$9,000	\$21,600
Heart Bypass	Up to \$144,000	\$21,100	\$26,000	\$10,000	\$26,000	\$26,000
Heart Valve Replacement	Up to \$170,000	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$3,000	\$24,000	\$38,000
Knee Replacement	Up to \$50,000	\$11,500	\$12,000	\$9,000	\$14,000	\$19,800
Hip Resurfacing	Up to \$30,000+	\$13,400	\$13,000	\$10,000	\$18,000	\$22,900
Hip Replacement	Up to \$43,000	\$13,800	\$13,000	\$10,000	\$16,000	\$18,450
Special Fusion	Up to \$100,000	\$8,000	\$16,000	\$14,000	\$13,000	\$19,350
Face Lift	Up to \$15,000	\$8,000	\$6,500	\$9,000	\$8,600	\$5,000
Breast Implants	Up to \$10,000	\$9,000	\$4,000	\$6,500	\$5,700	\$13,600
Rhino Plasty	Up to \$8,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$5,500	\$5,400	\$6,000
Lap Band/Bariatric	Up to \$30,000	\$9,200	\$9,000	\$9,500	\$14,000	\$11,500
Hysterectomy	Up to \$15,000	\$7,500	\$6,000	\$7,500	\$7,000	\$11,000
Dental Implant	Up to \$2,000-10,000	\$1,000	\$1,100	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000

Table 2.2 Table of cost of treatments in Thailand as compared to other countries

Source: Thailand medical tourism cluster

Medical treatment costs in Thailand are one of the lowest in the world. Due to the fact that the treatments are of world class quality and cheap many medical tourists are coming to Thailand. Some of the medical facilities are of world class quality having the latest equipment and facilities for treating even the most difficult illnesses for an affordable cost ("Why medical tourism,"n.d).

Thailand has some of the world's most low cost infertility treatments. The IVF treatment in Thailand is 70 percent cheaper than the one in the US which costs about

US\$13,000 and does not include medication. The other treatments like, ICSI, PGD also are comparatively cheaper than the west.

Most fertility treatments are minimally invasive and hence the patient can combine a holiday with the treatment as there is a time window available between treatments. Since Thailand offers many places for relaxation or exciting adventure it puts the patients mind at ease during the whole process. For example after egg retrieval it usually takes three to five days for fertilization in the lab, and then the new embryo is implanted and again the patient has to wait for nine-to-eleven days wait to confirm pregnancy ("Fertility tourism is,"n.d).

In the US most health and wellness spas cater to the rich as the very idea of "spa" carries with it a kind of exclusivity factor. In the United States an Ayurveda treatment, massage, and an aromatherapy session will cost about 300-400 USD, and if one wanted to spend a week at some of the best spa destinations the cost would run into thousands of dollars. However the very same spa treatment can result in enormous cost saving in a leading spa destination in Thailand. In Thailand, one can have a two hour aromatherapy for about 20\$ to 30 \$ and a two hour traditional Thai massage for 10\$ to 15\$ and a 90 minute Yoga class for \$8-10. Hence a full day treatment at the spa in Thailand works out to about 50 \$ ("Get pampered! spa,"n.d).

Thailand also has high quality dental clinics with world class facilities which make it a popular location for dental tourism. These facilities offer treatment like fillings, bridges, and veneers to orthodontics, periodontal procedures, and complete smile

makeovers at very low costs. The treatments are so cheap that one can include a holiday along with getting a treatment.

For example a dental crown used for capping a decayed or decaying tooth runs costs about four times in Australia and a dental bridge which is a procedure to fill gaps between healthy teeth costs seven times in UK what it costs in Thailand. A smile makeover is a process in which the teeth are repaired, replaced, whitened, straightened, and contoured and this can cost about 25,000 dollars more in the West than in Thailand. And even the simple root canal treatment in Thailand can lead to a 80 percent saving since it costs about US\$1,000 per tooth in America ("Dental tourism in," n.d).

2.2.2 World Class Facilities and Accreditation

Thailand's hospitals have some of the world's best leading state of art technologies and this helps them provide the highest degree of medical treatment. These technologies include the Siemens Biograph 64PET/CT which is much better than other scanners. They also use digital mammogram which works better and gives more accurate results on women less than 50 years of age. Other technology includes MRI machines in early cancer detection and diagnosis. Image Guided Radiotherapy (IGRT) and R2 CAD Image Checker that has 6-20% higher breast cancer detection rates. Thailand also provides Blood Marrow Stem Cell Transplant, which is a complex medical treatment program to cure incurable blood or bone marrow diseases. In Thailand noninvasive brain surgery is done through the use of Gamma Knife which uses a highly targeted gamma radiation. Another minimal invasive procedure is the use of Uterine Fibroid

Embolization, to remove fibroid tumors from the uterus. They use Novalis Shaped Beam Surgery System to destroy diseased tissue or cauterize a problem area in a noninvasive manner without affecting healthy adjacent tissue

The da Vinci Surgical System is a system in which robotics is used to copy the movements of a surgeon and it is used in complex heart surgery. Another technology is 256-slice Multi-detector CT Scan, whose use produces higher resolution pictures and Carto sound Module for identifying and treating arrhythmias. For treatment of veins and arteries they use the endovascular and interventional radiology and have methods which use ionizing radiation in the treatment of malignant tumors.

Hospitals use a Picture archiving and communication systems (PACS) that enable images such as x-rays and scans to be stored electronically, so that doctors and radiologists can access an image and compare it with previous images from anywhere in the hospital. Many hospitals use fully automated drug management system, picture archiving and communication systems to ensure that administration and communication are as seamless as the treatments ("Thailand's medical technology,"n.d).

Medical facilities can avail of various accreditations and certifications from international or domestic organizations amongst which the Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation and 'Clinical Care Program' Certification are considered the most prestigious. Thai hospitals also use Hospital Accreditation (HA), a national type of assessment and quality certification to certify their hospitals. ("Global accreditation ensures,"n.d)

Hospitals' accreditation is most often carried out by staff from developed countries and the accreditation acts as a signal of quality. According to (Shetty, 2010; Pocock and Phua, 2011) governments in India, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia encourage this kind of accreditation to help aid medical tourism. According to (Conway and Willcocks, 1997 p. 133) health is intangible which means that a customer cannot evaluate the treatment even after undergoing it. According to (Scrivens, 1997) accreditation is one of the external mechanisms by which the patients' confidence can be increased. Sustainable markets require consumer confidence.

According to (Greenfield and Braithwaite, 2008) there are three major players in the accreditation industry namely Accreditation Canada, Australian Council on Healthcare Standards International (ACHSI), and Joint Commission International (JCI), all accredited by The International Society for Quality in Health Care. As of July 31, 2011 the world-wide number of JCI accredited hospitals were 329, Accreditation Canada had accredited 21 hospitals and ACHSI had accredited 10 hospitals. Because of the internet, hospitals are able to display their accreditation and this reassures consumers about the safety of using these hospitals and this display also helps to promote the hospital. According to (Barker et al., 2002) there is not much correlation between quality measures and accreditation outcomes. They found that medical errors occurred in both accredited and non-accredited hospitals.

Hospitals are accredited following guidelines which are written in the manuals and according to Smits et al. (2008) the most common accreditation standards were

production related quality and did not take into account the dimensions of culture and value. When hospital accreditation standards were compared by Horowitz et al. (2007) they found that international standards were not that high because JCI had a different manual for international accreditation maybe due to the fact that when JCI had to accredit hospitals in other countries they had to consider environmental dimensions to help ensure more appropriate health-system accreditation (Woodhead, A.,2013).

In Thailand, for public hospitals under the Ministry of Public Health (“MOPH”), the ministry has set up different standards for different levels of hospitals depending on the number of beds, number and specialties of physicians and medical equipment. The Nursing Division of the Office of Permanent Secretary which supports nursing administration and practices has also developed guidelines for quality assurance in different areas of nursing. These include nurses operating in-patient care, ICU, emergency & accident, operating room. For private hospitals, the MOPH develops rules and regulation for annual auditing and these rules and regulations cover structure and manpower.

Guidelines for quality improvement are given to private hospitals. In many public and private hospitals programs like quality control circles (QCC) and 5-S program have been tried with little success. In 1994, some public hospitals introduced TQM/CQI with the help of the provincial Hospital Division under the MOPH. The Ministry has encouraged hospitals to get their hospitals to install policies like ISO9000 quality system

or the Hospital Accreditation (HA) programs. Even some private hospitals in Thailand have got the ISO9000 to set their quality assurance system for marketing purposes.

In 1999, the constitution of Thailand stated that the Thai people have a right to standard healthcare, and it was the job of the government to see that they have it. Due to this the government started to take an interest in quality of health care provided to people. They got inputs from healthcare academicians and health professionals, and started to pay more attention to quality management rather than tangible aspects of quality.

The Thai Medical Council initially set up a short list of hospital standards, and when the Social Security Act was enacted in 1991, a set of hospital standards were developed by the Social Security Office to approve and audit hospitals. These standards were for hospitals which were in the social security program. Later in 1995, the MOPH set up a neutral agency to solve the conflict of quality and cost between healthcare providers and consumer which later led to the set of systems for hospital accreditation. In 1996 the golden Jubilee version of the hospital standards laid the foundation of the hospitals' quality management system for accreditation. 35 public and private hospitals adopted it voluntarily in 1997 and later, after this research and development project ended, the collaboration was transformed into the "Institute of Hospital Quality Improvement and Accreditation." By 2003 about 50 hospitals had got accreditation and many committed to this program.

The hospital accreditation (HA) in Thailand is a mechanism by which hospitals are encouraged in a systematic way to improve quality of their hospitals and in a proper

direction (Sriratanaban,n.d). Many Thai hospitals have hospital accreditation (HA) which is a four-stage process that combines self-assessment and peer assessment to judge performance levels against established standards and identify methods of improvement("Thailand features int'l," 2010).. An accredited hospital is committed to patient-centered quality improvement and is an indicator that the hospital has a good quality system which will minimize risk and assure quality, and assures patients that there are systems in place which take care of professional practice and ethics, and lets the patient know that the hospital can continuously improve

Hospital accreditation helps regulate provider behaviors in a health care system and hospitals have to make some structural and process changes as required by the HA standards of practice. The hospitals with HA are assessed periodically. In Thailand it is necessary for the hospital to get accreditation of some form to be able to participate in certain public health insurance or welfare schemes, including the UC and the SSS. Hospitals are also subject to periodic assessments and surveys. The teaching hospitals also need HA by health-professional educational bodies. Both the public and private hospitals have the same kind of requirements under HA. The standards are set for optimal performance and therefore, they have a strong guidance system as well as support public-private partnerships (Sriratanaban,n.d).

Hospitals and medical facilities in Thailand have very high standards as they have striven hard to get their hospital premises and systems to undergo the strict rules in order to get international accreditation and certification. One of Thailand's hospital was the

first to get JCI accreditation in 2002, and as of January 2014 there are 32 hospitals which are accredited ("Healthcare system and,"). Many more are ISO certified and are in the process of getting a JCI accreditation. Over 350 hospitals have a Hospital Accreditation from the Ministry of Public Health. All the latest technologies and facilities are available in the largest private hospitals ("Why medical tourism,"n.d).

Many healthcare providers are ISO 14000 and ISO 9000 certified. The ISO certification sets standards of general management and environmental management and is also a sign of quality assurance in healthcare. It indicates that the hospitals are committed to deliver sustainable, high-quality facilities and services. 350 Thai hospitals have acquired Hospital Accreditation (HA), awarded by the Ministry of Public Health. Many Thai doctors and surgeons have won awards for their work and many specialist doctors have earned international qualifications from western countries like US and UK and about 500 doctors are American Board Certified ("Healthcare system and,"n.d). Most of Thailand's top hospitals are located in the capital and are (ISO 1900-2000) Even specialist clinics like Lasik surgery clinics dental clinics have ISO accreditation. Many Thai physicians hold US or UK professional certification ("The globalization of,n.d").

Thailand has many biomedical research facilities in many universities and many of them work in health biotechnologies. There are many private stem cell research companies in Thailand. In Thailand the Thai national Science, Technology and innovation policy office has asked for research to be conducted for biotechnologies in

Thailand. (Velasco, R., Chaikledkaew, U., Chaw Yin, M., Khampang, R., Tantivess, S., & Teerawattananon, Y.,2013)

Hospitals and other medical facilities in Thailand apply for accreditation and certification and this proves to the medical tourism community the commitment of the hospitals to ensure safe environment to its patients and staff. This voluntary process provides a tangible and visible commitment by the hospital to continually ensure a safe environment for its patients and staff.

JCI sets Clinical Care Program Certification standards (CCPC), and five Thai hospitals have received them. The award states that these hospitals demonstrated excellence in fostering better outcomes in specific clinical care services or treatment of specific diseases and conditions. ("Thailand features int'l," 2010).

Thailand's medical professionals are highly qualified. Doctors, physicians, surgeons and nurses have also been well trained. Many Thai doctors and surgeons practicing today have won awards for their work and endeavors, and more than 500 doctors practicing in Thai hospitals are American Board Certified. Among the most celebrated Thai physicians are Dr. Pairoj Rerkpattanapipat who was recognized by the American Medical Association's Physician's Recognition Award in 1997 and 2000 and heart specialist Dr. Wanpen Vongpatanasin who was recognized by the American College of Cardiology in 2000. Dr. Professor Pornchai Sithisarankul has been honored with several awards by the Thai Ministry of Public Health in 2001 and Dr. Therdchai Jivacate was given the prestigious 2008 Ramon Magsaysay Award. For his work in

advancing modern orthopedic science combined with space-age technology to help transform the field of prosthetics ("Thailand's medical professionals," 2010).

2.2.3 Other Services

Singapore Thailand and India have become global leaders in providing services for patients around the world. Hospitals in these countries try to attract international patients through the use of brochures, websites, and other marketing materials. Facilitators or brokers promote medical tourism by offering variety of services like assisting the patients with travel bookings, assisting with selecting hospitals and selecting surgeons and doing the paper work for potential medical tourists (Crooks et al.,2010).

Most services in Europe and US are performed by orderlies, but not so in the medical tourism hubs where they have registered nurses. In Thailand there are people to escort you through the whole process whether it is seeing a doctor, or collecting medicines. Us doctors also do not have time and are always rushing whereas medical tourists in Bangkok are treated courteously, doctors have enough time to answer questions and billing is made very easy. Treatments not available at home like stem cell therapies are available to patients because of government restrictions. In Bangkok there is treatment available for treating heart tissue damage with adult stem cells and the use of undifferentiated immune cells for personalized cancer therapies (Runckel, C. ,2007).

Thailand is the largest medical tourism hub in terms of total volume for both high-end and low-end procedures. Thailand is also a well-known tourism destination and along with western trained doctors has created a package of services for medical tourists. The

two biggest hospitals in Thailand Bumrungrad and Bangkok Hospital treat about a million people altogether. Even though cost of treatments in Thailand are higher than the costs of treatments in India Thailand has the advantage of being a renowned tourism destination and offers a better bundling of services. In Thailand due to the massive volume of patients for each specialty, hospitals have better equipment, offer lower prices and experienced doctors.

Due to this packaging of service many patients find they can come for a physical examination or even dental work and enjoy a week of vacationing as it proves to be cheaper than at home. Thailand's tourism options are the best when compared to other medical hubs and there are many Thai and foreign restaurants and they come in all levels of luxury and are better priced than those in India or Singapore (Runckel,2007).

Patients who come to Thailand are surprised to find hospitals with excellent restaurants, coffee shops and personalized room service, translation services, Halal-prepared cuisine, and access to prayer facilities of their chosen faith. Patients have a choice of private suites and accommodation in accordance with their own customs and preferences. They also have a choice of meals and cuisine including Thai, Japanese, and Muslim and Western food. Rooms have special bathroom designed for patients, electronically adjustable bed, TV with multi-lingual cable television and remote control, refrigerator, microwave, hotpot and dish set, personal in-room safe, air conditioning with a self-adjustable thermostat, personal telephone for local and international calls, guest couch and a personal nurse call system and fire alarms and a safety system to ensure security during your stay. Thai nurses are very warm and caring and considerate to the

needs of all their patients. Hospitals in Thailand offer 24-hour nursing care, and about 30 hospitals have English speaking staff and provide translators for people with other interpreting needs. Patients in Thailand can also opt for recovery from their treatment outside of the hospital environment, and hospitals in some cases provide a medical escort service wherever the patient chooses to vacation, so that the patient can avail of quality health care as they recuperate during their vacation ("Thailand offers excellent," 2010).

Most international Thai hospitals have an international department where interpreters are available to coordinate the patients stay from initial inquiry to follow up check and they also maintain communication with the patients when they go back home to find out how well they are doing. Thai hospitals also provide specialized assistance for every need of international patients.

Thai Hospitals provide for interpretation in many different languages like Arabic, Bengali, French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, Chinese, Korean, Swedish and Vietnamese. Many provide designated registration corners for Arabs, Muslim prayer rooms, and sometimes even certain closed off areas and wards only for Muslims.

If the patients do not want to arrange the trip to Thailand by themselves the hospital staff even make booking arrangements like air travel, accommodation airport pick up and drop off and other transportation arrangements. Hospital premises also have flower boutiques, bookstores, health food stores, and baby shops and ATMs to help patients with all kinds of facilities Bangkok Hospital has a counter at Suvarnabhumi international airport to great medical tourist("Hospitals in thailand," n.d).

At the airport Bangkok Hospital's Airport Service Center gives information and ground support services to inbound medical tourists. The hospital' lounge which has a business-class setting is mostly for patients who arrive from the Middle East and there is a 360 degree circle of support from the time a patient arrives till they leave. This service counter has treated over 800 patients a month and about 200 walk ins. Bangkok Hospital's sister company; Samitivej Hospital also operates a service center at the airport. Bangkok Hospital is the operator of Thailand's largest network of hospitals, which includes 13 separate medical facilities. The locations are the near the beaches, and they too offer serviced apartments for family and friends (BASEM). Since Bangkok Hospital has 1000 medical specialist, 300 of who are full time. Patients can see 3 or 4 specialist in a day which is very difficult abroad ("Tat eyes high-end,"n.d).

The hospital boasts of leading specialists in fields like heart treatment, cancer treatment and neurology, Travel Medicine Center, Psychiatric Center, Preventive Medicine & Medical Toxicology Center, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Center, Hair Restoration Clinic, Alternative Medicine Center, Aviation Medicine Center and the Bangkok Academy of Sports and Exercise Medicine (BASEM)

Bangkok General Hospital spends a lot on technology and its operations are spread across its hospitals. Their hospitals treat and specialize in various diseases. Medical schools utilize these various hospitals for doing their clinical research, and the hospital has become famous for this with various research works published. (Strategic and Marketing Magazine, 2007 cited in Jotikasthira, 2010).

Bumrungrad has a wide variety of specialist centers including a Women's Center, Urology Center, Stroke Center, Sleep Disorder Center, Radiology Center, Plastic Surgery Center, Orthopedic Center, Neurology Center, Heart Center, Fertility Center, Eye Center, Diabetes Center, Dental Center, Children's Center, Breast Care Center, Allergy Center and much more ("Is thailand the,"2004).

The Vital life Wellness Center is a subsidiary of the Bumrungrad International Hospital offers every kind of treatment in anti-ageing and wellness under one roof. This includes doctors from all facilities like dermatology, general medicine, reproductive medicine and obstetrics & gynecology. It also includes a team of specialized pharmacists who create tailored vitamins and supplements to revitalize aging or damaged tissue. One can get access to fitness programs tailored to ones need, maintain bone structure, build muscle mass, and increase flexibility ("Wellness & anti-aging (vitallife),"n.d).

Bumrungrad is the one that is well known among Thai hospital and is considered as having high medical standards by international patients. It is 484 beds hospital and treats more than 420,000 international patients each year from more than 200 countries. In order to comply with the US safety standards they opened a 22-story building which boasts of 700 parking spaces. The hospital has 2,100 medical personnel, most with international training and certification. The hospital uses a sophisticated health information technology system called Global Care Solutions' Hospital 2000 which recognizes and prevents dangerous drug interactions, stores patient records electronically and integrates patient management and hospital operations (Bumrungrad International

Hospital, 2015). Patients who visit Bumrungrad hospital feel like they are in a 5 star hotel. Bumrungrad offers services like 24-hour concierge service, swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, porter service, and safe deposit box for an additional sum access to broadband internet, laundry service and a variety of business center services though it is one of the most expensive among hospitals in Bangkok. At Bumrungrad it is all about the 4C's for its patients which are communication, convenience, comfort, and coordination. The customer service representative assists foreign visitors so that they get comfortable with the procedures. They speak in English and if the patient requires have translators to help. They also have a Sky Lobby where representatives from the hospital assist patients with hotel bookings, air travel, sightseeing tours, and local transportation. They also have a mezzanine floor which boasts of with four international restaurants Japanese, Thai, American, and Lebanese.

The Bumrungrad hospital's Medical Coordination Office, provides consultation and support for Arabic-speaking patients from Middle Eastern markets. They have seven doctors, seventeen nurses, and several customer service representatives all of who help in scheduling procedures, attending to logistical questions for patients and family, orchestrating follow-up plans. They help in transferring of patient's medical records, and help with visa extensions, and arranging return trip where follow up care is needed. They also provide halal food, prayer room, an Arabic restaurant, Arabic TV channel and during Ramadan they allow for nighttime prayer activity and group iftar("For patients from," n.d).

At Bumrungrad many activities are done electronically like bill payment, human resources, record keeping and inventory as a result doctor have access to patient records immediately and duplication is eliminated. Files are accessed by different doctors at the same time. Their e prescription decreases errors and allergy alerts warn doctors when they are prescribing medicines. This digitization allows the hospital to see more patients without adding to the costs (Nystedt, D.,2009).

Even the infertility treatment centers have all services under one roof and they cost less than what you can get in the west. Most of them offer expert fertility specialists who perform the full array of procedures including artificial insemination (AI), various fertility drug regimens, intra cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), gamete intra fallopian transfer (GIFT), in vitro fertilization (IVF), and embryonic cryopreservation. Some facilities perform some of the latest techniques like pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. It means that the specialist can test whether the implanted embryo has any genetic diseases before implantation. Thailand presently has no real laws pertaining to surrogacy ("Fertility tourism is,"n.d).

2.2.4 Tourism Destination:

The vacation aspect of medical tourism serves as another pull factor; in that patients may be drawn to receive care in places they are interested in holidaying. (.Crooks et al.,2010) Though neither quality nor vacationing matter for people who are in intolerable pain according to the survey people who accompany them do so .According to

(Connell, 2006) Thailand offers low-cost availability of noninvasive medical procedures such as dentistry and hair-transplantations in this respect (Karuppan et al., 2011).

Due to this packaging of services medical tourists, find that flying to Thailand annually for a comprehensive physical exam, dental work and any minor procedures along with a week on the beach at Phuket is a cheaper and more enjoyable option than staying at home. Thailand also has a variety of tourism options compared to any other medical hub, balancing exotic culture with pristine beaches and supported by a very mature tourism industry. Medical tourists can avail both Thai and foreign restaurants and Thai hotels come in all levels of luxury and are much cheaper than in Singapore or India (Runckel, 2007).

Overseas patients visiting Thailand also enjoy the chance to combine their treatment with a wonderful vacation. Your typical anti-aging skin procedures are non-invasive and require very little down time, and with the money people save over having them done at home, they are able to have the best of both worlds in the Land of Smiles: modern medical care combined with a sublime holiday experience.

And the savings in Thailand are significant. A popular procedure such as Ulthera – which uses ultrasound to tighten and firm skin – will run as much as US\$4,000 in top clinics in America, but just over US\$2,500 for a full-face treatment at Yanhee International Hospital, one of the leading facilities in Bangkok.

Similarly, the trendy “vampire facelift” – a technique that’s well-known among Hollywood stars – is now available in Thailand at a lower price than in the US. Urban

Beauty in Bangkok does the procedure – which involves enriching a patient’s own blood plasma with collagen-producing proteins, then injecting it back into their face – for US\$625. In reputable clinics in California, you’re looking at as much as US\$2,500 for these injections.

So add another feather into Thailand’s medical-tourism cap, as it is an ideal place for anti-aging skin procedures: state-of-the-art facilities, expert doctors and surgeons, and of course affordable prices combined with endless opportunities for fun and relaxation in between treatments. Come to Thailand and find your youthful glow, as satisfying as a walk in the park ("Modern beauty clinics,").

Most medical tourists, up to 80 per cent, seek additional services during their recovery period. After all, it’s a great opportunity to get pampered with spa services or catch up on some dentistry works while they are here. It is also time- and cost-effective things to do for patients’ companions to get services when time permits. They also make the prospect of accompanying someone on a medical trip much more attractive.

Thai spas have earned its place as a superior and unique oriental experience that offers gentle treatments from the ancient wisdoms. The Thai massages and Thai hospitality, coupled with herbal drinks, herbs, and Thai health foods amidst the serene seaside or forest atmospheres, are considered the very best you can get.

2.2.5 Holistic and Alternative Treatments:

Holistic medicine practitioners use different forms of health care sometimes using drugs to relieve symptoms and sometimes using alternative therapies and asking patients to modify and make lifestyle changes. In this form of medicine the person's body, mind, spirit and emotions are all considered when taking the patient's health into consideration. If the patient has imbalance in any part of their life this leads to negative health. Different types of treatment may include diet, exercise, psychotherapy, relationship and spiritual counseling, acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, massage therapy, naturopathy, western medicine and surgical procedures. (Kiefer, D., 2015).

The Royal Thai Government, the Ministry of Public Health and the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board adopted a five year plan under which they want to convert Thailand into a world class spa. They intended to do so with the help of both the private and public sectors. Many foreign patients have stated that they included spas as an important part of their planning for their vacation. According to them spas in Thailand are cheaper and better than those available in other parts of the world. Foreigners liked the body massage the best and they liked the spas because of their quality and standard of service. Mostly they used spa services to relieve pain in their muscles (Sankrusme, S. 2012).

The Ministry of Public Health has asked the Department for Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine to control the quality of medicinal plants used in pharmaceutical manufacturing. These medicines are aimed at making Thailand a leader in

traditional medicine in ASEAN. The Ministry of Public health found that 70 percent of the 3,478 hospitals had personnel trained in traditional Thai medicine. Popular methods were the use of herbs (59%) followed by traditional massage (35%) and this growing popularity for natural products and consumption of holistic food have led to the expansion of traditional methods of health care. ("Ministry of public," 2012)

Traditional Thai medicine is an ancient healing science reflecting folk wisdom passed on from generation to generation. It consists of the medical processes concerned with examination, diagnosis, therapy, treatment, disease prevention, and rehabilitation. The use of herbal medicine has been part of Thai life since ancient times. ("Ministry of public," 2012). The Practice of Thai traditional medicine is divided into diagnosis and treatment of diseases or symptoms, Pharmacy practice involves both the use of medicinal materials and the art of compounding those ingredients into various dosage forms of recipes, Traditional midwifery, and Nuad Thai or Traditional Thai massage ("Traditional medicine in,n.d").

Thailand has treatments ranging from the ancient to the modern, as well traditional and alternative medicines. Holistic health is concerned with integrating all aspects of one's life into a healthy whole. Holistic treatments include yoga, meditation, dance and music therapy, or other calming therapies such as walking therapy and mindfulness. Many health resorts and wellness practice holistic medicine and therapy and many are also offering ant ageing and longevity treatments. At these places everything from the patients' blood counts, blood chemistry, urinalysis, as well as micronutrient

level analysis are carried out. Addlife is one of the anti-ageing clinics in Thailand with American Board Certified doctor ("Holistic / anti-aging,n.d").

Thailand's anti-aging providers also offer Thai traditional medicine, Ayurveda, healthy food regimens, spa therapy, a variety of massage techniques, alternative health check-ups, and an anti-ageing skin therapy to promote health ("The top 7,"n.d).

People who believe in holistic medicine want to make Chiang Mai a center for alternative medicine because the north of Thailand has for very long been renowned for this kind of treatment. The public health office in Chiang Mai is also working towards this as it is the countries policy to promote the city as a center for medical treatment. John, L. (2004).

One of the most important teachings of Thai traditional medicine is the circle of life which states that the three essences namely body, citta, and energy are present. Each of these three essences is given equal weight and in Thai medicine they must present, balanced and healthy in order for life to be optimal. Imbalance in any one of them leads to problems in the others. In western medicine the field of energy is mostly left out as and mostly the doctors concentrate on the body. (Salguero, P.,2005).

According to the WHO, Thailand has been working to improve their regulatory framework and have paid importance to protecting the intellectual property and genetic resources regulation (Robinson, D., & Kuanpoth, J. 2008).

Holistic, alternative anti-aging treatments are one way of prolonging life and Thailand's anti-aging providers are well-known for their state-of-the-art facilities, expert physicians and therapists, an integrated approach to health maintenance, plus great success in slowing, preventing, and even reversing the aging process. They provide a wide array of options like Chelation therapy, acupuncture, live cell therapy, liver detoxification, Oxygen Therapy, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Intravenous (IV) Therapy

The mor baan who are traditional Thai healers have been accepted as a primary health care resource since the nineteenth century. The Bureau of Indigenous Thai Medicine stated that they use ceremonial and spiritual practices which are not used in modern medicine and provide a holistic approach to health care.

The wisdom of traditional healers has been incorporated in the National Health Act as a guideline for health policy making and practice. This healing method shows how people are creating their own healthcare network by depending on what is available locally and using the experiences and knowledge of the people in their own community. It also emphasizes how important the relation is between people and their environment. In 2005 the Department for Development for Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine found 39 provinces had about 3,075 traditional healers who included a mix of spiritual, herbal and massage healers and mid wives (Suwankhong, D., Liamputtong, P., & Rumbold, B.,2011).

There are about 71 different recipes in the National List of Essential Medicines of Thailand as of 2012. The Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan of Thailand is allowing the use of herbal medicines in hospitals and primary healthcare, which is an indication that these plants are very important in treatment of illness and that they will be used more in the future. Professor Krisana Kraisintu started facilities to manufacture herbal medicine in Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala using local herbs. As people residing in this area are Muslims all the food and non-food items like cosmetics and pharmaceuticals follow halal authentication. (Monton, C., Kraisintu, K., & Chankana, N., 2014).

There are many medical spas and wellness centers in Thailand offering alternative treatments like Thai massages, Thai foot massages, aromatherapy massages, and Thai therapeutic massages. Many of these therapies are exclusively found only in Thailand. Apart from this, Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are also widely known and can be easily found in Thailand. ("Why medical tourism," n.d)

Thailand is famous for Medical & wellness spas which offer alternative treatment like holistic healing, and include treatments like Thai massage, body scrubs and wraps, and aromatherapy which aim at connecting the body mind and spirit a key tenet of the alternative medicine movement. Thailand is the world's most popular spa destination with international visitors arriving for a rejuvenation vacation and pampering. Nowadays more and more people are looking to treat, reduce, or even prevent medical problems and availing of medical or wellness spas ("Get pampered! spa," n.d)

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Abstract

Medical tourism is a growing business and it certainly contributes to the GDP of the country. The profitability from this industry does tend to spill over into other sectors like tourism, hotel, transport, restaurant etc. Countries are competing with each other to have a share of this pie. However there is not enough study to show how medical tourists choose the destination of their choice since destination choices can be linked to a number of factors other than just cost and treatment needed. It is however necessary to study whether hospitals which invest millions of baht in the hospital industry benefit from this industry and whether the attributes they possess are what the medical tourists look for.

3.2 Research design

If the figures of medical tourists in Thailand are to be compared, which seems to be increasing we could reason that the investment in medical tourism services offered by hospitals to be one reason. Assuming the fact that all hospitals have state of art technology the attributes selected for this study were those following from the fact that majority medical tourists came from Middle east, Japan, US, China and Myanmar. Taking the fact that the sizeable number would face a big culture shock when they entered Thailand, as well as face stress regarding the procedure or treatment and depression being far from family (I choose attributes which could reduce stress) like availability of language translators, different food offered at hospital facilities, accommodation provided for family, pick up from airport, visa extension facilities, EMR facilities as factors which left patients feeling good about the hospital, ease in payment mode. Also literature review has indicated word of mouth is a great way for hospitals to get new patients and so if hospitals were providing these services they were on the right path to getting more patients.

Key words: Hospitals, Hospital services, EMR, Patients, expectations of patients, hospital accreditation

3.2.1 Hospitals

Hospital is a place where treatment is offered to patients under specialized staff monitoring and with the use of equipment. There are different kinds of hospitals some offering specialized services include trauma centers, rehabilitation hospitals, children's hospitals, seniors' (geriatric) hospitals, and others which deal with specific medical needs such as psychiatric problems, certain disease categories (cardiac, oncology, or orthopedic) and so forth. Even though hospitals provide services by having medical personnel, equipment and resources all in a single place they are often criticized for being very industrialized in their behavior by dehumanizing the patient. This could be because of the way modern hospitals are designed to function which causes them to be less feeling to the treatment offered to the patients. Quality of health care is an important issue to hospitals and one way to show quality is through external accreditation facilities like Accreditation Canada from Canada, the Joint Commission from the USA, the Trent Accreditation Scheme from Great Britain, and Haute Autorité de santé (HAS) from France: ("Hospital," 2014)

3.2.2 Hospital services

Hospital services everything from include short-term hospitalization, emergency room services, general and specialty surgical services, x ray/radiology services, laboratory services blood services

Health maintenance organizations add a number of special and auxiliary services to the basic list, including pediatric specialty care, greater access to surgical specialists, physical therapy and rehabilitation services, prescription services, home nursing services, nutritional counseling, mental health care, family support services, genetic counseling and testing, social work or case management services, financial services Hospitals which are funded state, regional, or local government, charity hospitals and hospitals within research and teaching centers, also provide basic services like: primary care services, mental health and drug treatment, infectious disease clinics, hospice care, dental services, translation and interpreter services.

Other services include diagnosis/Preparation including preoperative testing, medication counseling is offered for current patient prescriptions and how they should be taken during and after surgery. An anesthesiologist or an assistant discuss with the patient the patient's history of allergies, previous reactions to anesthesia and special precautions that will be taken. Discharge personnel help the patient plan to go home. Some hospitals follow up with an outpatient nurse or social worker service. Outpatient aftercare is for procedure that requires little aftercare due to the nature of the surgical procedure and use of local anesthesia. After the anesthetic has worn off, the patient is monitored for complications and released to go home. : ("Hospital services,n.d")

3.2.3 Electronic Medical Records (EMR)

EMR is another service provided by some hospitals and this has become very important because potential medical tourists have to be evaluated before the treatment when they are in their home country most large health care providers and medical intermediaries for patients use electronic medical records (EMRs) to store and access patient files. ("Medical tourism global,n.d")

EMR crates great efficiencies for patients and their providers, as well as health payment systems. EMR allows patient's records like blood type, prescribed drugs, and medical conditions to be stored and accessed quickly which can be very important during an emergency when life can be saved because of the instant availability of records. Another benefit is safety because EMR prevents the need to fill out forms on previous history of the patient which sometimes could be forgotten if not stored and may prove vital in case of treatment. EMR is also important in case the family doctor relocated or died and patient records are lost because through this process patients also have access to their records. (Torrey, T. 2013).

3.2.4 Patients (Customer of a Hospital)

The patients are a very different form of customer because they do not want to be a customer since everyone wants to be healthy. Customers to hospitals are forced to use services of the hospitals and part with their money to do so. Hence when designing their services hospitals must take this factor into account and make the services more pleasing. Another factor being patients react with everybody in the hospital right from the doctors, nurses to the receptionists, bill accountants, and pharmacists. There is a lot of patient and hospital staff interaction which could be a crucial factor in the patients deciding whether to choose the hospital again for services. ("Medical tourism global,n.d")

3.2.5 Patient expectation

Informed consent requires us to inform the patient about the condition and its likely course, treatment options, and expected benefits and risks. Patient understanding and involvement are central to optimal treatment selection and active patient role in treatment and recovery. This maximizes patient benefit and safety. We should carefully communicate realistic expectations for the course and outcome.

According to Richard Boothman, JD, chief risk officer at the University of Michigan Health System physicians create expectations which cannot be met by thoughtlessness, simple-minded marketing, gimmicks, arrogance, or misguided compassion. Understanding, emotion, satisfaction, rapport, and empathy are among the factors involved. According to him patients like to note if doctors face them, look to the door, sit or stand as they communicate with them. For doctor's knowledge of cultural beliefs and patient modeling systems can help them to understand their patients. The patient is not supposed to form different expectations from what the physician is trying to communicate and if they do so then the physician has to find ways to eliminate that gap. Such a review makes communication better and patients feel a sense of trust because of which a patient might not feel neglected even if some mishaps were to occur. This might prevent a claim filed by the patient. (Jayasankar, 2009) A number of studies have found a significant relationship between patient satisfaction and the socio-emotional aspects of the physician's behavior especially the physician's ability to show empathy and this could be more so for

patients with neurology and psychiatric needs. Patients' perceptions about receiving examinations, tests, medications or nondrug treatments were minimally associated with levels of satisfaction with physicians. Patients of internal medicine were more connected to the non-technical aspects of care. (Afkhamebrahimi & Esfehni , 2002)

3.3 Literature Review

There is little research on the role that family members or friends play on the recovery of the medical tourists. Just by being there, these members can lower a medical tourist's stress levels because they are the only familiar presence in an unfamiliar surround. On the other hand they can stress the patient more if they do not understand what is going on in the whole process.

(Crooks & Casey , 2013)

According to(Jyothis & Janardhanan 2009; Mueller & Kaufmann 2001) as the medical tourism industry continues to growth people involved with the supply side of the medical tourism should provide level of service that differentiate them from others and to satisfy the needs of the patients the (customers of this industry). According to (Lee & Spisto 2007) those countries, organizations or companies that do not do so cannot remain sustainable in the competitive market.(Vequist, D. G., & Guiry, M. ,2010).

Factors affecting patient satisfaction in terms of quality care Reliability, responsiveness, accessibility , Courtesy, credibility, and communication which would include everything from staff delivering timely and quality service every day, answering patient needs, staff being accessible, providing information in an easy way to understand and delivering services that were offered. Patients should also feel secure in their hospital both physically and psychologically.

There should an understanding of the customer's needs and the patient should receive care in a timely manner. The patient should have information regarding the various facilities, his right to privacy should be respected, treatment should be carried out ethically, the waiting rooms should be bright and have good ambience, generally there should be cleanliness, good housekeeping, security service, signage, clinical examination facilities, accuracy and promptness in billing and availability of different modes of payment. ("Medical tourism global,n.d")

Health care delivery involves many provider groups, both formal and informal, like doctors and nurses who are trained for the specific job and informal health care providers include friends, family, and some volunteers. Members of these groups provide essential care despite the fact that they are not all from the medical tourism industry. (Casey et al.,n.d)

In Thailand service and graciousness have been infused into the medical tourism industry and patients have been made to feel at home in unfamiliar surroundings. There is availability of helpful and attentive medical staff and the needs of different cultures are taken care of with staff speaking different language, hospitals catering to different dietary requirements like Western, halaal, and Kosher, Japanese or vegetarian food assisting in liaising with your embassy, offering visa extension facilities. ("Medical tourism global,n.d)

3.4 Research Instrument

A questionnaire was prepared with questions relating to medical tourism. Some of the questions were close ended since the interest was to test the theory whether the services offered by hospitals were the ones preferred by tourists with the assumption that if the hospitals offered it, tourists preferred those services. Many questions were open ended so as to help in finding whether there were other reasons for growth in medical tourism other than services offered, whether political landscape had affected the industry and also to find out whether the demography of the patients had changed over the years.

3.5 Instrument pretest

The three hospitals who answered of the questionnaires did not find the questions difficult to understand nor did they need any extra information regarding the question and hence the questionnaire was considered fit to be used.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

A questionnaire was given to the hospitals to ask them about their service attributes which was preferred by medical tourists, who were the tourists who visited their hospital, how did they advertise about the hospital and the number of medical tourists per year. By listing

attributes which would be preferred by medical tourists most in various hospitals we intended to do a comparison between the hospitals and see a correlation between increase in number of tourists and services offered. For lack of data since many hospitals were not cooperative we had to use secondary data and compare differentiation strategies of different hospitals. We did not have access to number of patients and could not figure if there was a substantial increase. We could only figure that from the data provided by the tourism authority which might not exactly say which hospitals benefited by the increase and which did not.

3.7 Summary of demographic data

Table 3.1 Classification of nations from where medical tourists arrive in Thailand

No.	Nationality	Rate of Patients each year				
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2008-2011
1	Japanese	200,642	n/a	177,058	182,807	1,639,413
2	American	114,872	n/a	74,058	76,277	846,412
3	South Asian	73,991	n/a	52,004	61,999	631,322
4	British	91,969	n/a	63,937	62,448	635,970
5	Arabian	164,943	n/a	91,117	98,657	748,018
6	Asian	139,887	n/a	122,404	113,522	695,776
7	Chinese/Taiwan	33,492	n/a	32,310	48,396	359,266
8	German	38,730	n/a	32,310	28,716	291,687
9	Australian	35,998	n/a	24,915	42,831	286,261
10	France	31,000	n/a	34,519	35,472	263,532
11	Korean	21,999	n/a	17,262	19,594	191,872
12	Scandinavian	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	113,579
13	Canadian	18,750	n/a	12,784	14,109	117,780
14	East-European	12,738	n/a	7,841	9,947	73,418
15	Other	384,240	n/a	192,516	147,379	2,188,257
Total		1,363,295	695,779	93,4587	954,107	11,158,311
Rate of increment		-0.77	-48.96	34.32	2.09	92.04

Source: Ministry of public health Thailand 3 November 2013

CHAPTER 4

FINDING

4.1 Finding of the study

As of 2010, there were 1,002 public hospitals, and 316 private hospitals in Thailand registered with the Ministry of Public Health's Medical Registration Division. ("List of hospitals," 2013)

For my study I have chosen 19 hospitals that have JCI accreditation catering to international patients in Bangkok. All the 19 hospitals are up to international standards in terms of state of the art technology, cleanliness, offering cost effective treatment, caring and compassionate medical personnel, convenience stores located in their facilities. All the hospitals are accredited by some independent accreditors; provide treatments which are popular among international medical tourists such as cosmetology, dental services, cardiac surgery, IVF treatment and orthopedics treatment, offer ease of payment, facilitate fixing appointments through email, facilitate finding accommodation for accompanying family or friend, offer interpreters, visa extension facilities, food choice, access to internet while in hospital, EMR, airport pick and drop, insurance coordination, availability of different modes of payment. I have chosen hospitals that are more or less equipped with same number of beds except for the three big hospitals and I am comparing the attributes provided by hospitals which are most likely to cater to medical tourists coming to Thailand to see how many of them are similar.

4.2 Hospital comparisons

Bumrungrad Hospital

Bumrungrad International Hospital is a multiple-specialty medical center located in Bangkok, Thailand with 563 beds and 200 US-certified doctors. It is accredited by JCI and has a HA accreditation. The hospital offers many services visa extension services in hospital, Interpreters, liaison with embassy, airport transport, in-house accommodation, EMR services, prayer room, air ticket and hotel reservation, provide 7 doctors and 17 nurses to coordinate scheduling of procedures, and have international referral offices in 24 countries They also to take care of the

patient's family and help in logistics during treatment and follow-up care, and also offer payment option like cash, wire transfer ,credit card and debit card.

Samitivej Hospital

Samitivej Hospitals were founded in 1979, and their main hospital in Sukhumvit soi 49 has 270 bed and about 400 specialists. The hospital is accredited by JCI and the Hospital Accreditation Board of Thailand The hospital offers a comprehensive range of medical technology, complemented by a team of highly qualified specialists and experienced caregivers, a multi-lingual workforce and international services such as interpreters, EMR services, immigration services and payment options like Cash, personal check, bank transfer, AMEX, VISA, Master card, JCB.

In 1999, Samitivej was awarded the prestigious recognition as a Mother and Baby Friendly Hospital by WHO and UNICEF. Other recognitions include the Prime Minister Award for the Most Recognized Service in 2004.

Phyathai Hospital

The Phyathai Hospitals Group is a hospital group based in Bangkok, Thailand, and was founded in 1976 and has 1220 beds amongst themselves. The Phyathai group of hospitals and their staff are not accredited by any international healthcare accreditation, whether from the USA (JCI), the UK (Trent Accreditation Scheme) or Australia (ACHSI)

The group consists of Phyathai 1 Hospital, Phyathai 2 Hospital, and Phyathai 3 Hospital.

Phyathai 1 and Phyathai 2 hospitals are located in the city center of Bangkok, and Phyathai 3 hospital is based in Thonburi area.

The hospital is equipped with medical equipment and technology by the European provider Philips and offers service for international patients, like Interpretation services in 17 languages, international wards, 24 hour free consultation and medical advice over the internet, Housekeeping, services and announcement via internet, free snacks and food in patient rooms, free internet services Insurance services, embassy services, transfer of medical documents for further treatment in home country, business center, transportation service, visa extension, air

transfer from home country if needed, choice of Catering to western, Muslim, Japanese clients, hybrid operating rooms and payment option like Cash, personal check, bank transfer, AMEX, VISA, Master card, JCB.

Vejthani Hospital

Vejthani International Hospital is a private hospital in Bangkok, Thailand established in 1994 with 500 beds. The hospital has JCI (2010), HA, ISO 9001 accreditations has overseas office in 5 nations.

The hospital provides a number of services ranging from Arabic Customer Services Counter, multilingual interpreters in English, Japanese, Arabic, German, Bengali, airport transfers, e-mail correspondence, international insurance coordination, international food menu including halal food, prayer room, In-house serviced apartment, EMR services, hotel and travel arrangements, payment options like cash (Thai Baht or US Dollar) or through major credit cards including VISA, MASTER, AMEX, and.

If language assistance in a language not provided by them is required they find a interpreter for the patient.

Piyavate Hospital

Piyavate International Hospital is a 27 story publicly-owned health care services facility in Thailand operating since 1993, with 300 beds, and range of specialized services. They have ISO 9001:2008 certified by the International Standards Organization since 2001 and is licensed by the Royal Thai Government's Ministry of Public Health.

The hospital provides a number of services ranging from Transportation arrangements including airport pick-up, Ground ambulance / Air ambulance, insurance process claims, prepare/Issue medical Documents, Medical Certificate, medical Report, medical Summary, a whole floor for Arabic patients, visas and flight preparation services, in house accommodation, payment option like cash (Thai Baht or US Dollar) or through major credit cards including VISA, MASTER, and AMEX.

The hospital provides modern medical technologies and training in the latest, hi-tech medical procedures & medicine to its doctors and staff while still offering services to patients at competitive prices to encourage the trend of medical tourism to Thailand.

The doctors at the hospital are both American Board and Thai Board certified physicians in every area of medical specialization. They are supported by highly-qualified and experienced registered nurses as well as technicians who maintain our high-tech medical equipment and sophisticated computerized Medical Information System. Our team is completed by warm, caring and diligent administrative personnel.

Praram 9 Hospital

Praram 9 Hospital first opened on 19 July 1992, and has about 300 professional physicians, 300 beds and is accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI),

The hospital provides a number of services ranging Airport pick up, visa extension, Short and long term lodging for family, shuttle bus service to station, 24 hour interpreter service, family sightseeing service, diet food and other cuisines like western, Japanese, Chinese, liaison with embassies, air ticket and hotel booking and also offers payment options like Cash, personal cheque, Amex, VISA Card, JCB, bank transfer. The hospital has installed the most modern, state-of-the-art medical equipment's to provide patients with the very best medical services at all times

Thainakarin Hospital

Thainakarin Hospital Public Company Limited was founded in 1993 with 260 beds and accredited by hospital accreditation (HA) standards.

ThaiNakarin Hospital offers medical transportation services for an accident-emergency. They also offer the following services to patients which include Medical records transfer, Rehabilitation, Translation services, Interpreter services, Airport pickup, Local transportation booking, Hotel booking, Free Wi-Fi, Phone in the room, Family accommodation, Nursery / Nanny services, beauty salon, laundry, dry cleaning, 24 hours a day mini mart, and payment options like Personal cheque, bank transfers, AMEX ,VISA, Master Card, cash transfer and JCB

Vibhavadi Hospital

Vibhavadi Hospital is located in Chatuchak district in Bangkok, Thailand and has 350 beds and 70 examination rooms 50 full-time physicians, 250 consulting physicians and important medical equipment

The hospital is accredited by ISO 9001. The hospital provides translators for four different languages, has in-house accommodation for family, pick up from airport, internet facility in rooms, provides alternative medical treatment and offers payment option only by cash.

Synphaet Hospital

Synphaet is a Bangkok-based business engaged in hospital and other medical services. It is one of Thailand's leading firms in the healthcare services Synphaet Hospital is accredited by HA, JCI, ISO 9001 and ISO 9002 and has services in Thai, English, Chinese

Yanhee Hospital

Yanhee International Hospital is a 15-story multi-service general hospital in Bangkok with a 400-bed capacity, 150 full-time doctors, 120 part-time health professionals, and 800 nurses, established in 1984. The hospital has HA, and JCI accreditation

The hospital offers Interpreter/translator services without extra fees, English-speaking personnel at every counter and department, Affordable and transparent rates

Sikarin Hospital

Established on March 15, 1979 under the name of Samrong Karnphat Co., Ltd., The hospital has 215 beds and has HA, ISO 14001, ISO 9001 and JCI accreditation.

The hospital offers translation services to patients who are not able to speak and understand Thai. Translators available are English, Japanese, Arabic, Chinese, Khmer and Filipino. AMC nurses are also on standby to help. They also provide EMR, worldwide insurance assistance, Repatriation ,Hotel reservation, embassy liaison and immigration Services, advance appointment booking, pick up at airport and drop of at hotel of choice, general inquiries by email and/or telephone, multilingual staff to help with registration procedures and accompany the patient to

the appropriate department and specialists, private room for your hospitalization with international staff, variety of mode of payment ranging from Cash, Bank Transfer, AMEX, Visa, Master Card.

Paolo memorial Bangkok Hospital

Paolo Memorial hospital is a 240 beds private hospital founded in 1972. The hospital has HA, ISO 14001, ISO 9001 and JCI accreditation.

Their International Service Center provides supports to overseas patients with professional staffs who can speak several languages, providing necessary information such as insurances services, currency exchange, Visa Extension, Translating and Interpreting Service, Insurance services, Patient Transport Services.

They offer different modes of payment ranges from Cash, Personal Cheque, Bank Transfer, AMEX, Visa, Master Card, and JCB.

Bangkok Nursing Home

The Bangkok Nursing Home Hospital is a modern 225-bed, hospital to international standards. The hospital provides service in both inpatient and outpatient departments with physicians in every field of medicine available on a 24 hours basis. The hospital has HA, and JCI accreditation and 225 beds.

The hospital's international center caters well for visitors from abroad, offering translators in most of the major European and Asian languages. Every patient is assigned a personal assistant who will visit every day and will offer all of the services needed, including embassy contact, keeping in touch with the patient's own doctor, arranging insurance, medvac and contacting relatives in the case of emergency treatment and a library with full internet access. Modes of payment offered by the hospital include cash, personal cheque. AMEX, VISA, Master Card, JCB and bank transfer.

Ramkhahaeng Hospital

Ramkhamhaeng Hospital is a private hospital established on February 28, 1988 and has over 485 beds. Ramkhamhaeng Hospital is certified with HA, ISO 901 and JCI accreditation.

The hospital provides airport pick up and transfers, has English speaking service staff, personal escorts for appointments and procedures and EMR facilities.

Language Support offered is Thai and English.

Navamin 9 Hospital

Navamin 9 Hospital is a leading private hospital with 200 beds in the suburbs of Bangkok. Navamin9 Hospital has been certified as a standard hospital by the healthcare Accreditation Institute (Public Organization) and has passed the standard accreditation of Joint Commission International (USA) in 2013

The hospital offers 24-hour emergency care services, has EMR facilities, hospital pick up and transfer, travel arrangements for family, visa services before arrival, flight and hotel booking , in-house accommodation for family, internet service in rooms, consultations at patient's home country through representatives before arrival. They also provide bilingual and bi-cultural service and one can pay through Cash, VISA, or Master Card

4.3 Impact of ASEAN

Thailand's position as a leading global hub of medical tourism will be strengthened when the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is formed in 2015 which will lead to a vast single market. Health care and tourism are two of the priority service sectors where all restrictions may be removed when AEC is formed. Towards making this happen the countries are trying to work on Complete Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) which could facilitate movement of health care professionals like medical professionals, dentists, nursing personnel, engineers, architects, surveyors and accountancy personnel.

This opening up should encourage more foreign investors to establish projects in Thailand and also allow Thai health care providers to expand operations throughout the AEC allowing it to open its services to 600 million consumers. Bumrungrad hospital chain is already extending its business operations overseas, including investments in the AEC's Philippines and Singapore, as well as in Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates. To bring in investments certain non-tax incentives such as land ownership rights for foreign investors, permission to

bring in foreign experts and technicians, and work permit and visa facilitation for expatriate employees have been given. ("Trade experts push," 2012)



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

Most of the information presented in this report has been from secondary sources. Three hospitals replied to my questionnaire; all of them viewed medical tourism to be a growing industry and that their hospitals were investing in better technology to cater to growing demand. All three had been affected by the current political unrest but Thailand has had this problem in the past and things have become better. According to the three questionnaires there was an increase in the number of tourists from the Middle East and from data presented in the comparison table, it can be seen that most hospitals in Thailand are catering to this population by providing them with Arabic language interpreters or halal food (Muslim food). Some are even providing them with prayer rooms. All three hospitals felt that there was an increase in number of medical tourists during certain periods. Arabs visited before or after Ramadan, Europeans came during November and April. All hospitals had a few patients defaulting on their payment. The number of local patients was more than foreign patients in most hospitals.

5.2 Information from hospital comparison using secondary data

Information from secondary data of 18 hospitals shows that most of them are accredited by JCI, a standard which most medical tourists trust. A number of services are not observable in some of the hospitals. Except for the top few hospital groups which offer top facilities, the others are still competing on low cost.

5.3 Personal visit observations

Visibly what I felt from having visited hospitals were that there is still a problem with communication in English. There was a problem even communicating over the phone. But everywhere, the hospitals made genuine efforts made to try to understand me which comes from the fact that the hospitals are a part of the service industry.

5.4 Ambience

The Hospitals I visited looked more like five star hotels, with clean and well lit surroundings, smiling and courteous staff, valet parking facilities, cafeterias, and convenience stores.

5.5 Recommendation for further research

Hospitals must be able to address the lean and peak season in medical tourists arrival. While the infrastructure facilities are very good the government of Thailand and the hospitals themselves should focus on training institutions to produce more doctors, nurses and others human resources to manpower is one area where hospitals need to focus with the opening of AEC; they should also strengthen the staff's English language skills. All things considered, it is my conclusion that major hospitals in Thailand are geared up to meet the growing demand for medical tourists, especially the expected increase in demand after the AEC comes into being in 2015. Since service factors considered in my Independent study can be easily emulated hospitals may have to see whether they have to constantly evaluate where they have a competitive edge. There is further research needed to see if the service factors which patients find attractive today regarding Thailand change over a period of time and how can hospitals remain competitive in a world where more countries are becoming medical tourism destinations.

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APPENDIX 1

Questions for the Hospital Administrators

1. Who do you classify as medical tourists?

A.)Expatriates _____

B.)Tourists who have accidents while on
holiday_____

C.)Patients who contact you for surgery or
treatment_____

2. What kind of treatment do medical tourists prefer most?

A.)Surgery (What Kind)

B.)Health check up_____

C.)Others (please specify) _____

3. Do patients come back for check-ups once they are fine?

**4. Do patients specifically come for certain treatments to your hospital? If so
what is it that your hospital is famous for?**

5. What do patients most like about your hospital?

- Facilities
- Experienced Doctors
- Modern Equipment
- Latest (advanced) treatment methods
- Language assistance (translators)
- EMR

6. Do these patients recommend your hospital to others?

7. How many medical tourists do you get per year? How important it is to the hospital?

8. Does this number increase during peak holiday season or is it the same throughout the year?

9. Which countries do they come from? From which country do you get the most number of patients?

10. Has there been a change in the countries from where they come?

11. How did the patients learn about your hospital:

- Travel agent,
- Internet,
- Friend,
- Medical providers,
- Insurance companies

12. Do you advertise or have any tie up with foreign hospitals or government?

13. What do the medical tourists look for most?

- A.)Specialist Doctors
- B.)Cost effective treatments
- C.)Treatments which they cannot have in their country

14. What help (facilities) do you give patients?

- A.)Helping with Visas
- B.)Providing translators
- C.)Arranging accommodation
- D) Taking care of diet
- E) Helping family and friends who accompany adjust
- D.)

Others _____

15. Do the medical tourists have any misgivings? Have they been unhappy with the hospital for any reason?

- 16. Have you invested on technology because of medical tourism? If so is this a big cost to your hospital?**
- 17. What is the ratio of local patients to foreign tourists?**
- 18. Have you had payment default?**
- 19. Is medical tourism affected by the current political conditions in Bangkok?**
- 20. Do you expect the medical tourism market to grow?**
- 21. How are you prepared for the ASEAN economic community 2015?**
- 22. Do patients like to take a holiday while they undergo treatment? If so do you arrange for it?**
- 23. Do patients want access to alternative treatment? What kind of alternative treatment do you provide?**
 - a) holistic treatment
 - b) Acupuncture
 - c) Thai Massage
 - d) Others please specify-----
- 24. How many patients come looking for alternative treatment?**

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