

4. COUNTERMEASURES FOR PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAILAND'S MEDICAL TOURISM MARKET

4.1 Competition Countermeasures for Thailand's Medical Tourism

Within the same region, Thailand's competitiveness in medical tourism is much higher than that in other countries, which is contributed by Thailand's unique geographical location. Thailand faces Pacific Ocean in the southeast and face the Indian Ocean in the southwest, and borders with many other countries. It is more convenient for foreign tourists to travel to Thailand. At the same time, Thailand has attracted many overseas tourists by combining medical services with famous tourist attractions.

Compared with the competitor Singapore, Thailand has similar service quality to that in Singapore, but medical costs in Thailand are lower. Moreover, Thailand also has proficient doctors and modern medical facilities comparable to those in Singapore. In addition, there are many private hospitals in Thailand, and some of them are well-known both at home and abroad; while Singapore, due to the small area size, is not able to build more hospitals, nor can it accept large numbers of foreign tourists who need medical tourism. From the analysis of the strengths, Thailand's strengths in medical tourism is much more than that of competitors in Asia, especially in terms of cosmetic surgery and knees surgery. Thailand also provides thoughtful medical services and travel services for foreign patients .

Corresponding strategies have been put forward for how to expand Thailand's medical tourism market. This will help the government, providers of medical services and other relevant departments to formulate comprehensive development plans and thus attract more tourists to visit Thailand for medical tourism. The strategies are put forward in the respect of the following aspects:

4.1.1 Product

(A) Establishing and Promoting the Image of "A Country with High Quality Medical Tourism Services" in Thailand

It is very important for a country to establish a good image. It not only enables the country to display its own identity, but also help it to display the highlights of the country in tourism. Therefore, Thailand should focus on establishing an image that conforms to "a country with high-quality medical tourism services" and publicize itself through advertisements and other media to increase visitors' awareness of Thailand's high-quality health care services. At the same time, every hospital should pay enough attention to the treatment quality and the medical technology to establish an image of an excellent hospital. On the one hand, hospitals should provide a variety of medical projects - from ordinary medical services to the treatment therapies of various complicated diseases, to meet the various needs of patients. On the other hand, hospitals must attach importance to the details.

It should not only provide modernized medical technology, high-quality medical services,

and a skilled medical team, but also be certified and authorized by international authority agencies, so that it can get the trust from patients and offer quality services to patients.

(B) Establishing and Developing a New Model of Medical Tourism

Thailand is famous for the tourist attractions in the country. Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya and Koh Samui have become the main destinations for medical tourists visiting Thailand. The cities should combine their own characteristics to make local tourism products more distinctive. For example, as the capital of Thailand, with modern medical equipment, a professional medical team, high-quality medical personnel, and advanced technology for treating complex diseases, Bangkok should combine specialist medical services with shopping, entertainment, city sightseeing, and cultural activities in tourism. Similarly, Phuket, Pattaya, and Koh Samui, as coastal cities with beautiful beaches, coral reefs, and fascinating tropical scenery, should integrate medical treatments such as cosmetic surgery and oral care with seaside activities and vacation tourism. The combination of medical services and other entertainment and sightseeing activities can provide tourists more choices, and promote cooperation between different industries, thus increasing the income of the practitioners in some industries.

(C) Destinations for health tourism

The Thai government needs to promote the development of health tourism. It is a misconception by most of people that health tourism is merely spa therapy and massage, which has no connection with health care. In fact, these health care programs are also part of the medical services. Thai spas, massages and other physical therapies are well known in other countries. Therefore, the Thai government should seize the opportunity to value and vigorously develop health tourism so as to attract more tourists that is interested in health tourism.

(D) Promotion of health services

In order to expand the medical tourism industry and promote the fame of Thailand's medical tourism services, the Thai government must vigorously promote hospitals with high-quality medical technologies. Therefore, the Thai government should build related websites, strengthen cooperation with other countries, and promote the expansion of Thailand's medical tourism market. Thailand's major hospitals such as: Bumrungrad Hospital and Bangkok Dusit Medical Company (jointly operated by Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Central Hospital and BNH Hospital) currently invest in various hospitals and medical centers in the Middle East and neighboring countries. Similar to this, the expansion of Thailand hospital branding should be carried out as always, thus increasing the influence of Thai hospitals.

4.1.2 Price

Hospitals with high-quality medical services and low medical costs are always a major strength in Thailand. Combining the cost of hospital treatment with the quality of service, it can be concluded that Thailand's medical expenses have always remained at a relatively

reasonable level. Most of the patients are quite satisfied with Thai medical services, medical expenses and various medical packages. It shows to us that Thailand's pricing strategy and hospital treatment are very scientific and reasonable. In order to maintain this advantage, the government should monitor and supervise the quality of medical services and support hospitals in formulating transparent medical fee charging mechanisms to avoid unreasonable charges.

At the same time, a high level of medical quality and reasonable medical expenses are also important factors for medical tourism tourists to be taken into account when selecting foreign hospitals. It can often be seen that patients will be confused about the high cost of medical treatment, which will seriously affect the image of Thai medical tourism. Therefore, charging standards should be set by hospitals in cautiousness to ensure the patients are charged in a transparent way to avoid misunderstandings.

In order to support the health care industry and promote the development of modern medical technology, the government should reduce the hospital's tax revenue, and at the same time lower the interest rate on the purchase of medical equipment and necessary loans for hospitals. This can promote the development of Thai health services and make Thailand competitive in medical expenses.

4.1.3 Place

The advantages of information technology should be fully acknowledged and the Internet should be attached importance and be used as a marketing tool to promote medical tourism related information. At the same time, service providers need to build up their own websites and export their products and services to overseas markets. At present, however, many hospitals are not known due to the limited resources, low development, and limitations in the use of networks in the operating market. The Thai government should establish a central website with all data and links to other related information of interests to promote the development of Thai medical tourism. This website will become a collection center for Thailand's medical tourism related information, such as: medical services, other non-medical services for overseas tourists, doctors lists, hospital lists, hospital quality certification, health service packages, basic information of Thailand, and other necessary information for the patients and the relatives of patients. Other useful information related to medical tourism such as hospital brochures, medical tourism reference books, national maps, press releases, magazines, news and newspapers, books, and promotional videos should be promoted by the government and hospitals.

4.1.4 People

Since health care personnel and other staff members play an important role in health care, hospitals should focus on building excellent medical teams to advance the development of the medical health care industry. The government and hospitals should strongly support doctors' self-development and encourage physicians to expand their knowledge and

skills. Eyes!] The lack of doctors in some areas is still an important issue in Thai health care. Therefore, a good balance between the domestic health care system and the health tourism industry has to be maintained by the government. The Thai government should support its people to select medical tourism related disciplines to increase the number of doctors. And the government should pay the profits earned from health tourism to the staff of private hospitals on a monthly basis, so as to alleviate the shortage of medical personnel in health tourism in the underdeveloped areas. At the same time, the government must comprehensively analyze the impact of health tourism, launch policies or regulations to control the flow of doctors from government departments to private hospitals.

In order to improve the overall level of the health care personnel, it is necessary for the management of the health tourism industry to value the education and training of the staff. Medical staff and other staff who are in direct contact with tourists should be particularly trained in a strict way. Because good English communication skills and in-depth understanding of cultural differences all contribute to improving the quality of service in the health care industry and providing better services to patients from other countries.

4.1.5 Promotion

From the study by Sutherinetal and others in 2007, word-of-mouth, information searched from the Internet, newspaper advertisements, TV promotion videos, hospital magazines and data obtained from the tourism information center, become channels for those medical tourists to learn about Thai medical conditions before vising Thailand. Therefore, the research on promotion strategy is as follows

(1) Publicity

The government should use various media channels to properly implant medical tourism promotion activities. Advertising and public relations activities should be put on well-known websites, television stations, tourist maps, airplane newspapers, magazines, and foreign local TV stations. Since some patients are hesitant to travel to Thailand for treatment from their own country, advertisement and publicity should repeatedly emphasize the high quality of Thai medical services and the good image of Thai hospitals, so as to improve the awareness and trust of those patients. In the future, hospitals should use various channels to introduce the hospital's service quality and medical quality and continue to establish a good image.

For hospitals and clinics, presentations on patient treatment success, hospital quality certification, medical facilities, new medical technologies, and outstanding doctor teams should be included in the advertising campaign to make foreign markets more convinced with the good service quality and advanced medical technologies.

(2) Combination sales

The government should encourage the health care industry to establish partnerships with hotels, airlines and other industries, such as: the combined therapy with hotels, combined health services with aviation, etc., in order to promote Thailand's health care tourism and

attract more international tourists. Hospitals should focus on innovation and the introduction of other treatments such as physical examinations, vaccines, surgery (cosmetics, heart transplants, caesarean operation), etc., and provide discounts on medical expenses.

In addition, the services should be extended beyond treatment. For example, in the airport-hotel-hospital trip, the hotel's costs can be reduced, and dinner and spa should be sold as a package.

(3) Word of mouth (widely spread)

Word of mouth is an important channel for spreading information on Thailand's medical tourism. According to Suthinetal, word of mouth is an important way to promote the development of health care in and outside the country. Patients will be attracted to go to the hospitals and clinics by the online presentations on other patients' successful treatments. Therefore, the government should strengthen the supervision. Hospitals and clinics need to maintain excellent service quality, high treatment standards and friendly Thai services to meet the needs of patients and enable them to introduce the high-quality medical services to their relatives and friends.

4.2 Marketing Strategies for Thailand's Medical Tourism

1. To clarify the market position and promote the development of Thailand's medical tourism market through the use of efficient promotion strategies

The market position of Thailand should be clarified, focusing on promoting the differences between Thailand's medical tourism and other industries to attract tourists' attention.

2. To communicate efficiently with the target market to build relevant image awareness of Thailand through the use of efficient promotion strategies

The government can produce brochures on local featured services to provide tourists with information on medical services; set up a medical tourism service consulting office at the airport and display related advertisements on large billboards around the Immigration Department to attract tourists and arouse their medical tourism interest; disseminate medical tourism related information to tourists, and promote medical tourism through advanced science and technology and modern marketing methods, like the use of digital marketing strategy. Visitors can click on the official website of the Thai Tourism Bureau to enter the websites with relevant medical information.

The government should actively look for opportunities to hold world-class medical conferences in Thailand to establish a good image of the professionalization of Thailand's medical services and to strengthen the awareness of other countries in Thailand's medical services. Different agencies can go abroad to carry out roadshows in different countries to display Thailand's medical tourism services. When carrying out activities abroad, department stores and other places where people were gathered should be selected, and well-known media, columnists, thought leaders should be invited to influence all sectors of society. People, through their promotion and participation, are driven to Thailand for medical

services. The government should look for opportunities to hold world-class medical service related conferences in Thailand to promote the professional image of Thai medical services and increase the awareness of relevant countries in terms of Thai medical services. It should effectively communicate with the target market, and put the focus on the cities that are influential in one country, rather than the widely promotion throughout the country. Through effective communication and publicity, they will be aware of the highlights of Thailand, understand the status quo and stability of Thailand and show their trust in Thailand.

3. To develop products and services needed by the market to attract more people to expand the market

First of all, consumer behaviors and concepts are gradually changing. Because of the fast-paced life style, consumers will pay more attention to the efficiency and effectiveness of their behaviors. They will favor the products and services that have long-lasting effects and obvious results in a short period of time, such as weight-loss products that can be effective in a short term, cosmetic surgery that can generate a long-lasting effect. In addition, Thai massage is not enough to attract people in order to develop products and services with Thai characteristics because it is already widely available in other countries. Thai Spa Experience can be enjoyed in their own country. Multiple services should be developed to make it one-stop service and more popular services that visitors need should be introduced into Thailand, such as laser field therapy, rejuvenation, psychotherapy, and double-sex therapy. In addition, it is necessary to develop services that can attract potential medical tourists, penetrate the niche market, and provide special services for various special groups, such as: business tourists; East Asian tourists, tourists from Southeast Asia and the Middle East; couples tourists and honeymoon tourists (women have a great influence on the choice of honeymoon travel places, and men who travel together may escort their companions to use beauty care services).

4. to improve beauty and health services to enhance consumer satisfaction

Standardized and professional services are clearly different from other services. The company's services can be classified to promote service levels and the overall development of the industry. Second, the government should strengthen local management, improve service quality, increase the chance of obtaining international awards and related certificates, enhance the credibility of Thai beauty care services, and establish a good image in the hearts of patients. In addition, it is necessary for the state enterprises to jointly train with private companies to improve the quality of various types of medical service personnel. In particular, it is necessary to improve the foreign language skills of service personnel and improve the skills of Thai massage and other Thai traditional health care services. At the same time, it is necessary to promote health care careers and increase the number of employees to meet the needs of future tourists. Besides, the convenience of visitor visas and immigration inspections should be increased to attract more tourists.

5. To Establish a business alliance to strengthen cooperation and promote the sustainable development of medical tourism

It is necessary to actively establish cooperation between the state and private enterprises,

clarify the role of each department in the medical tourism market, pay attention to the coordination among various units, and establish business alliances. For example: state enterprises and private enterprises can cooperate to carry out promotional activities, aviation companies can provide discounts for passengers, companies jointly carry out promotional activities. In addition, it is necessary to expand the market by adopting a series of measures to collect various favorable information and data that guide the development of the market, such as tourist information, tourist behavior, tourist satisfaction, benchmarking, and results tracking. (Monitoring), etc., which can more effectively advertise and provide visitors with related services.

4.3 Government Support

The government should set up a special working group with strong comprehensiveness involved in all aspects of medical tourism. At the same time, it must provide rich professional knowledge related to medical tourism so as to promote the development of medical tourism by using scientific policies and methods. The departments related to medical tourism, such as the Thailand Tourism Bureau, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Health, should join hands to formulate relevant policies to promote the development of Thailand's medical tourism industry. However, in recent years this issue has not been handled in an effective way. Many private hospital administrators believe that the government should increase the budget for Thailand's medical tourism promotion, increase the promotion of Thai medical tourism, make people more aware of Thailand tourism, and then attract them to Thailand and receive medical tourism related services; Enterprises should play their own role in promoting the medical tourism as some companies' work experience and professional knowledge are more abundant than that of government departments. Private hospitals should also provide more complete information on their own websites to provide more convenience for customers to access information and understand Thai medical tourism.

4.4. Multilateral cooperation between Thailand and other countries

(1) United States

The Thai Embassy in Washington has played an important role in promoting Thailand to become a medical hub in Asia. Seminars on medical services between Thailand and the United States have been held and the Chambers of Commerce of each state are invited to participate with Thai representatives. The seminar was held for commercial negotiations. The embassy strongly supports the exchange between Thai representatives and private American companies. Some U.S. companies such as ConsumerDirectedHealthCare (CDHCC), KereonHAS, and GlobalHealthDirectMedRetreat expressed interest in Thailand's healthcare industry and they will cooperate with Thailand's potential hospitals, such as: Bangkok Hospitals, Kangmin Hospital and Paayatai Hospital because they need to reduce costs in terms of national medical benefits.

In addition, the embassy also held a meeting with the National Institutes of Health. The U.S. National Institutes of Health is a U.S. public health research unit that can promote the

development of potential medical fields in Thailand, improve the quality of Thai medical personnel, and develop drugs for the treatment of respiratory diseases and other diseases, including avian flu. It has Invested in and set up various research bonuses, sent Thai civil servants to receive NIH training, and established a cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA).

(2) China

In order to develop Thai medical tourism and achieve its goal of becoming a medical tourism hub in Asia, the Thai Investment Committee and the Tourism Bureau Office in Beijing also held meetings with the Chinese side including the exchange seminars and the conferences on Thailand-China medical tourism cooperation.

As China is entering an aging society, Chinese citizens are paying more and more attention to health care. Health products and related services are becoming more and more popular. In addition, in China there are a large number of upper middle income people who like to travel abroad for medical tourism. The United States, Europe and South Korea become their destinations for plastic surgery, physical examination and even cancer treatment. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of Chinese people visiting Thailand for treatment was around 400,000. It ranked 7th, following Japan, the United States, South Asia, the United Kingdom, the Middle East, and ASEAN. Whether in terms of the level of medical personnel and experience, or in terms of the quality of Thai-style service,

Thailand is a leading health care country in the world. China and Thailand can cooperate with each other on the above mentioned projects.

(3) Sweden

Scandinavia tourists may be the most potential tourist group. They are keen to travel to Thailand for treatment and tourism. The number of Scandinavia tourists visiting Thailand is increasing every year. Because the citizens in these countries quite appreciate the good manners of Thai people. It is a prominent problem in their national health care system that citizens have to wait for a long time for the treatment. If the waiting time exceeds 90 days, the government will arrange patients to receive medical services in other hospitals within the scope of the EU countries. Thailand is capable for the treatment of these patients. The Ministry of Health in Thailand has promoted exchanges and cooperation with Sweden in the development of the Reimbursement System and exchanged the main payment rights of the National Health Insurance system. For the Swedish people visiting Thailand for treatment, there are DGR rules for the activities outside the rights and interests. In addition, they have proposed to the Swedish government to make sure that the retired people can receive pensions and receive medical services including short trips and long-term visits under the prescribed rights.

4.5 The Summary

At present, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India all have certain advantages in

medical tourism. According to their own advantages, they should compare these comparative advantages. Due to the different market positions and different medical services, the tourist markets should be targeted accordingly. Therefore, there are few competitions in medical tourism among countries in the Asian region.

The spread of word of mouth by patients are attached great importance by many providers of medical services because of the lowest investment in this type of publicity channel. First of all, companies will provide detailed and real information for patients; secondly, hospitals will create a good medical environment for patients and provide complete facilities; meanwhile, they will also provide good services to the relatives and friends of patients to get the trust from the patients. Through these measure, patient satisfaction can be improved so that they can recommend Thailand's medical travel services to relatives and friends around them. Apart from these, the relevant government departments have formulated some policies to promote the development of medical tourism in Thailand. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has provided visa convenience for medical tourists; the Ministry of Health has formulated long-term plans for the development of Thai medical tourism. At the same time, effective exchanges and cooperation between countries will help expand Thailand's medical tourism market and make Thailand's medical tourism market prosperous in the future.

