

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE EFFECT OF MEDICAL TOURISM
ATTRACTIONS AND DESTINATION IMAGE OF
HOST COUNTRY ON MEDICAL TOURISTS'
FUTURE DESTINATION CHOICE**

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PhD

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.


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ABSTRACT

Medical tourism comprises a phenomenon where over five million patients a year are travelling across international borders to obtain various forms of healthcare. This scenario has boosted the growth of the industry; requiring many hospitals to consistently equip themselves with excellent medical services and effective marketing strategies to remain relevant in the industry. With active government promotions, Malaysia has become one of the leading destinations for medical tourism. In view of the competitive landscape in medical tourism, the impact of attractions and image on the behaviours of medical tourists towards future medical tourism destination choice has become an important issue. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the relationship among tourism attractions, medical healthcare attractions, destination image, and future destination choice. The target population of the study were the international medical tourists who travelled to Malaysia in order to seek treatment in private hospitals listed under Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC) in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Melaka and Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. The survey questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 800 respondents by using the convenience and judgemental sampling method with only 441 sets of questionnaires were returned. Only 419 sets were usable making a response rate of 52.4%. The statistical program Smart-PLS 3.2.7 and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software were used to test the hypothesized relationships for this study. The results from this study revealed that all the hypothesized relationships among constructs namely tourism attractions, medical healthcare attractions and destination image have significant positive influence on future destination choice. In particular, (i) geographical factors; (ii) physical attributes; (iii) quality; (iv) accessibility to treatment; and (iv) availability of treatment were mostly had significant influence on future destination choice. Destination image mediated the relationships between tourism attractions and future destination choice as well as partially mediated both relationships between medical healthcare attractions and future destination choice. Significantly, this study on the involvement of medical tourists in medical tourism proposed guidelines for medical tourism practices and significant factors that influence the future destination choice among international medical tourists getting treatment in Malaysia. Consequently, the finding of this research proposed that tourism operators and hospital managers should strive to create and maintain the attractions to enhance positive behavioral intentions of medical tourists in the future. Furthermore, several strategies have been suggested to assist hospital managements in developing successful medical tourism strategies in the hope of attracting more potential international medical tourists. Lastly, the results from this study provide useful insights to the advancement of medical tourism industry in terms of theoretical and practical knowledge. The future research should explore the images of Malaysia while comparing such images with other competing destinations. Besides, actual destination choice behaviour should also be observed if time and resource permit.

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