ANTECEDENTS OF WORD-OF-MOUTH GENERATION IN MEDICAL TOURISM

Ching Ying Tian¹, Seow Ai Na² & Lam Siew Yong³

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Business and Finance, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia.

(lauraching@1utar.my, seowan@utar.edu.my, lamsy@utar.edu.my)

ABSTRACT

The growing market demand for medical tourism has triggered intense competition among the medical tourism industry players. Word-of-mouth has been recognised as one of the key acquisition channels among the thoughtful marketing tactics to attract medical tourists. The purpose of this study is to gain insight on the relationship between medical service quality, perceived value, and satisfaction on word-of-mouth generation in a medical tourism setting. A quantitative survey was conducted to collect the data. The data collected was analysed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicated that medical service quality is positively associated with perceived value, which in turn, affects satisfaction. However, perceived value and satisfaction are not positively related to word-of-mouth generation. The availability of resources, patient cooperation and collaboration among service providers do affect the outcomes of word-of-mouth generation. It is implied that effort must be directed by the healthcare institutions to enrich the value and satisfaction of medical services. Hospital management should emphasise the service quality and raise it to a high level in order to increase recommendation.

KEYWORDS: Word-of-Mouth, Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Medical Service Quality, Medical Tourists

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Medical tourism has been considered as a profitable economic sector in many countries (Zarei & Maleki, 2019), and they enthusiastically promote this industry to stimulate economic growth (Beladi, Chao, Ee, & Hollas, 2019). This phenomenon has led to fierce competition among the participants in the industry. Accordingly, word-of-mouth has been recognised as one of the key acquisition channels among the thoughtful marketing tactics to attract medical tourists (Taheri, Chalmers, Wilson, & Arshed, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to gain insight on the relationship between medical service quality, perceived value, and satisfaction on word-of-mouth generation in a medical tourism setting.

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents to gather their opinions. This research used Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) as the data analysis technique.

FINDINGS

The results revealed that medical service quality was positively related to perceived value ($b = 0.863$, $p < 0.05$), which in turn positively related to satisfaction ($b = 0.854$, $p < 0.05$). Besides, the results showed that perceived value ($b = 0.457$, $p > 0.05$) and satisfaction ($b = 0.278$, $p > 0.05$) were not positively related to word-of-mouth generation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have provided a better understanding on medical tourists' behaviour in the context of word-of-mouth generation in medical tourism.

These outcomes contribute to the developing body of knowledge on medical service quality, perceived value, satisfaction and word-of-mouth generation, as well as their importance to the research on word-of-mouth generation. Certain limitations associated with this research have been highlighted.

CONTRIBUTION/PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study focused on the important role of healthcare institutions in enhancing the value and satisfaction of medical services. Healthcare institutions are encouraged to monitor regularly on medical service quality for high levels of satisfaction and word-of-mouth generation.

It is expected that this study could provide a significant account of the circumstances under which consumers would recommend medical tourism destinations to others. Besides, the outcomes of this study could help healthcare managers to develop effective tactics to improve service quality as well as attract and acquire more potential medical tourists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has been carried out as a partial fulfilment of Research Scholarship Scheme under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme Project No. FRGS/1/2019/SS01/UTAR/02/2 provided by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia.

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