

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The government and health industry in Indonesia must consider the dynamic foundation created by the opportunities and challenges in the global Medical Tourism market. The objective of this study is to assess the progress and scope of Medical Tourism in Indonesia by analyzing existing literature, as well as identifying the key factors that contribute to its effectiveness in attracting medical tourists. The employed methodology is qualitative as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies and intricacies involved in the implementation of Medical Tourism. The research findings indicate that the government plays a crucial role in maximizing the potential of Medical Tourism in Indonesia. This is achieved through the implementation of incentive policies and effective promotions. Enhancing regulatory measures, elevating health service benchmarks, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders in the health and tourism industries are crucial measures to enhance Indonesia's appeal as a Medical Tourism hub.

Keywords: *medical, tourism, implementation, Indonesia*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's appeal as a Medical Tourism destination stems from various factors that set it apart from its rivals. Indonesia possesses abundant natural resources and cultural splendor, making it an appealing destination for medical tourists. The combination of cultural diversity, natural beauty, and historical heritage offers patients a comprehensive and distinctive experience. Health facilities in Indonesia are experiencing growth and are providing high-quality medical services, as stated by Maharani and Vembriati (2019). Indonesia's abundance of top-tier physicians, state-of-the-art medical apparatus, and sufficient healthcare facilities establishes it as a dependable choice for medical treatment. This advantage is further enhanced by the relatively lower cost of treatment in comparison to Western countries, rendering Indonesia an appealing choice for patients seeking top-notch medical services at a more affordable price. Indonesia's appeal as a provider of high-quality healthcare services for international tourists is enhanced by the government's approach of enhancing health infrastructure, streamlining the medical visa process, and promoting medical tourism. The combination of these factors establishes a conducive environment for the growth of Medical Tourism in Indonesia.

Indonesia's expanding health infrastructure and technological advancements are crucial factors that enhance the country's appeal as a Medical Tourism hub. Firstly, the enhancement of health infrastructure in Indonesia entails the construction and enhancement of contemporary healthcare facilities distributed throughout different regions. Advanced medical facilities equipped with cutting-edge medical technology have been constructed, enhancing patients' accessibility to receive high-quality healthcare. The integration of information technology in health administration and management also enhances the efficacy and caliber of services. Reni et al. (2022) state that technological advancements in the healthcare industry, including telemedicine, electronic medical record systems, and advanced diagnostic technology, have significantly enhanced the quality of medical services in Indonesia. The technology not only enables the transfer of information between individuals involved in the healthcare process, but also enhances the precision of diagnosis and the effectiveness of medical procedures. The inclusion of proficient and trained medical personnel

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA

Suadi Sapta Putra, Elwisam, Kumba Digdowiseiso, Nguyen Duc Tri, Nurul Nazwa Napatah.

proficient in utilizing these technologies establishes a comprehensive and contemporary care setting. Indonesia is establishing itself as a Medical Tourism destination renowned for its constantly updated health infrastructure and ongoing technological advancements, ensuring the provision of healthcare services that meet international standards. This factor not only instills confidence in foreign patients, but also fosters an environment conducive to the expansion of the medical tourism industry in Indonesia. Despite Indonesia's significant potential as a desirable destination for Medical Tourism, there are several obstacles that must be addressed in order to successfully implement this initiative. A significant hindrance arises from regulatory and administrative complexities.

The Medical Tourism sector may face challenges in achieving rapid growth due to intricate legal frameworks and burdensome administrative procedures. Sari (2019) asserts that enhancing regulations, such as licensing and patient safety standards, is crucial for bolstering international patient confidence. Challenges in implementing Medical Tourism in Indonesia include issues with infrastructure and the limited availability of skilled human resources. The disparity in healthcare infrastructure between urban and rural regions, coupled with a dearth of proficient medical staff, can have an impact on the caliber and availability of healthcare services nationwide. To meet the service standards expected by health tourists, substantial investment is necessary in infrastructure development and the enhancement of human resource capacity. Additional barriers encompass cultural elements and unfavorable perceptions of healthcare services in Indonesia. Certain patients may harbor skepticism regarding the caliber of medical services or encounter unease when navigating through various languages and cultures. To overcome these obstacles, it is crucial to enhance cross-cultural communication and enhance the reputation of Indonesian health services.

The government, health industry, and related stakeholders must consider the dynamic foundation created by the opportunities and challenges Indonesia faces in competing in the global Medical Tourism market. Indonesia has a significant opportunity to attract more international patients due to the rapid expansion of the global medical tourism industry. The convergence of cost-effective medical treatment, abundant natural resources, and a varied cultural milieu can offer a distinctive allure to individuals seeking medical tourism. Investing in the promotion of medical tourism and implementing effective marketing strategies can enhance Indonesia's worldwide appeal as a preferred destination for medical services. Nevertheless, the challenges must not be disregarded (Kusumawati et al., 2019). One of the main challenges is the intense competition from other Medical Tourism destinations, particularly Southeast Asian countries that boast highly developed health infrastructure and facilities. In order to be competitive, Indonesia must persistently enhance service standards, foster medical technology innovation, and guarantee the accessibility of sufficient health facilities. The intricate regulatory challenges and bureaucratic hurdles can impede the expansion of this industry, necessitating the exploration of regulatory and policy reforms to establish a more favorable business climate.

Another important factor to consider is the sustainability and management of reputation. Ensuring the high standard of healthcare services, upholding medical ethics, and effectively addressing patient needs and expectations are essential factors in establishing a favorable global perception of Indonesia. To address these challenges, it is crucial for Indonesia to foster collaboration between the public and private sectors, empower medical personnel, and allocate resources towards research and development. These measures are essential for sustaining Indonesia's competitiveness in the ever-changing global Medical Tourism market. According to Setiawan and Muhardi in 2020, the Indonesian economy experiences a substantial and favorable influence from Medical Tourism, resulting in numerous economic advantages that are evident across various sectors. Medical Tourism in Indonesia generates revenue from overseas by charging for medical services, lodging, transportation, and other necessary expenses. The rise in health tourism visits directly enhances the expansion of the tourism industry, augmenting revenue from the hotel, restaurant, and other service sectors. The rise in Medical Tourism activities also promotes the expansion of the domestic healthcare industry. The health sector is witnessing a surge in demand for local health facilities and medical services, leading to the emergence of new

employment prospects. The sustained growth in demand also spurs investment in health infrastructure, medical technology, and medical personnel training, thereby generating a lasting positive effect on the competitiveness of Indonesia's healthcare system. In addition to these immediate advantages, Medical Tourism also possesses the capacity to enhance Indonesia's image and reputation as a top-tier healthcare destination in the global perspective. Indonesia can enhance its attractiveness as a competitive Medical Tourism destination by offering favorable experiences to international patients (Kusumawati et al., 2019). The positive perception of this image has the capacity to attract a larger number of health tourists, thereby making a more substantial contribution to the overall expansion of the economy. This research aims to assess the progress and scope of Medical Tourism in Indonesia by analyzing existing literature. It also seeks to identify the factors that contribute to its success in attracting health tourists and to examine the obstacles that have been identified in the literature regarding the implementation of Medical Tourism in Indonesia. Additionally, this research aims to propose strategies and efforts to overcome these obstacles and facilitate the optimal development of Medical Tourism in Indonesia.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The qualitative research allows for a comprehensive exploration of the intricacies and intricacies involved in the implementation of Medical Tourism. Sugiyono (2018) states that qualitative research methods entail analyzing specialized literature to uncover crucial aspects in the advancement of Medical Tourism in Indonesia. This study will employ text analysis methodologies to discern trends, patterns, and key discoveries elucidated in relevant literature. The first stage of this research involved gathering literature pertaining to the implementation of Medical Tourism in Indonesia, encompassing scientific articles, books, research reports, and other pertinent sources. The literature will undergo content analysis to identify the primary themes, key concepts, and thought frameworks that have been proposed.

Qualitative methods may incorporate comparative analysis to evaluate disparities or similarities in the implementation of Medical Tourism between Indonesia and other nations. This research will analyze the interpretations and perspectives of literature authors, aiming to identify any discernible patterns that may arise from diverse viewpoints. The outcomes of this qualitative analysis will serve as the foundation for assembling the primary discoveries and formulating conclusions that can offer comprehensive understanding into the implementation of Medical Tourism in Indonesia. Qualitative research methods offer the benefit of furnishing a comprehensive, profound, and situational comprehension of the issues under investigation. This literature research aims to make a valuable contribution to the understanding of the factors that influence the implementation of Medical Tourism in Indonesia and to propose potential strategies for overcoming emerging challenges.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An essential aspect in comprehending the appeal of Indonesia as a medical tourism destination is the identification of the factors that contribute to its attractiveness for medical tourists. The abundant natural resources and diverse cultural heritage of Indonesia offer a distinct and comprehensive experience for tourists seeking wellness. Nature's therapeutic potential and cultural variety offer additional benefits for patients seeking a unique healing experience, with picturesque beaches and breathtaking mountains. Moreover, the progressively advanced healthcare infrastructure in Indonesia is also a crucial determinant. Intama and Sulistiadi (2022) assert that the augmentation of medical services, utilization of cutting-edge medical technology, and the availability of highly skilled medical staff instill health tourists with assurance regarding the excellence of the medical care they receive. The comparatively lower treatment expenses in comparison to Western nations serve as a notable economic incentive for patients from abroad. Indonesia's appeal is further enhanced by the presence of health services that prioritize indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA

Suadi Sapta Putra, Elwisam, Kumba Digdowiseiso, Nguyen Duc Tri, Nurul Nazwa Napatah.

The incorporation of contemporary and conventional therapeutic techniques fosters a comprehensive approach to wellness, aligning with the growing global inclination towards holistic health that is experiencing a surge in popularity. The promotion of medical tourism and government support are crucial factors that contribute to making Indonesia an appealing destination for medical tourism. The growth of this sector is bolstered by efficient marketing strategies and policy incentives, which enhance Indonesia's prominence in the global market and instill medical tourists with trust in the long-term viability of medical services in the country. The main factors that contribute to the appeal of Indonesia as a Medical Tourism destination are its distinctive culture, stunning natural landscapes, and excellent healthcare facilities.

The abundant cultural heritage of Indonesia enhances the health tourism experience. According to Azwar et al. (2023), historical heritage, traditional arts, and cultural celebrations contribute to the creation of an inspiring and calming environment for patients. Indonesia's commitment to a comprehensive approach to health is demonstrated by the incorporation of traditional medicine into medical care. The breathtaking natural beauty throughout the country is a significant attraction for wellness tourists in search of a rejuvenating experience in harmony with nature. Indonesia presents a wide range of natural landscapes, encompassing serene white sand beaches and breathtaking mountain vistas, which seamlessly blend tranquility and convenience.

This factor not only influences the individual's physical well-being, but also has a beneficial effect on their mental health. In addition to its natural beauty and cultural richness, Indonesia's health facilities have undergone significant development, ensuring the provision of high-quality medical care. Indonesia's commitment to delivering healthcare services on par with international standards is evidenced by its utilization of state-of-the-art medical technology, renowned medical professionals, and modern healthcare facilities. Indonesia's healthcare infrastructure is regularly updated and its healthcare facilities are of the highest quality, ensuring healthcare travelers can have full confidence in receiving professional and top-notch care.

The caliber of healthcare services offered in Indonesia is a pivotal factor in elucidating the nation's appeal as a Medical Tourism hub. The advancement of medical technology in Indonesia demonstrates notable strides, characterized by the utilization of state-of-the-art medical equipment and the integration of sophisticated diagnostic technology. As stated by Dhyana & Barre (2015), comprehending these advancements encompasses not only the presence of extensive medical facilities in major urban areas, but also encompasses the accessibility of state-of-the-art medical technology in more distant healthcare centers. In addition to technological advancements, the proficiency and aptitude of medical personnel in Indonesia also significantly contribute to the attraction of health tourists.

Ongoing education and training for medical personnel fosters the development of a skilled and proficient medical team. Medical tourists can be confident in receiving exceptional and individualized medical care due to the availability of highly trained specialist physicians, seasoned nurses, and proficient medical support staff. The presence of top-tier healthcare facilities is a significant determinant of the quality of healthcare services in Indonesia (Trisnantoro, 2012). Contemporary, officially recognized medical centers, furnished with diagnostic amenities, surgical rooms, and cutting-edge treatment facilities, establish an environment that adheres to global benchmarks. Comprehending the significance of excellent health infrastructure, both in the public and private domains, is crucial in elucidating why Indonesia is regarded as a destination that provides superior health services.

An assessment of Indonesia's position in the Medical Tourism industry can be made by considering its comparative advantages and disadvantages in attracting medical tourists. An advantage worth considering is the cultural and natural diversity of Indonesia. The region's abundant cultural distinctiveness and breathtaking natural splendor greatly attract wellness travelers in search of a therapeutic encounter that harmonizes with the wealth of nature and indigenous customs. Conversely, the comparatively lower cost of healthcare in Indonesia can be seen as a notable benefit. Indonesia provides superior healthcare services at a more affordable price, particularly when compared to Western nations. This can serve as a determining element for

medical tourists who are looking for efficient medical treatment while maximizing their expenses (Rosalina et al., 2015). Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize and address various vulnerabilities. One factor is the unfavorable perception of the healthcare system in Indonesia. Despite the enhanced quality of health services, the unfavorable perception can hinder certain health tourists from selecting Indonesia as a medical treatment destination. Additional challenges encompass disparities in health regulations, intricate bureaucracy, and ambiguity surrounding treatment protocols. These factors may hinder international patients' decision-making process when selecting Indonesia as a destination for Medical Tourism.

Indonesia's comparatively lower medical care costs in relation to other destinations highlight the country's strong economic appeal in the Medical Tourism industry. In general, medical care in Indonesia is relatively more cost-effective compared to Western countries and other popular destinations for Medical Tourism. The cost comparison analysis encompasses prevalent medical procedures, surgical interventions, and healthcare services frequently sought by medical tourists. According to Arisanti (2019), the high cost of healthcare in Indonesia plays a significant role in the decision-making process of health tourists when choosing a destination. Additionally, this factor can also contribute positively to Indonesia's appeal as a Medical Tourism destination. Reduced expenses enable international patients to access top-notch healthcare at a lower price. This enhances Indonesia's economic competitiveness and enables the country to attract health tourists from diverse backgrounds. The decreased costs of medical care in Indonesia have the potential to foster the growth of a more comprehensive medical tourism industry. The prospect of a rise in health tourism can spur economic expansion in interconnected industries, such as hospitality, dining, and local transportation. Warniyanti (2017) emphasizes that health care quality, safety, and non-financial factors are significant factors to take into account. When developing marketing policies and strategies for medical tourism, it is crucial to emphasize the cost benefits of receiving medical care in Indonesia, while simultaneously upholding and enhancing the standards of health service quality.

The government's policies and roles in supporting the implementation of Medical Tourism in Indonesia are crucial for comprehending the fundamental basis and trajectory of this industry's growth. The Indonesian government plays a pivotal role in creating a conducive environment that promotes and facilitates the expansion of Medical Tourism. An essential policy that aids this sector is the development of incentive regulations and policies, which include streamlining administrative procedures and licensing for health facilities involved in the Medical Tourism industry. Government funding for the promotion and marketing of medical tourism is a crucial factor. Pramudita et al. (2022) found that implementing effective promotional programs, which utilize online platforms and participate in international health exhibitions, can enhance Indonesia's recognition as a Medical Tourism hub.

Providing financial assistance or tax benefits to health facilities that are dedicated to enhancing service and facility standards can serve as a strong incentive for the private sector to actively engage in Medical Tourism. Government intervention in the advancement of health infrastructure and the education of medical personnel is crucial to guarantee that Indonesia possesses sufficient human resources and facilities to sustain the expansion of this sector. Providing training programs and enhancing the skills of medical personnel, along with adhering to international standards, can enhance the trust of health tourists in the quality of medical services in Indonesia (Warniyanti, 2017). In order to successfully promote the growth of the Medical Tourism sector, it is imperative to establish strong collaboration among different stakeholders, such as relevant ministries, health institutions, and the private sector.

The presence of barriers in the execution of Medical Tourism in Indonesia, particularly those associated with regulations and bureaucracy, has substantial ramifications for the availability and accessibility of healthcare services, as well as their appeal to medical tourists. The presence of unclear regulations and bureaucratic processes can impede the progress of health infrastructure, leading to limited or uneven distribution of health facilities in the region. The accessibility of health services, particularly in remote areas, is significantly affected. Regulatory ambiguity and perplexity

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA

Suadi Sapta Putra, Elwisam, Kumba Digdowiseiso, Nguyen Duc Tri, Nurul Nazwa Napatah.

can lead to setbacks in the licensing and accreditation procedures, impeding the expansion of new healthcare establishments or the renewal of current ones. Consequently, this could negatively impact the availability of high-quality healthcare for medical tourists seeking medical services in different parts of Indonesia. The presence of these barriers can have a detrimental effect on the perception of the Indonesian healthcare system, thereby diminishing its appeal as a destination for Medical Tourism. Health tourists typically opt for destinations that offer a high degree of regulatory transparency and dependable healthcare systems (Radiah et al., 2022). In order to enhance the appeal of health tourism, it is imperative to revamp policies and expedite endeavors to elucidate regulations and streamline bureaucracy that hampers the licensing procedure. To enhance Indonesia's appeal as a Medical Tourism hub, it is imperative to prioritize initiatives that streamline regulations, expedite the licensing procedure, and bolster the healthcare infrastructure nationwide. By increasing the availability and accessibility of health services, Indonesia's appeal as a Medical Tourism destination can be greatly enhanced.

An assessment of the barriers associated with the quality of healthcare services in Indonesia is a crucial factor in the implementation of Medical Tourism. Within the realm of literature, these hindrances frequently encompass the absence of global benchmarks and disparities in the caliber of healthcare establishments. The absence of global benchmarks in certain healthcare services can generate ambiguity for medical tourists, particularly those who are accustomed to elevated international norms. These factors can impact how people perceive the quality of service and the safety of medical procedures. Variations in the quality of healthcare facilities across different regions or between health institutions in Indonesia can impede the expansion of Medical Tourism. As per the study conducted by Margono et al. in 2021, certain facilities exhibit varying levels of quality, encompassing both the caliber of medical equipment employed and the proficiency of medical staff. This poses difficulties in establishing the requisite uniformity and confidence for medical tourists when selecting Indonesia as a destination for medical treatment. In order to surmount these challenges, it is imperative to exert endeavors towards enhancing the overall caliber of healthcare provisions. Enhancing standards and accreditation to align with international norms can establish a benchmark of quality that meets the expectations of health tourists. Enhancing the expertise and knowledge of medical staff, along with investing in state-of-the-art medical technology, will play a crucial role in leveling and enhancing the standard of services within the healthcare industry.

The suboptimal promotion and marketing endeavors for medical tourism underscore the pivotal significance of marketing strategies in molding the perception and allure of Indonesia as a destination for Medical Tourism. There is evidence in the literature suggesting that inadequate promotional and marketing strategies can impact the appeal of Indonesia as a destination for medical care. These suboptimalities may encompass limited exposure in the international market, imprecision in communicating promotional messages, and inadequate collaboration among stakeholders in the Medical Tourism industry. According to Irianto et al. (2020), the primary consequence of suboptimal promotional and marketing efforts is a limited comprehension and awareness regarding the potential and excellence of healthcare services in Indonesia. Health tourists tend to prefer destinations that have successfully established a favorable and persuasive image through effective marketing campaigns. Inadequate promotional endeavors may result in missed chances to showcase Indonesia's advantages and appeal as a Medical Tourism destination, thereby diminishing its allure among international health tourists. Efforts to enhance should prioritize the enhancement of the caliber of promotional and marketing campaigns. This can be achieved by employing digital marketing strategies, participating in international health exhibitions, and fostering collaboration across different sectors to establish a unified narrative. Consistency in promotion and marketing is crucial, along with the collaboration of the government, tourism institutions, and health service providers to enhance Indonesia's reputation as a Medical Tourism hub.

4. CONCLUSION

Indonesia possesses significant potential as a compelling destination for Medical Tourism. The primary allure for health tourists lies in factors such as abundant natural resources, a wide range of cultural experiences, and advancements in healthcare infrastructure. Indonesia benefits economically from the advantage of having relatively affordable medical care costs. Nevertheless, there are multiple challenges that must be surmounted, such as regulatory ambiguity, disparities in healthcare standards, and the need to enhance initiatives promoting medical tourism. The government plays a crucial role in maximizing the potential of Medical Tourism in Indonesia by providing incentive policies and effective promotions to support this industry. Enhancing regulatory measures, elevating health service benchmarks, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders in the health and tourism industries are crucial measures to enhance Indonesia's appeal as a Medical Tourism hub. Through surmounting the recognized barriers and persistently enhancing the caliber of its services, Indonesia can fortify its standing as a dependable and exceedingly appealing hub for medical tourists. The ongoing collaboration between the government, health institutions, and the tourism sector will yield favorable outcomes for the expansion of the Medical Tourism industry and a constructive impact on the Indonesian economy.

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA

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