

ABSTRACT

Medical tourism became a niche market and offered the businesses opportunity to many stakeholders. This research was conducted in Bangkok to study the specific preferences and characteristics of a sample of foreign tourists and elements of medical tourism. The data was collected by a set of questionnaire distributed to 152 foreign tourists who obtained medical treatment and at the same time intended to do some tourism activities (before or after the medical treatment) in Thailand during the month of December 2008 to March 2009. Descriptive statistics along with One-way Anova, independent sample t-test were performed to test the Hypothesis.

The research outcomes revealed that the age of the majority respondents was more than 50 years without health insurance. The majority group of respondents was Asian and Buddhist. They selected Thailand as the destination because of reasonable cost of treatment, quality of care, ease and affordability of international air travel.

The outcomes revealed that under the leisure driven elements of medical tourism, the respondents expressed the highest importance to “Airport pick-up services” while “Vacation prior to surgery/local tours/ sight-seeing/ shopping” was considered as the lowest importance.

Under the medical driven elements of medical tourism at hospital, the respondents have the highest importance to “Safety and quality of care” while “Medical care providers pay attention to religious, dietary and cultural needs” was considered as the lowest importance.

The hypothesis testing results revealed that medical tourists had different age and insurance status do not differ in their importance for all leisure driven elements and medical driven elements of medical tourism, while the medical tourists with different nationality and religion differ in terms of importance for selected leisure and medical driven elements. For example, Muslim medical tourists need attention on their religious (prayer room), dietary (do not eat pork) and cultural needs than other religions as part of the medical service offered in Bangkok, Thailand.

The difference of medical tourists' characteristic and preferences can support the marketers' decision making to design appropriate marketing activities and services to meet their characteristics and preferences.

Keywords: Medical tourism, Leisure driven element, Medical driven element, Preference