



UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE NARRATIVES BY MEDICAL TOURISTS TO  
MALAYSIA AND THAILAND

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## **ABSTRACT**

Medical tourism is a practice of travelling to other countries for the purpose of obtaining healthcare treatments. (1) Malaysia and Thailand are the main regional hubs for the medical tourism industry where visas are available for medical tourist; government agencies have been given mandate to increase the inflows of medical tourist to both countries as well. In 2006 and 2007, an estimation of 2 million medical tourists had practiced medical tourism in Malaysia and Thailand which makes these countries earned about US\$ 3 billion revenue.

This study is a qualitative study which analyses online narratives by medical tourist of Malaysia and Thailand. This study listed out various factors that had assisted medical tourists in decision-making to practice medical tourism as well as satisfaction and perceptions on the practice of medical tourism from overall experiences of the practice. This study can bring in-depth understanding on the issues of medical tourism. The findings from this study may be useful to assist in decision-making of the future medical tourism and may give opportunities for providers of the medical tourism to improve their quality of services according to the global patients' demand.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Medical tourism can be defined as an organized travel outside one's natural healthcare jurisdiction for the enhancement or restoration of individual's health. (2) The instance of this practice has been started since thousands years ago to when a group of Greek pilgrims traveled from all over the Mediterranean to a place in the Saronic Gulf called Epidauria, where the healing God, Akslepios was believed to reside. Sanitariums and Spa towns, a place with supposedly health-giving mineral waters may be considered as an early form of medical tourism as well due to their popularity among 18th century England patients to treat several diseases such as psoriasis. (3)The practice of medical tourism becomes increasingly common due to the ease of global travel. Malaysia, Thailand, India and Singapore are among the countries that had received a lot of medical tourists every year. These countries offered affordable healthcare services with latest medical equipment. (4) (5)

The practice of medical tourism can be characterized into two different typology, which are quality sensitive medical tourism and price sensitive medical tourism. Quality sensitive medical tourism involved a group of wealth people who were searching sophisticated and high quality of medical treatments abroad while price sensitive medical tourism involved less affluent people who were traveled out of their home country to seek for treatment