

Comparative Analysis of Medical Tourism Industry among Key Nations in Southeast Asia

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Abstract : Medical tourism has been associated as a global phenomenon in developed and developing countries in the 21st century. Medical tourism is defined as an activity in which individuals who travel from one country to another country to seek or receive medical healthcare. Based on the global trend, the number of medical tourists is increasing annually, especially in the Southeast Asia (SEA) region. Since the establishment of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, the SEA nations have worked towards regional integration in medical tourism. The medical tourism in the SEA has become the third-largest sector that contributes towards economic development. Previous research has demonstrated several factors that affect the development of medical tourism. However, despite the already published literature on SEA's medical tourism in the last ten years there continues to be a scarcity of research on niche areas each of the SEA countries. Hence, this paper is significant in enriching the literature in the field of medical tourism particularly in showcasing the niche market of medical tourism among the SEA best players namely Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. This paper also contributes in offering a comparative analysis between the said nations whether they are complementing or competing with each other in the medical tourism sector. This then, will increase the availability of information in SEA region on medical tourism. The data was collected through an in-depth interview with various stakeholders and private hospitals. The data was then analyzed using two approaches namely thematic analysis (interview data) and document analysis (secondary data). The paper concludes by arguing that the ASEAN countries have specific niche market to promote their medical tourism industry. This paper also concludes that these key nations complement each other in the industry. In addition, the medical tourism sector in SEA region offers greater prospects for market development and expansion that witnessed the emerging of new key players from other nations.

Keywords : healthcare services, medical tourism, medical tourists, SEA region, comparative analysis

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