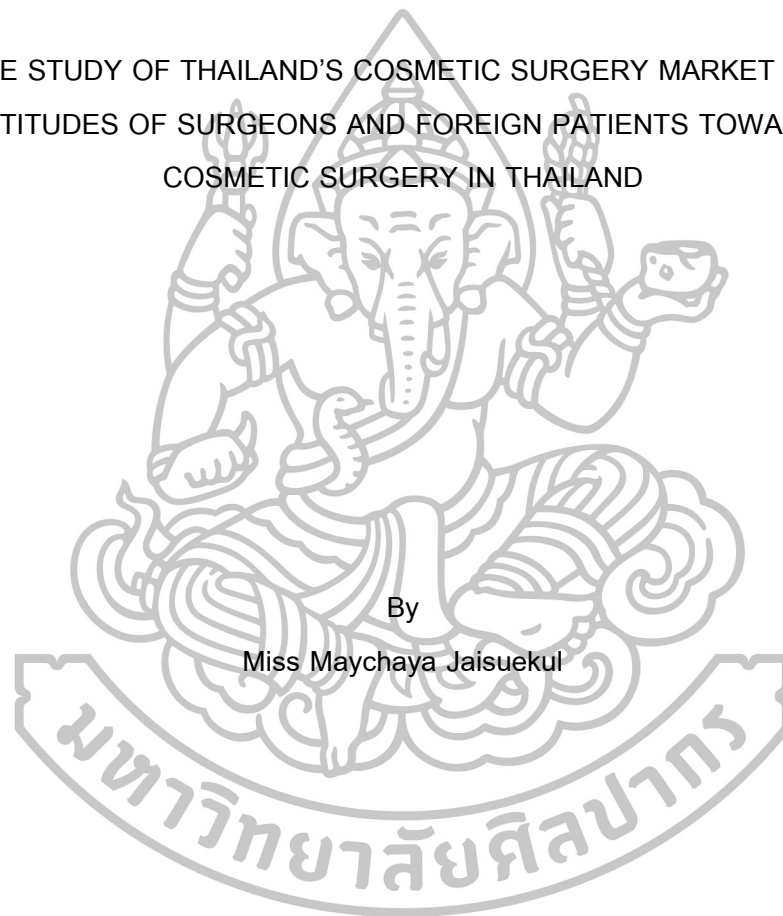




THE STUDY OF THAILAND'S COSMETIC SURGERY MARKET AND
ATTITUDES OF SURGEONS AND FOREIGN PATIENTS TOWARDS
COSMETIC SURGERY IN THAILAND



By

Miss Maychaya Jaisuekul

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Business Administration Program in International Business
International Program
Graduate School, Silpakorn University
Academic Year 2015
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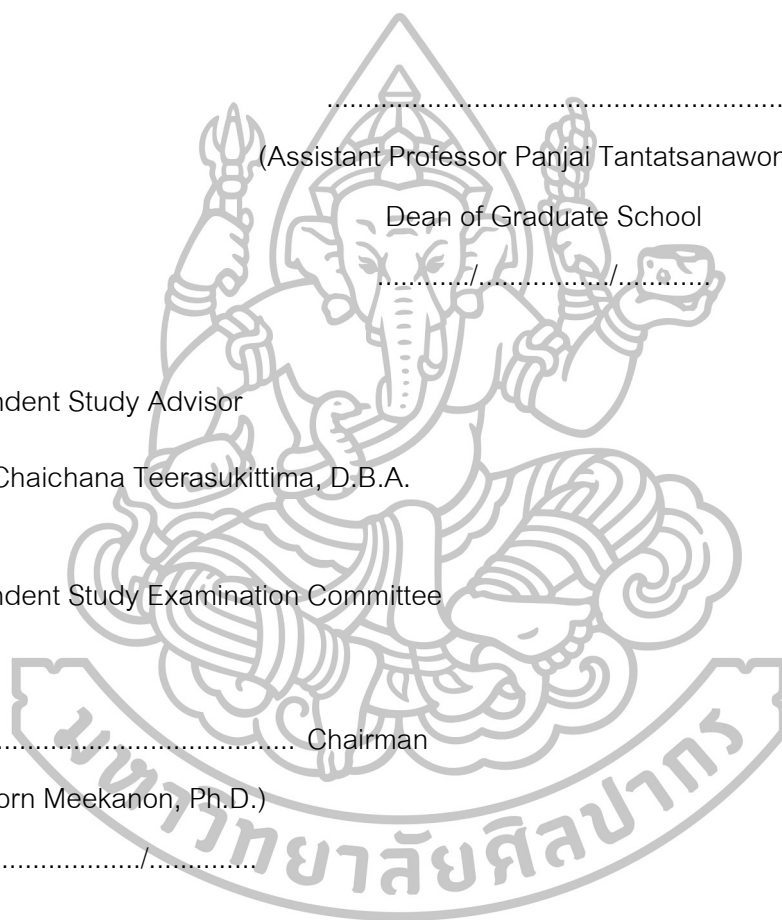
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The Graduate School, Silpakorn University has approved and accredited the Thesis title of “The study of Thailand’s cosmetic surgery market and attitudes of surgeons and foreign patients towards cosmetic surgery in Thailand” submitted by Miss Maychaya Jaisuekul as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in International Business.



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SURGERY MARKET AND ATTITUDES OF SURGEONS AND FOREIGN PATIENTS
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Medical tourism in Thailand is a potentially valuable market, promoted and developed for national advantages. Today, Thai medical services, particularly cosmetic surgery gains foreigners' reputation, and acquires international attention in world market. The objectives of this research were: 1) to identify factors that foreigners undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand for promoting medical tourism market; 2) to study the perspectives of the leading surgeons in aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand; 3) to study the perceptions of foreigners who had undergone aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand and; 4) to examine the conditions and practice of aesthetic plastic surgery market in Thailand in relation to medical tourism in Thailand. This research is an exploratory descriptive study, using qualitative research method. Study population, which were obtained through snowballing technique, consists of five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals, including Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Loralak Hospital, and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals. In this research, three theories were applied as the theoretical model, including theory of diamond national advantage, marketing mix for service business (7Ps), and total perceived quality model. Research findings showed that Thailand still earned its place as the first mover in medical tourism, with strengths in factor and demand conditions. Nevertheless Thailand should improve in terms of firm's rivalry and competition as well as make the related and supporting industry stronger. In terms of factors influencing foreigners to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand were mainly price and quality of cosmetic surgery and related services. Most of the leading surgeons perceived that cosmetic surgery in Thailand is currently growing among both the Thai and foreign patients. In addition, the majority of former foreign patients who had undergone cosmetic surgery in Thailand perceived that prices are relative cheap while they are able to receive good outcome after the surgery. Most of them were very satisfied with the surgery outcome and overall service of the hospitals where they had cosmetic surgery done. Overall situation of cosmetic surgery market in Thailand is currently in a growth period and has become a well-known destination for undergoing cosmetic surgery overseas. With competitive pricing comparing to other countries, there are still many rooms for growth and development as long as the hospitals are still focusing on improving their equipment, technologies, services and facilities while receiving good support from the government in terms of advertising and promotion and providing subsidiaries to the hospitals to ensure sustainable growth of the medical tourism industry.

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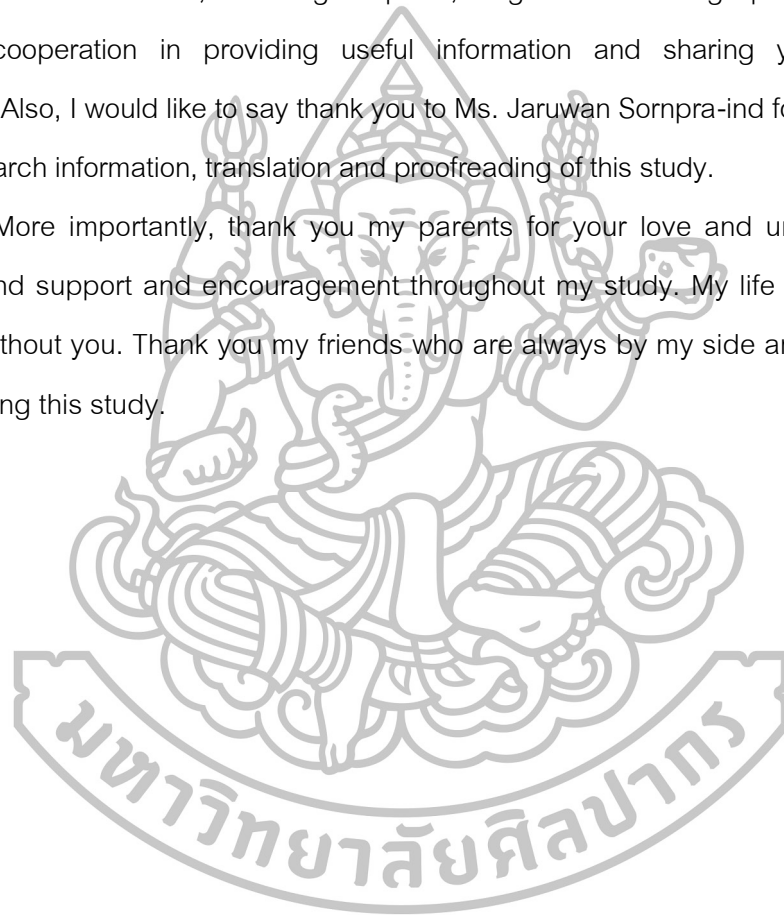


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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1. Background and significance of the study

There has been an increase in popularity of travelling for medical treatment around the world as people are becoming more highly concerned on appearance both facial and body figure. There are various reasons for medical travelers to seek health care treatments in other countries instead of domestically, for examples, cheaper costs, more advanced technologies and equipment, expertise of doctors as well as excellent healthcare services (Horowitz, Rosensweig & Jones, 2007). Medical tourism is considered to be an emerging industry. Its fundamental is that the same type of service or better services are also available in other countries at a more affordable price comparing to domestic market (Medical Tourism Association, 2008). According to Ricafort (2011, p. 2; cited from Gahlinger, PM, 2008), popular destinations for medical tourism are “*Argentina, Brunei, Cuba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, and recently, Saudi Arabia, UAE, South Korea, Tunisia, Ukraine, and New Zealand.*”

Cosmetic surgery is part of medical tourism, which is an important niche market in the tourism industry. People spend more money on this type of tourism by traveling from place to place for the operations. By using advanced technology, the operations are done in high quality and fast procedures of cosmetic surgery (Stockhaus, 2012). According to Atiyeh et al., (2008), cosmetic surgery has developed from medical practice, which integrated with a context of culture of appearance on the physical representations of age, gender and ethnicity.

Regarding to medical tourism market, aesthetic plastic surgery provides a place for patients to travel to for treatments and operation. Most of patients prefer to travel to developing countries to access medical procedures in low cost facilities

including flights, accommodation, and infrastructures. The industry is enhanced from both the private business to local government, which aims to promote national medical tourism as a significantly profitable source of international revenue (Lunt et al., 2011). Throughout a numerous of factors for decision aesthetic surgery, the important reasons are to satisfy one's own skin, to gain attractiveness, and to satisfy one's image and appearances. The benefit of cosmetic surgery is to feel better of body appearance which the resulted of feeling more self-confident. In additions, plastic surgery can enhance both physical and psychological matters (Salehahmadi & Rafie, 2012). In Thailand, Thai government supports aesthetic plastic surgery as national medical tourism. Medical tourism in Thailand is a potential valuable market, promoted and developed for national advantages. Today, Thai medical services, particularly cosmetic surgery gains foreigners' reputation, and acquires international attention in world market. The operations are managed by leading hospitals, which are reliable and offer a high quality service with advanced technology (Cohen, 2008).

Thailand is the world's leading medical tourism destination, earning a staggering \$4.31 billion in revenue from the industry in 2013. There were 2.5 million people coming purely for medical reasons out of 26.5 million people who visited Thailand in 2013. Such number has been increasing at an average of 15 percent a year over the past decade (Ryan, 2014). The popularity of cosmetic surgery tends to increase continuously. Dr. Worapol Sukkheewattana, BNH Hospital, mentioned that the direction of cosmetic surgery and beauty market in Thailand in continuously growing, reaching 30,000 million baht nowadays. At the same time, medical and beauty industry is still an outstanding business for more than 4 consecutive years (www.banmuang.co.th,2015).

All associations involved in cosmetic surgery in Thailand perceive that the government should utilize the opportunity of regional integration into AEC in 2015 to support Thailand to become the surgical hub of Asia, by promoting to foreigners about capability and readiness of the Thai surgeons in sexual reassignment, nose, eye and breast augmentation as well as promoting cosmetic surgery tourism package. The

International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) pointed out that the amount of cosmetic surgery, both surgical and non-surgical procedures, in Asia showed that China has the highest number of cosmetic surgery, followed by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan while Thailand is the only nation in Southeast Asia that is in the rank. This reaffirms that cosmetic surgery in Thailand is internationally well-known and trusted by both Thais and foreigners (Postjung.com, 2016).

Focusing on aesthetic plastic surgery, this is the newest trend of the decade. Many leading hospitals and clinics invest a large amount of money in the properties and material to offer high standard services. Thailand is one of the leading emerging medical tourist destinations and has become one of the best choices for cosmetic surgery patients, including eyes surgery, nasal reshaping, breast reduction and especially sex reassignment surgery (Sinhaneti, 2008). Most of medical tourists in Thailand are from Middle East nations. According to the International Medical Travel Journal (2010), TAT forecasted that the total number of international medical tourism who come to Thailand should have a significant growth of 10 million in 2015. Thus, in order to promote aesthetic plastic surgery as part of medical tourism in Thailand, many aspects relating to aesthetic plastic surgery should be taken into account, particularly in terms of the perceptions of aesthetic plastic surgeons and of customers.

With an increase in the popularity of aesthetic plastic surgery as part of medical tourism in Thailand and the intention to promote medical tourism in Thailand, the researcher is particularly interested in studying about the perceptions of aesthetic plastic surgeons in relations to aesthetic plastic surgery market as part of medical tourism industry in Thailand as well as studying about the perceptions of foreigners who had undergone plastic surgery in Thailand, together with factors influencing their decision making to undergo aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand. The researcher expects that this research will contribute to the development of medical tourism market in Thailand and increase popularity of aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand among foreigners as well as create better understanding towards aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

2. Problem Statement

We have seen an increase in the importance of medical tourism, especially in terms of cosmetic surgery, in contributing to the Thai economy. Major competitors of Thailand in the Asian market are India, Malaysia and Singapore. As a result of considerable high costs of treatment, long waiting time, and red tape, more and more medical tourists from Europe and North America are beginning to look for undergoing cosmetic surgery in emerging countries like Thailand and India (Ricafort, 2011) where hospitals offer high quality of cosmetic surgery at a more affordable price. The majority of those who selected Thailand as their destination for medical tourism also want to travel on a vacation after their surgeries are done. As part of medical tourism, this research aims to focus on essential factors affecting foreigners' preferences in choosing the hospitals in Thailand for cosmetic surgery. This research also includes the study of perceptions of the cosmetic surgeons of the leading hospitals in Thailand towards cosmetic surgery, and the perception of foreigners who had done the operations in Thailand and the factors that they choose and trust in the Thailand's hospitals to undergo their surgery.

3. Scope of the Study

This thesis only focuses on studying factors that foreigners undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand for promoting medical tourism market as well as the perceptions of foreigners who had undergone plastic surgery and of the leading surgeons in Thailand. The practice of aesthetic plastic surgery market in Thailand in relation to medical tourism in Thailand is also examined in this research.

3.1 Case selection consists of five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals, including Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Loralak Hospital, and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals. The major reason in choosing these hospitals is because they have reputation in cosmetic surgery internationally, and are also the most widely known and internationally accredited hospitals, specializing in cosmetic surgery in Thailand.

3.2 Recruitment in this Research is classified into two sampling groups, which are five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals.

4. Objectives of the research

4.1 To identify factors that foreigners undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand for promoting medical tourism market.

4.2 To study the perspectives of the leading surgeons in aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

4.3 To study the perceptions of foreigners who had undergone aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

4.4 To examine the conditions and practice of aesthetic plastic surgery market in Thailand in relation to medical tourism in Thailand.

5. Research questions

With the development and the growth of cosmetic surgery market worldwide, this concept has rapidly gained popularity regardless of any risk consideration. In this research, the researcher is particularly interested in studying about various factors contributing to this growth in the Thai market. Therefore, two representative groups, including surgeons and foreign patients are involved, and research questions are devised as follows.

5.1 Which factors do foreigners choose to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand?

5.2 Does this cosmetic surgery promote medical tourism in Thailand?

5.3 Why do foreigners choose Thailand as cosmetic surgery premises?

5.4 Which factors do foreigners consider in deciding to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand?

5.5 How is the perception of the plastic surgeons relating to current conditions of aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand?

6. Theories Used in This Research

In this research, the researcher constructed the conceptual framework by applying three theories in order to answer to research objectives as follows:

6.1 Theory of Diamond National Advantage

Medical tourism industry in Thailand will be analyzed with the Theory of Diamond of National Advantage (Porter, 2004). This theory is applied to answer to the research objective: To examine the practice of aesthetic plastic surgery market in Thailand in relation to medical tourism in Thailand. It reveals the hospitals' strategies and rivalries to identify competition within the market. Demand conditions show us the needs of the industry and area of expertise which may be required in this industry. Factor conditions investigate the overall aspect of aesthetic industry in Thailand. Lastly, related and supporting industries provide us the support of the industry, which can be an advantage to the Thai industry.

6.2 Marketing Mix for Service Business (7 Ps)

In this research, **7Ps or Marketing Mix for Service Marketing** (Booms and Bitner, 1981) is used for analyzing the factors which are directly related to service marketing. The 7Ps include Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, People, Physical evidence, and Process (Booms and Bitner, 1981). The 7Ps or Marketing Mix for Service Marketing is applied in order to identify factors that foreigners undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand for promoting medical tourism market as well as to study the perspectives of the leading surgeons in aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

The outcomes of the analysis will be able to provide information on what kind of service do Thailand offer and at which level. Analysis of the data collected from interested patients can provide the researcher with useful aspects of how to improve the attractiveness of aesthetic industry in Thailand.

6.3 Total Perceived Quality Model

The *total perceived quality model*, based on the individual's perception of the quality of a service. The customer compares his expectations with his experience of the service, i.e. technical quality (that obtained by the user) and functional quality (how the service is provided), perceived through the filter of the company's image.

In this research, the **total perceived quality** (Gronroos, 2007, P.77) model explained the perception of patients both former patients and interested patients. This model will be analyzed under the factor of 7Ps. As a result comes to a better understanding of how people perceive Thai aesthetic surgery and the awareness of this industry.

7. Research Benefits

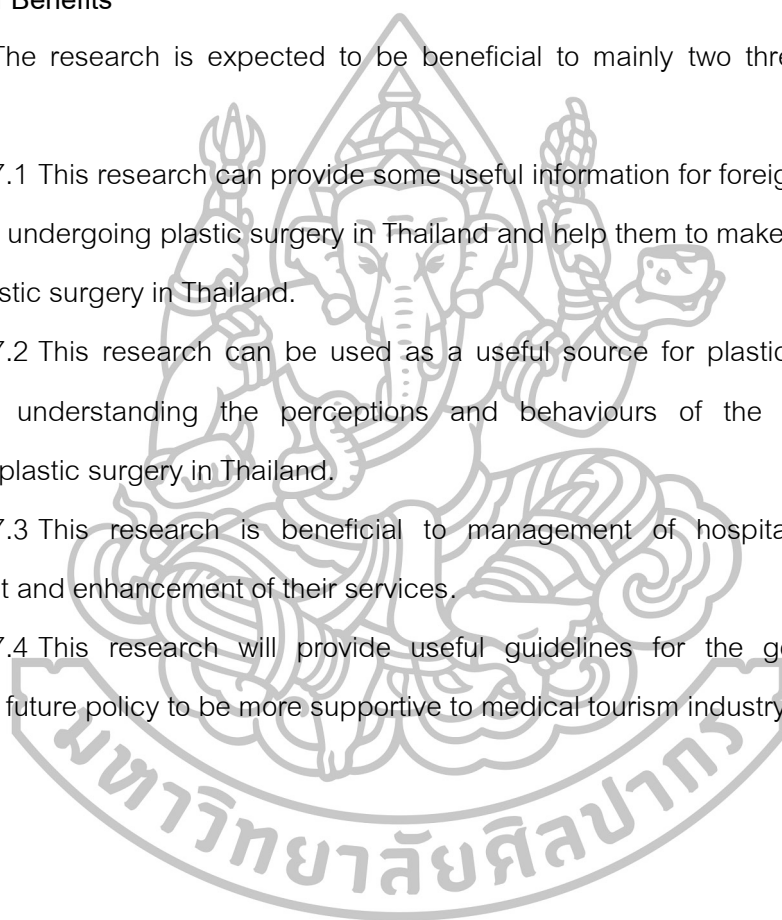
The research is expected to be beneficial to mainly two three groups as follows:

7.1 This research can provide some useful information for foreigners who are interested in undergoing plastic surgery in Thailand and help them to make a decision to undergo plastic surgery in Thailand.

7.2 This research can be used as a useful source for plastic surgeons in Thailand in understanding the perceptions and behaviours of the foreigners in undergoing plastic surgery in Thailand.

7.3 This research is beneficial to management of hospitals for future improvement and enhancement of their services.

7.4 This research will provide useful guidelines for the government in devising the future policy to be more supportive to medical tourism industry.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of medical tourism

In order to create deeper understanding towards cosmetic surgery market and medical tourism in Thailand, the researcher has conducted literature review on various topics in relevance to this research, including medical tourism definition, medical tourism market and cosmetic surgery market in Asia and Thailand, and three theories applied in this research.

2. Theory of Diamond of national advantage

There is no one definition for medical tourism but it is generally accepted that this term is used to refer to travel activity that involves a medical procedure or activities that promote the wellbeing of the tourist (Lee and Spisto, 2007). Therefore, it is important to begin by providing the definitions of "medical tourism". Medical tourism is a term that has risen from the rapid growth of international healthcare where people from all around the world are traveling to other countries to obtain general medical surgery, cosmetic plastic surgery and dental surgery at a fraction of the cost of healthcare in their home country. And, while abroad, if physical conditions permit, patients can experience the interesting cultural attractions their destination country offers (Thailand Medical Tourism Cluster, 2013).

According to Lunt et al. (2011, p. 7), medical tourism is when consumers elect to travel across international borders with the intention of receiving some form of medical treatment. This treatment may span the full range of medical services, but most commonly includes dental care, cosmetic surgery, elective surgery, and fertility treatment. Setting the boundary of what is health and counts as medical tourism for the purposes of trade accounts is not straightforward. Within this range of treatments, not all

would be included within health trade. Cosmetic surgery for aesthetic rather than reconstructive reasons, for example, would be considered outside the health boundary (OECD, 2010, pp. 30-31).

Munro (2012, p. 5) describes medical tourism as the act of people making health choices and accessing health treatments across borders. Medical tourism has embraced all facets of consumers seeking treatment, improvement or change through medical or wellness practices, provided they cross an international border to do so.

Wang (2012) defines “medical tourism” as tourism premises that promote and support health and medical facilities even though this kind of tourism emphasizes tourism rather than health-related issues. Moreover, medical tourism is defined by Connell (2006) as destination for patients to take medical operations, in which the patients have to travel overseas. He also further states that tourism is the association of health care issues with advanced technology to integrate health care and tourism (Connell, 2006). The development of medical tourism is aimed to enhance quality of life and well-being of the patients. Medical tourism is originated in the Western and European countries in which people save more money to spend on tourism and medical concerned.

In terms of medical and wellness tourism, it is illustrated as industry and business which people travel around the world to gain dental, medical and surgical care at the same time vacationing, experiencing, and visiting an interesting place and destination (George and Swamy, 2008). Furthermore, Bookham (2007) stated that medical tourism, with a focus on good health, general wellbeing and its pursuit, is not a new phenomenon. Therefore, medical tourism, by Bookham's definition, is a health treatment and therapy for sustainable living and life both inner and outer of body, which uses the beneficial of existing environment from local community. This tourism is one element to build consciousness of people to understand the environmental advantages and the use of it in beneficial to the people in the community as well as the community itself (Bookham, 2007).

According to Lee and Spisto (2007, p.1), medical tourism is a term that is applied in reference to “a travel activity that involves a medical procedure or to activities that promote the wellbeing of the tourist”. Lee and Spisto (2007) further pinpointed that

since medical tourists generally refers to travelers who have a specific purpose to travel as their major motivation, they can be classified as a group of special interest tourists, therefore participating in a form of special interest tourism. Figure 3 demonstrates the components of medical and healthcare tourism (Lee and Spisto, 2007).

Based on the definitions of medical tourism provided by different authors, the researcher can hereby conclude medical tourism as travelling for the purpose of medical tourism of both the patients and accompaniment as a result of better medical service (or equivalent), but with a cheaper price and convenience; it also includes availability of tourism attractions for relaxation during the stay for the patient's treatment and of the accompaniment.

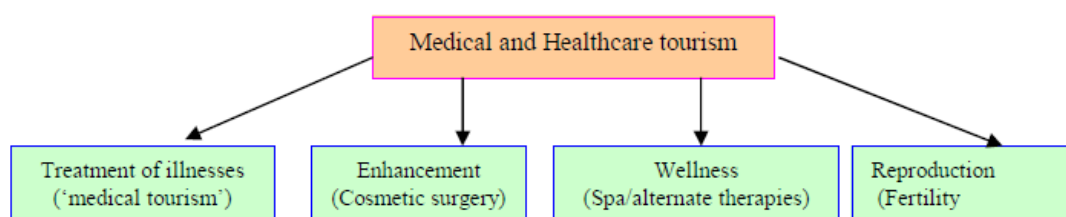


Figure 1 Components of medical and healthcare tourism

Source: Lee and Spisto, 2007, p. 1

3. Marketing mix for service business (7Ps)

Michael Porter's Diamond of National advantage model introduces four important factors to analyze the nation competitiveness (Bashiri et al., 2013; Frasinianu, 2015; Lau, 2007). Hereby will come to a better understanding why some nation are more competitive than the others in some industry. The four elements are *Factor condition*, *Demand condition*, *Related and Support Industries*, and last *Firm Strategy, Structure, Rivalry*. (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Bashiri et al., 2013; Frasinianu, 2015; Lau, 2007; Porter, 2004, P.166) The details will be discussed further on.

Each element of the diamond works as a system. Without one another a nation is not able to achieve its competitiveness. In addition, each element has important effect on one another. Abundance in resources and excellent skill are essential for any industry as the information company obtained works as a guideline for

the company to move into the right direction and utilize those resources at the full extent. All individuals in the company take part in contributing to the performance of the company (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Frasineanu, 2015; Lau, 2007). To create efficiency in the company, innovation should be an ongoing process and continuous investment should be put into all essential resources. After the completion of innovation and investment, the company would be able to gain competitive advantage. Consequently, the development of the industry will follow; the nation also gains this competitive advantage from the industry (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Frasineanu, 2015; Lau, 2007).

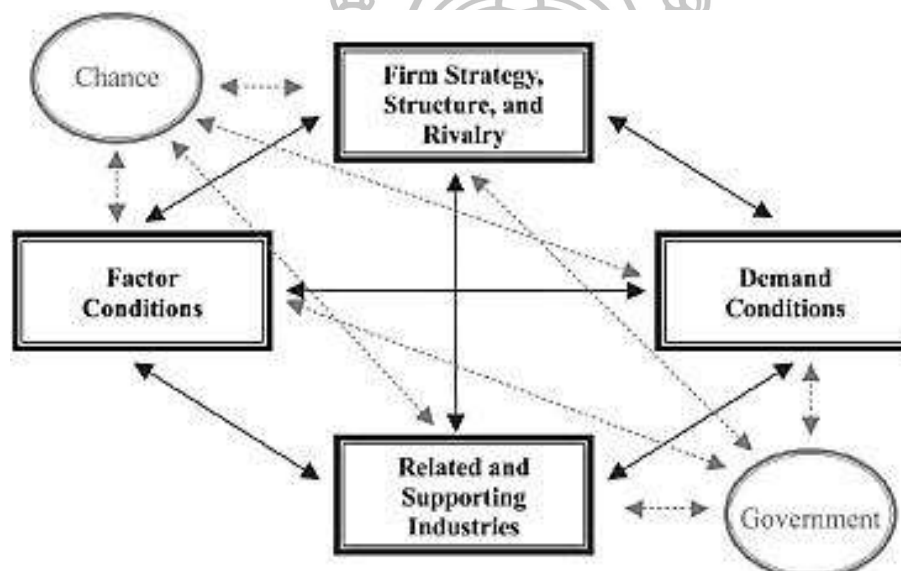


Figure 2 Theory of Diamond of National Advantage (Porter, 2004)

3.1 Factor Conditions

Factor conditions refer to values of the firms' skill to supply those factors of production to create the industry's comparative advantage in the international market (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015). Basic factors can provide the initial advantages like the natural resources, climate and location. Nevertheless, the basic factors cannot provide sustainable competitive advantage leads to the individuals, governments and companies invest in the advanced factors. These factors can be categorized into individual expertise and skills, know-how, infrastructure, technology and communication (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015).

These national factors often grant considerable advantages to the country. A country produces its own important factors, for example, skilled resources and technological base in which these factors can be divided into human resources, knowledge resources, capital resources and infrastructure (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015). Factors utilized in production, for instances, labour and raw materials are crucial for enhancing competitiveness in each industry. Factors conditions are used to consider the most competitive positioning as core competency of the country. Each country will try to develop its own industry, which is the most efficient and competitive as factor conditions. To become the competitive nation, a country will not be able to achieve its goals without any investment on their resources, particularly knowledge-based resources. Industry with high specialization will conquer other competitors. In addition, one thing to focus on is the importance of convenient infrastructure in order to facilitate better development of the industry. Therefore, it is crucial for the nation to sustain resources. Porter pinpointed that these factors are not essentially made or inherited by nature since they may or can be developed and changed (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015; Porter, 2004).

3.2 Demand Conditions

Home demand conditions have an influence on factor conditions. From the beginning, it impacts the way the company perceives, understands, and reacts to the needs of customers. Consequently, the nation gains competitive advantage from an increase in the needs of customers. In return, customer needs also have a crucial role to encourage the company to move towards innovation. Based on the ability to satisfy needs, the company is able to gain sustainable national advantage, which is difficult to achieve by other international competitors (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015; Porter, 2004). Porter explained that home demand is assessed by three main factors, including mixture of customer needs and wants, scope and rate of growth, and tools that transfer national preferences to international markets. Mixture of customer needs usually specifies greater specialization and advancement in production. Based on the above-mentioned factors, it also results in higher standard of products. In terms

of tools, the country is able to achieve national advantages from the industry or market segment when home demand is proven to have significant number. Generally, the needs of customers in national markets have greater influence on the company than foreign markets (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Nitisha, 2015; Porter, 2004).

Furthermore, competitive advantage of home demand can enable the country to reach a level of globalization. It is essential for the industry to respond to the home demand through rapid product improvement and development as well as offering of good product quality, features and service (Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015; Porter, 2004). The widespread of popularity and trend from the needs of customers can establish value among the nation. However, the trend has to be strong, significant and widely accepted by other nations (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Porter, 2004).

3.3 Related and Supporting Industries

The related and supporting industry is regarded as the complementary products or services of the industries. Intimate working relationships and continuous cooperation of related and supporting industries increase the competitive advantage of the industries (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Nitisha, 2015). One globally successful industry can create advantages in other related or supporting industries. For instances, a company has greater opportunity in cost reduction, and related and supporting industries are established to support one another when necessary. Cooperation can create a number of benefits to the company in many aspects, including production, marketing and promotion. The company can also utilize resources of its partners. In addition, it strengthens the relationships among partners from related and supporting industries. It enables continuous information flow in leading to innovation. Related and supporting industries are crucial as they can cooperate in certain activities in the value chain or businesses together, or even discuss about complementary products to the industry (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Porter, 2004).

However, Porter (2004, p. 199) also stated that “cluster” is a group that is geographically related, associated, interconnected companies in the same industry sharing a common goal. And that related and supporting industries of one country can

develop into a cluster. Companies can commonly share their production facilities, distribution, marketing company, and financial service, and etc. Advantage toward cluster is that the companies can achieve the competitive advantage from bargaining power of the buyer and supplier. Furthermore, innovation by the company is also derived from the flow of information and technology in the cluster. Cluster is said to increase an export of the country as well as attract more foreign investment into the country (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Nitisha, 2015; Porter, 2004)

3.4 Firm Strategy, Structure, and Rivalry

Cultural aspects have a crucial part in the business world. Local conditions have a significant impact on the firm strategy, management as well as domestic rivalry. Strategy and structure help to determine the types of industries a nation's firms will be best. Furthermore, factors such as management structures, working morale, or interactions between companies are varied based on beliefs and cultural aspects, which provide both benefits and drawbacks for particular industries. Competitive advantage occurs from the company itself as well as its own performance, which is favorable to the nation. In addition, capital and human resources of the country impact the competitiveness of the industry. Porter (2004) stated in the Five Forces Model that low rivalry results in more attractiveness of the industry while higher local rivalry is preferable as it stimulates the companies to move towards innovation and development (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Lau, 2007; Porter, 2004)

Government plays a highly important role in encouraging or discouraging the industry. Domestic law and government's influence towards the country have an effect on performance of the company. More importantly, government should support the industries with high potential to successfully attract investors domestically and internationally. Furthermore, government should encourage and support the weak industry for more development and innovation as well as promote industry competency and push the free trade to a greater level (Bakan & Dogan, 2012; Nitisha, 2015; Porter, 2004).

Medical tourism industry in Thailand will be analyzed with the Theory of Diamond of National Advantage (Porter, 2004). This theory is applied to answer to the

research objective: To examine the practice of aesthetic plastic surgery market in Thailand in relation to medical tourism in Thailand. It reveals the hospitals' strategies and rivalries to identify competition within the market. Demand conditions show us the needs of the industry and area of expertise which may be required in this industry. Factor conditions investigate the overall aspect of aesthetic industry in Thailand. Lastly, related and supporting industries provide us the support of the industry, which can be an advantage to the Thai industry.

4. Total perceived quality model

Managing services are considered to be more complicated than managing products as there are many factors involving in satisfying the target market. The extension of the marketing mix from 4Ps to 7Ps was generated by Booms & Bitner (1981), which is particularly for the service industry. These factors are controllable by the company and can apply to create an influence on consumer behavior. Originally, 4Ps consisted of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, while 7Ps additionally comprised of People, Physical Evidence, and Process (Thamrin, 2012; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009; Mohammad, 2015).

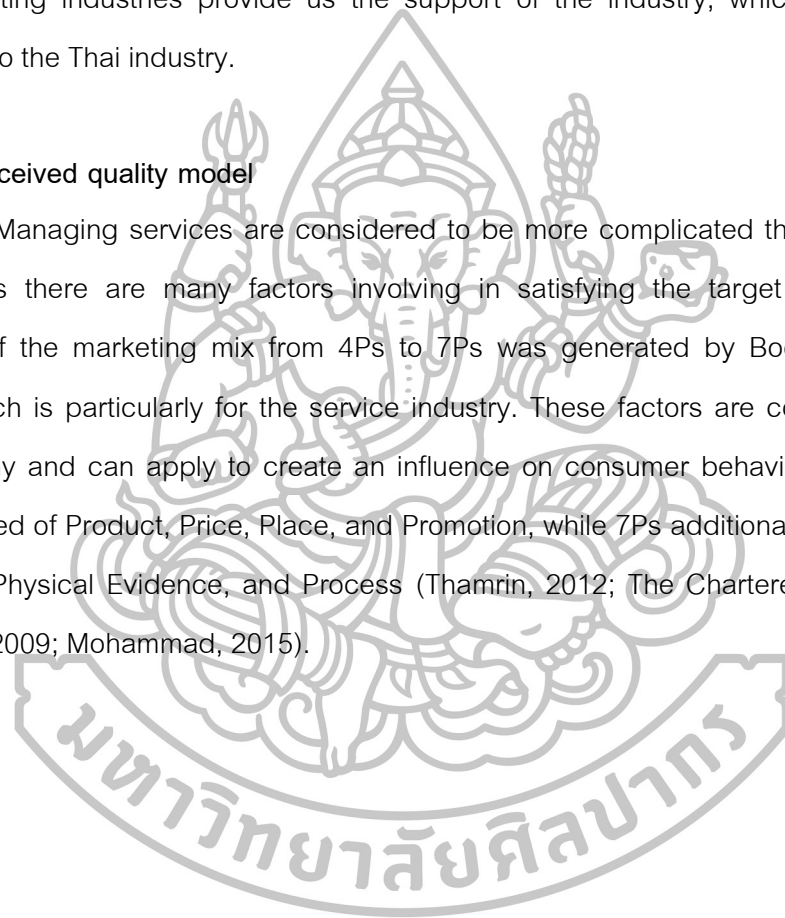




Figure 3 The elements of the 7Ps marketing mix model (Booms & Bitner, 1981)

- **Product:** This factor should be primarily considered by firms. Product is not only in a tangible form, but service is also recognized as intangible product. Products or services, which are offered by a company should be able to respond to customer's needs and wants (Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009). Having market knowledge is an advantage. The ability to develop products with perceived quality and value by customers is primary task for the company, while customers' perceptions towards the products create product value (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

• **Price:** Price refers to the product value in a form of money. A customer will compare between value of the services and price of those services. If the value is higher than the price, the customer will decide to buy. Therefore, price setting of services should be clearly appropriate to the level of services and easy to categorize different levels of services (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

• **Place:** Place is where a customer can purchase the product or use the service and it is an activity relating to environment and atmosphere in presenting and offering services to the customer, which affects customer's perception towards value and benefits of the offered services. Location should be mainly taken into account together with channels in offering services. Place should facilitate and provide convenience to the customers. The firm has to ensure that products or services are served in the right place at the right time and in the right quantity (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

• **Promotion:** Promotion is one of the important tools used in communicating with the service users, with its purpose to inform about news or convince them to have the attitude and behavior in using services. In addition, it is also an important key of relationship marketing. Channels in which a firm uses to communicate with customers are considered to be as crucial as having good products. The firm has to gain attention from the target market through branding, advertising media, sales or special offer, etc. It is important for the company to have the right channel in communicating for the best outcome (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009)

• **People:** A firm should put the right person into the right jobs. People or employee who are recruited through selection and required to have training and motivation to enable them to create satisfaction to customers differently above other competitors. It is the relationship between service staff and service users of the organization. The staff needs to have the ability and attitude that can respond to the

needs of service users as well as have initiatives and ability to solve problems, and be able to create value to the organization (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

- **Process:** Process is sequences of step customers spending their time receiving the services or buying products. It is an activity relating to methods and implementation in services, which are presented and offered to service users in order to provide fast and quality services as well as create satisfaction and impression towards services. Generally, process consists of waiting time, information given to customers, and eagerness and behaviors of the staffs. The company has to create an understanding among their customers about the process of services as well as facilitate them along the process (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

- **Physical evidence:** Tangible factors describe an intangible one, for example, service is an observable element that the customer can measure the quality of the service. Physical evidence is the creation and presentation of physical characteristics to the customers, with an effort to establish overall quality in terms of physical quality and service pattern to create value to the customers. An environment where service is provided can contribute to an image of the company. Physical evidence includes tidiness in dressing, good verbal communication, and quick service or benefits of the service that the customers should receive (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Marketing and 7Ps, 2005; Mohammad, 2015; The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

In this research, 7Ps or Marketing Mix for Service Marketing (Booms and Bitner, 1981) is used for analyzing the factors which are directly related to service marketing. The outcomes of the analysis will be able to provide information on what kind of service do Thailand offer and at which level. Analysis of the data collected from interested patients can provide the researcher with useful aspects of how to improve the attractiveness of aesthetic industry in Thailand.

5. Medical tourism and the rise in Asia

The distinguishing feature of services is that they are processes and not tangible things. The fundamentals of theory on service quality originate from the literature with regard to “product quality and customer satisfaction” (Korda and Snoj, 2010, p. 189). Gronroos described the perception of customer in service industry in Total perceived quality model. According to the Total Perceived Service Quality model (Figure 2), the perceived quality of a service by the customer is the outcome from comparing the expectations of the customers with their real-life experiences. If the experienced quality surpasses the expected quality, then the total perceived quality is positive. If expectations are not met by performance or the actual experience, the perceived quality is low (Gronroos, 2007, P.77; Korda and Snoj, 2010; Thamrin, 2012).

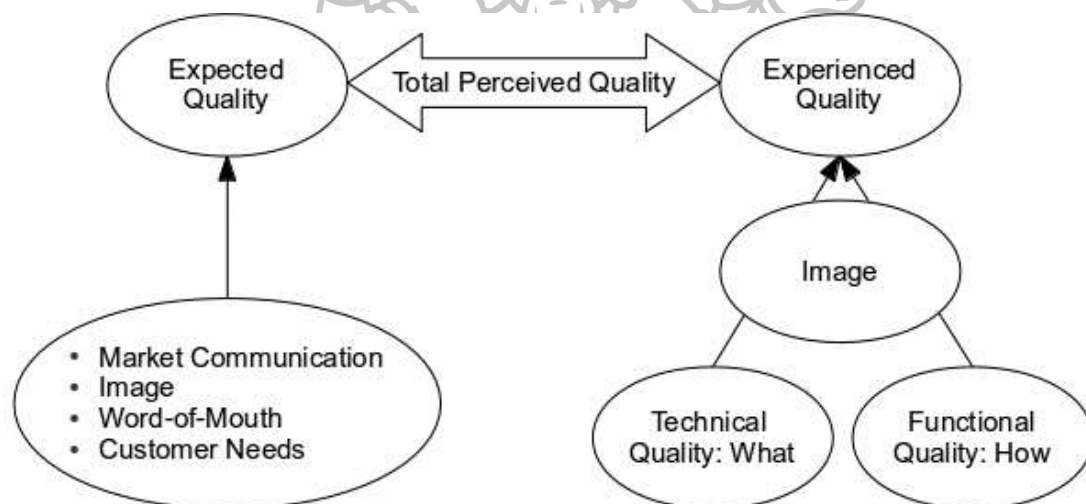


Figure 4 Total perceived quality model (Gronroos, 2007, P.77)

5.1 The expected quality

The expected quality is established from the expectation of the customer, which is based on the perception of individuals on how service should be. The service quality should respond to the expectation of customer to have favorability. The expectations are generated from diverse factors in traditional marketing activities, which are marketing communication, sales, image, word of mouth, public relations, customer needs and values. The messages, which are transmitted through the marketing tool, can create different influences on different customers. It is important that the company is

able to use different channels strategically to obtain the expected outcomes (Gronroos, 2007, P.77; Korda and Snoj, 2010; Thamrin, 2012).

5.2 The experienced quality

The experienced quality can be collected from previous experience of the customers. The experience will establish a fundamental quality image of the company, which can be derived from the technical quality and functional quality. The image can be viewed as a filter of the service of the customers. When the image is perceived favorably, the customers will generally view the service quality to be positive (Gronroos, 2007, P.77; Korda and Snoj, 2010; Thamrin, 2012).

The technical Quality

The experiences happen following the interaction of service. The satisfaction on the service quality is based on the service itself, accessibility, performance of the service provider, and other customer's opinions on the same or similar service. The technical quality is also regarded as "What". According to the 7Ps, it consists of product, price, place, promotion, people, and physical evidence. (Gronroos, 2007, P.77)

The functional Quality

The experiences happen during the service. The customers can perceive the quality through the way that the service provider operates. The process during service generally identifies the quality. In addition, the influences of the others on the process affect the way the customers perceive quality. The functional quality is also regarded as "How". It consists of process in the 7Ps Marketing Mix. (Gronroos, 2007, P.77)

In summary, the total perceived quality model is anchored in the individual's perception of the quality of a service. The customers make a comparison between their expectations with their experiences towards the service; that is, technical quality (that obtained by the user) and functional quality (how the service is provided), perceived through the filter of the company's image. In this research, the **total perceived quality** (Gronroos, 2007, P.77) model explained the perception of patients both former patients and interested patients. This model will be analyzed under the factor of 7Ps. As a result

comes to a better understanding of how people perceive Thai aesthetic surgery and the awareness of this industry.

6. Medical Tourism in Thailand and its cosmetic surgery market

Medical tourism has come forward from the rapid growth of what has become an industry, where people usually travel to foreign countries in long distances in order to receive medical, dental and surgical services while concurrently being on a holiday, in a more conventional aspect. It has developed significantly in recent years mainly due to high costs of treatment in the developed countries, long waiting time, the comparative affordability of international airfares and favorable foreign exchange rates, and the ageing of the frequently wealthy post-war baby-boom generation (Connell, 2006; Garcia-Altes, 2005). Therefore, it has tremendously reversed a previous pattern of affluent patients who travel to rich world centers, such as Harley Street in London (but where tourism was not involved) (Connell, 2006).

Growth has been supported by an increase in the popularity of the Internet, and the emergence of new companies, who are not specialized in healthcare, but are agents between foreign patients and hospital networks. The growth also occurs due to rapid improvement in health care systems in some major countries where new technologies have been implemented. In particular, it has followed the planned marketing of health care (together with tourism) as medical care has progressively deviated from the public sector to the private sector, making sure that an increasing majority of people particularly in the richest countries, and mainly in the United States, must pay for healthcare. Lastly, increasing interest in cosmetic surgery, engaging elective procedures like rhinoplasty, liposuction, breast enhancement or reduction, LASIK eye surgery and many more have created new demands (Connell, 2006; Levette, 2005).

The main region for medical tourism is Asia. Thailand is recognized as a destination for medical tourism as early as the 1970s since it is specialized in sexual reassignments, and later on progressing into cosmetic surgery. Malaysia became

involved after 1998 in the rise of the Asian economic crisis and the need for economic diversification, as did many Thai hospitals, when local patients cannot afford private health care anymore (Chaynee, 2003; Chong, Boey & Vathsala, 2005). Afterward, Singapore became one of the competitors with Malaysia and Thailand, intentionally set rates lower than those in Thailand as well as set up a stand at the airport with fliers, information and advice for transit passengers (Ai-Lien, 2005).

Malaysia is considered to be a relatively new entrant to cosmetic surgery as a medical tourism alternative, and it is also an increasingly popular destination for people from Singapore, a place typically on the receiving end of travelers on healthcare holiday. Kuala Lumpur received almost 6,000 medical tourists from Singapore last year, a lot of them traveling for affordable cosmetic surgery treatments, and this number is forecasted to increase. It is also more likely that there will be an increase in patients for cosmetic surgery from its neighboring countries as their people are becoming wealthier. When comparing to Thailand, the big draw of Malaysia is affordability. For example, breast augmentation costs only \$4,000, but it costs twice in Singapore. It is also similar for tummy tucks and eyelid surgery. In terms of eyelid surgery, South Korea has become the preferred destination for eyelid surgery as well as many others. This is mainly resulted from "Korean Wave" of surgically-enhanced beauties in their pop-culture. Plastic surgeons in South Korea have become internationally renowned specialists in Rhinoplasty, Tip Plasty, and eyelid surgery. Due to its expertise and its price competitiveness and quality, South Korea sets itself up as a medical tourism hub to be recommended (mymedholiday.com, 2015).

India is usually regarded as the modern international center for medical tourism, and it promotes itself as offering everything from alternative Ayurvedic therapy to coronary bypasses as well as cosmetic surgery (Graham, 2005). To turn into the most significant international destination, it has enhanced its technology, absorbed western medical protocols and focused on low cost and on-time attention (Connell, 2006; Graham, 2005). From economic liberalization in the mid-1990s, there was expansion of private hospitals and it became easier to import technology and other medical products

in order to develop the best hospitals that reach a global level. In addition, the links to India's highly successful IT industry are advertised as vital (Graham, 2005). Moreover, as hospitals improved and specific salaries increased, so doctors returned from overseas. Many had international qualifications and western experience that could be advertised to make potential tourists more comfortable (Neelankantan, 2003). The same liberalization brought new structures of corporatization that restructured India's notorious bureaucracy and significantly improved administration. The principal corporate hospital chains employ teams of interpreters, although India has benefited due to its prevalent English speaking ability. (Thailand's Phuket Hospital provides interpreters in 15 languages and receives about 20,000 international patients a year, while the currently famous Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok declares to employ 70 interpreters, all its staff speak English, and it has 200 surgeons certified in the United States) (Connell, 2006; Neelankantan, 2003). While technology has become highly similar to the west, and surgeons are experienced in western procedures, most labor costs stay very low and insurance is less expensive. Success rates, even for procedures that can have high infection rates, such as heart operations, bone marrow transplants and kidney transplants, are comparable to those at some of the world's best hospitals. India has an annual Medical Tourism Expo and it was predicted that medical tourism would earn India as much as US\$2 billion in 2012 (Neelankantan, 2003).

Medical tourism is likely to increase even faster in the future as medical care continues to be increasingly privatized, and cost differentials remain in place. As the demand for cosmetic surgery (including dentistry) continues to expand so will demand for overseas services, and this will probably replace heart surgery as the core element in medical tourism. Moreover, as successful outcomes become more evident, demand is likely to increase further. The number of countries seeking to develop medical tourism continues to grow rapidly. The success of medical tourism in Asia especially has prompted growing global interest and competition, and optimism is seemingly unbounded.

7. Patient satisfaction

In 2007, Thailand provided medical services for as many as 1.4 million foreign patients, including medical tourists, general tourists and foreigners working or living in Thailand or its neighboring countries (NaRanong and NaRanong, 2011). For the Thai economy, medical tourism generates a value added approximately equal to 0.4% of the GDP. It helps raise income for the medical service sector, the tourist sector and all related businesses, and it provides other intangible benefits. All of these direct and indirect positive effects for the Thai economy are well recognized in the business arena (NaRanong and NaRanong, 2011). On the other hand, the negative effects for the Thai society stem from having to provide health-care services for 420,000 to 500,000 medical tourists annually with the same number of health-care staff. The study conducted by NaRanong and Naranong (2011) is evidence in terms of shortage of physicians and increased medical fees for self-paying Thais, which are likely to undermine their access to quality medical services (NaRanong and NaRanong, 2011).

In term of cosmetic surgery market, Thailand becomes one of the cosmetic surgery hubs in Asian. Recently, there are many cosmetic surgeons provided in Thailand, which trained from either in Thailand or abroad. Cosmetic surgery market is the popular niche market in Thailand, which supported national medical tourism, accounted for over US\$2.3 billion in Thailand (Sanjotis, 2007). In addition, the governments supported with high quality service by provide health care staffs, medical facilities, and equipment (Kim et al., 2009).

In Thailand, the public perception towards cosmetic surgery has changed over decades in which there is large demand among Thai patients, especially teenagers. Over decade ago, public were not accepting about cosmetic surgery like nowadays. Patients were hiding and unsecure for undergoing cosmetic surgery, while nowadays, this market is very popular and gains more attention in public. From 2010 to 2011, the cosmetic surgery market value has risen from 15 billion baht to 20 billion baht (Sarnsamak, 2012).

Regarding to Link (2013), Bangkok, Thailand is in rank 7th of the world's top 10 cities for plastic surgery, which described that Bangkok is famous to American

patients who are looking for relaxations at Thai plastic surgery centers. In addition, Thai surgeons are professionals, which certified by American and Australian surgery boards. Most of American trust and believe in Thai surgeons' quality and services. Interestingly, the procedures prices are cheaper than in the United States for over 50% in the similar procedures, quality and services. Likewise, Thailand is chosen to be one of the best places for undergoing plastic surgery, considering on numerous matters, including images of country to rest, healing and recuperation. Most of the Australia patients who gain high income and strong national currency travel to Thailand for undergoing plastic surgery, which has low income and weak national currency. The reason is the destination is suit for relaxation and resting after the operations and the procedures has done by professional and certified surgeons as well (Jones, 2012).

Patient satisfaction is a crucial measurement of healthcare treatment. Comparatively little is known about the experience and satisfaction of medical tourists. Ehrbeck *et al* (2008, p.7) pointed out that patients report commonly high satisfaction with quality of service received in foreign countries. However, it is unclear that this can be extrapolated outside of the US and to a range of treatments. Patient clinical outcomes and satisfaction does not have to be congruent with each other at all times and satisfaction is not constantly the main indicator for some treatments, for example dental work. Correspondingly, in cosmetic surgery, it is evident that a small percentage of patients may suffer from psychological body-related issues that make such judgments problematic (Grossbart and Sarwer, 2003). On the contrary, Hanna *et al* (2009) mentioned that for a sample of outsourced patients (rather than medical tourists) whilst the majority of patients operated upon abroad obtained similar functional outcomes with those expected domestically, they were frequently not satisfied with the experience in general. There is a gap in understanding of patient expectations and how these may be raised by individuals paying a market-price and taking responsibility for choosing a provider.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

This chapter outlined the research methodology, including research techniques, process, and methods of analysis. It also outlined the qualitative study, sampling techniques as well as analytical method applied.

2. Research Participants

Polit and Hungler (1999) refers to a population as the sum of all subjects that verify to a set of specifications, consisting of the whole group of persons to whom the researcher is interested in and to whom the generalisation of the research findings can be made. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) explained a sample as a part of the study population, who are chosen to participate in the research and represent the study population. Participants included in this research were five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals.

3. Case Selection

The researcher applied the technique of snowball sampling, which is the process of case selection using networks. It is generally helpful in the case of sociological, psychological or management studies (Dragan and Isaic-Maniu, 2012; Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling technique is beneficial for populations which are difficult to access or difficult to identify for which there is no sampling frame; however, the members of which are somewhat interlinked (Schutt, 2008). This technique yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who obtain some characteristics that are of research interest. It usually begins by

a few samples in a group or organization are chosen and the needed information is gathered from them. Then, they are asked to identify other people in the group or organization. After that, the samples selected by them become a part of the sample in the study (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981).

In this research, the researcher selected five leading hospitals as case studies and then collected the data from interviews with the surgeons of the five leading hospitals. Then, the researcher asked the doctors to give referrals to the foreign patients who had undergone cosmetic surgery with them. The selected foreign patients then become part of a sample. Figure 5 below illustrates the snowball sampling method used in this research.

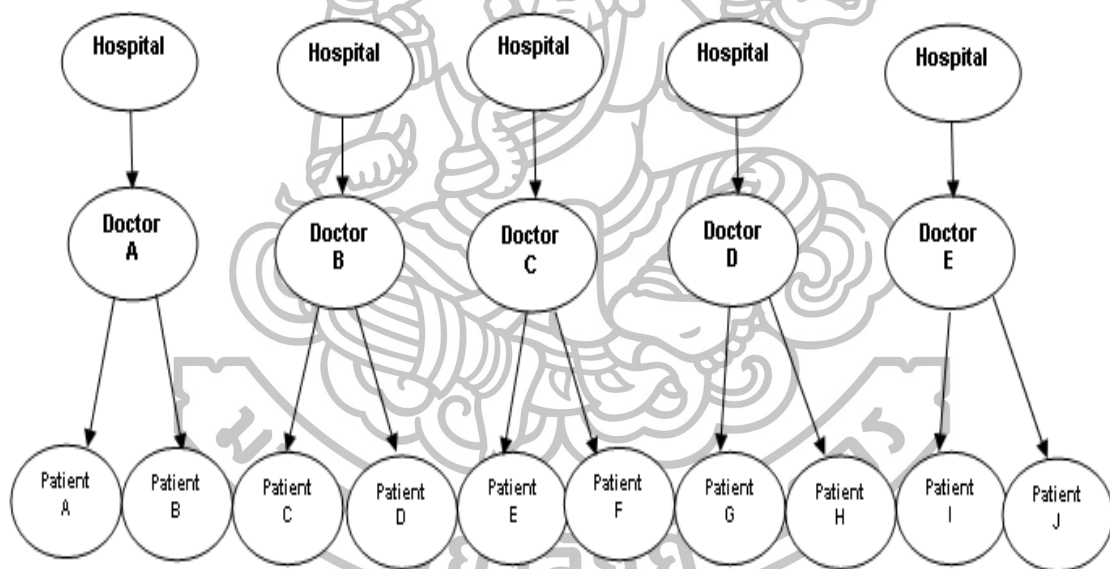


Figure 5 Snowball sampling method used in this research

4. Recruitment of participants

As previously mentioned, the recruitment method used in this research is snowball sampling. It is considered to be appropriate for this research because snowball sampling technique is suitable for many research purposes and is essentially applicable when the research focus is on a sensitive issue, such as relating to a private matter, and therefore requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981)

The recruitment is classified into two case selections, which are five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals.

The case selection consists of five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals, including Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Lork Hospital. These hospitals are internationally renowned and gain popularity not only for Thais but also for international patients for expertise of the Thai surgeons, reputation of the hospitals, price competitiveness and quality of service. For instance, Bumrungrad hospital in Bangkok adapted its business of cosmetic surgery into medical tourism when domestic economy decreased their appeal to the local market (Cindia et al., 2011). The second sampling group includes 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals.

The data collection process will be conducted for three months. The interview will be held with plastic surgeons and 10 foreign patients. In this research, Thai actual cosmetic surgeons and foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand are the important principle.

5. Research design

This research is an exploratory descriptive study, using qualitative research method. This research applied both primary and secondary data as an approach to data collection. The primary data collection method was conducted by using an in-depth interview while the secondary data collection was done through the review of literature relating to aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

This research was exploratory because it explored the factors influencing foreigners to undergo aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand. This kind of research explores and tries to discover new information and explanation for better understanding and more informative knowledge of the related topic (Brink and Wood, 1998). The criteria stated by Polit and Hungler (1999) further identify this kind of research as

exploratory, due to the fact that this research explores the insights of foreigners who had undergone aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand thoroughly as well as attempts to examine the influencing factors of foreigners in undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand. The outcome of exploratory research does not have to reach out to large sample group but it should show new knowledge for better comprehension of the study group (Burns and Grove, 1999). The researcher deemed this approach to be suitable for gaining a better understanding of factors influencing foreigners in undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

Exploratory research creates precise explanations of the current condition by exploring close relevant and relating elements accurately (Brink and Wood, 1998). On the other hand, descriptive research aims for detailed description of the current condition of an individual, an occurrence or a group of samples (Polit and Hungler, 1999). The descriptive kind of research is often a tool for theory development, for describing, judging, problems identifying, and comparing (Waltz and Bausell, 1981). The ultimate objective of descriptive design is to deliver the opinions and judgements of the sample groups towards the studying topic (Burns and Grove, 1993). This study attempted to identify and describe factors that contributed to the decision of foreigners in undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand.

6. Data Collection instrument

Data collection instruments refer to devices used to collect data such as questionnaires, tests, structured interview schedules and list of interview questions (Seaman, 1991, p. 42). The data collection instruments can be divided into secondary data and primary data.

6.1 Secondary Data

Information gathered based on Fisher knowledge of open analysts which looking for common narrative structures were shared by many similar documents (Fisher, 2004, P. 135). Up to date journals, articles and reports gave the recent insight of the topic.

The general information on the case of aesthetic surgery mostly came from medical journals, articles and physicians themselves. Societies of Plastic surgeons in many countries such as America, England, Canada, Australia and Thailand are reliable sources in surgery procedure and lead to related medical journals. Specific information about aesthetic services both on international level and in Thailand gathered through Medical services information which mostly provided only by direct contact to service providers. Luckily, in the world of businesses many websites offered many more information to approach customers. They are rich sources of updated information provided plastic surgery services detail. Moreover, Internet connected us directly to the physicians and other patients all over the world to share information and experienced about our study.

Information about Thai aesthetic surgery services came from International hospitals and clinics websites which are Bumrungrad International Hospital as example of one of the hospital, which have already been familiar with internationalizing, Bangkok Hospital another big international hospital in Thailand, Yunhee Hospital, Bangmod Hospital, Lork Hospital and some other Thai hospitals. This information will explain about the current situation of aesthetic practice with foreign patients and also the strategy they used to be on this level. Important information from hospital websites used as references had verified by direct contact to the hospital.

Business Newspaper is a type of media publication gave idea about medical care business situation, competition, news in this industry and narrow down point of study about aesthetic surgery.

6.2 Primary Data

Primary data gathered from interviews and direct contact to hospitals and clinics. The questions are semi-structure meaning that controlled the scope through the type of question we asked (Fisher, 2004, P 143). Interview questions are formed regarding to the theory concerned with the topic. The list of questions had used in interview related to theory can be seen in Appendix B and C.

6.2.1 Interview

In this research, in-depth interviews with five Thai cosmetic surgeons and 10 foreign patients in the five leading hospitals in Thailand are used as qualitative research method in order to gain in-depth perception, attitude and idea of the surgeons and patients toward aesthetic surgery in Thailand. The face-to-face interpersonal communication is processed of probing unstructured questions for interview flexibility. The surgeons who experience the patient have ability to express the reason or factor that most of the patient are undergoing the aesthetic plastic surgery. The interviewer can expressed more detailed on the relevant topic to gain more information. The questions will extend, depend on the answer of the interviewer to give more idea of the topic. Using qualitative method, the researcher has ability to define what things mean, and depend on the intellectual abilities of researchers to manager, organize, analyze and interpret data. The researcher plans to extend the questions in order to collect effective information and data. The collection method is detailed which the researcher can evaluate the inner thought of the respondents. The actual Thai cosmetic surgeons who understand the current phenomenon of this industry and foreign patients who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand are the respondents. These include interviews with individuals, observations of people, place and interactions, immersion in setting which the researcher can understand the what, how, when, where and how of social structure and action, the analysis of media, content and aid conversations with individuals. The question is to gain the understanding how the person being interviewee understands, experiences or views some topic. The Thai cosmetic surgeons and 10 foreign patients from the five leading hospitals, including Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Lork Hospital, are selected.

Interview questions are based on four factors of Diamond of National advantage and Marketing mix for service business (7Ps). The interview with the Thai doctors gave us the basic information on the service and insight information of the advantages of Thai aesthetic surgery from the doctor perspective. Also the interview will give us back ground information on past experiences doctors have conducted including a number of international patients have performed.

Interview questions with the Thai surgeons gave reliable and necessary information according to theories as follows:

Diamond of National advantage

1. Factor Condition

- Explanation about the hospitals potentiality of services
- Degree or awarded that Thai surgeons hold

2. Demand Condition

- Number of aesthetic Surgeons has done approximately in the last 5 years.

- Surgery for foreign patients Thai surgeons have done.

3. Related and Supporting Industry

- Service joins with other company to attract more foreign patients and how to promote services

- Opinion about join hand with any industry to help hospitals and clinics provide better service

4. Firm strategy, Structure and Rivalry

- Destination foreign patients having the surgery done
- The advantages of Thailand aesthetic surgery

Marketing Mix for service business

1. Product

- Type of aesthetic surgery perform
- Who is the customer?

2. Price

Define your price among others (domestic and international)

- Where do you work?
- Opinion about location of aesthetic surgery in Thailand especially

Bangkok

4. Promotion

- Special offer provide for patients

5. People
(Already included in questions above)

6. Process
- Aesthetic surgery process time

7. Physical Evidence
- Recovery time
- Facilities provide for patients in hospital/clinic

To specify and conclude the research objectives, the interviews were also conducted with foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand in order to identify factors in which they used for consideration in undertaking cosmetic surgery in Thailand as their destinations. Thus, the questions will be related to theoretical framework as mentioned in Chapter 1, which includes Factors in Diamond National of Advantage, Marketing Mix for Service Business (7Ps) and Total Perceived Quality Model (perceived quality and expect quality).

Diamond National of Advantage

1. Factor Condition
 - Your reason to choose aesthetic surgery in Thailand
2. Demand Condition
 - How many times have you done the surgery?
3. Related and Support Industry
 - Factors influence decision to come to Thailand?
4. Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry
 - Opinion about the hospital/clinic before and during surgery

Marketing Mix for service business (7Ps)

1. Product
 - Type of aesthetic surgery interviewees have done, where, when
2. Price
 - Do you think hospital/clinic provide service with reasonable price?
 - Was the lower cost the reasons you came to Thailand for surgery?

- How much the same procedure cost in your homeland?
 - 3. Place
 - Did you find the hospital/clinic convenient for travel?
 - 4. Promotion
 - Special treatment received and wants to have
 - 5. People
 - Do you feel that you received professional treatment from the doctor and institute?
 - Describe staff willingness
 - Language barrier
 - 6. Process
 - Decision time
 - Explain process of contact, follow up after surgery
 - 7. Physical Evidence
 - Physical evidence of the hospital/clinic interviewees have surgery done
- Perceived Model*
1. Expected Quality
 - Your expectation before surgery
 2. Experience Quality
 - How did you know about aesthetic surgery in Thailand?
 - Did Thailand aesthetic service serve your expectation?
 - Are you satisfied with the result of the surgery and service? Why?
 - What do you think the hospital/clinic should improve?
 - Will you recommend Thailand to your friends who interested in surgery?

7. Ethical Consideration

In the data collection process, some ethical issues may be involved in association with the participants and the researcher (Dawson, 2002; Kumar, 2005). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to exercise care that the rights of individuals

and companies are safeguarded (Polit and Hungler, 1999). Ethical consideration is taken place, particularly with those who have involvement in this research as follows. First, ethical issues involve the people whom the data was collected from or who were studied by the researcher, namely participants of the study. Second, ethical issues involve anybody who gathers the data for a particular purpose in adherence to the accepted code of conduct, namely the researcher.

In this research, ethical issues concerning research participants are primarily given importance to. Some ethical issues relating to participants of the research are discussed.

7.1 Access to data

At some point, the researcher's request for information may potentially create anxiety or put pressure on the research participants. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to primarily obtain the informed consent of the respondents. This research is ethical as it is the work that seems to support the society both directly and indirectly, and it is also acceptable to ask questions. The researcher also justified the research relevance that the researcher is conducting; therefore, the respondents' time is not wasted and it is ethical (Dawson, 2002; Kumar, 2005).

7.2 Obtaining consent

In any research discipline, it is ethical to collect the data with the knowledge and the research respondents, along with their willingness and informed consent. The researcher sent the consent letter to the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals in Thailand in order to obtain their informed consent prior to the process of data collection. It is crucial that the consent should be done voluntarily and with no pressure (Dawson, 2002; Kumar, 2005).

7.3 Seeking sensitive information

Some particular type of data can be viewed as sensitive or confidential by some respondents, which may be perceived as an invasion of privacy or the cause of embarrassment or upset to the respondent. Many people feel that the questions relating to age, income, marital status, etc. are invasive. In data collection, the researcher has been very careful about the respondents' sensitivities. According to Dawson (2002) and

Kumar (2005), it not considered unethical when asking questions if the researcher inform the participants about the types of information in which the researcher will ask precisely and honestly, and provide them enough time to make a decision on whether they are going to participate or not, with no inducement.

7.4 Avoidance of causing any potential harm to participants

When the researcher gathered information, careful examination of any potential harm from the participants' involvement in this research was made. Harm, in this case, consists of discomfort, anxiety, or privacy invasion. If there is any potential harm relating to these matters, the researcher has to find ways to prevent this. In this research, the questionnaire was carefully designed, with proper language and wordings used.

7.5 Keeping confidentiality

It is unethical to share information about the participants for other purposes apart from this research. Any information which may harm the respondents is omitted and kept anonymous in this research, for examples, name of the respondents. Information obtained from the respondents are kept confidential and only used for the purpose of this research. Furthermore, it is also considered unethical to identify responses of individuals. As a result, the researcher kept the source to be unknown after the data was collected (Dawson, 2002; Kumar, 2005).

8. Processes of handling the qualitative research data

8.1 The researcher took notes during the interviews (transcribing), together with observations, and take a recording

8.2 The researcher used a tape recorder during the interviews with the permission from the participants. This enabled the researcher to concentrate and listen and respond better. The discussion also flew better when there are no distractions. More importantly, the entire interview/observation is recorded, which gives a better, more holistic picture of what is going on. Ethically, the participants may feel less observed if the tape recorded is used in a discreet way. It also helps the researcher to have the opportunity to go back over material during analysis.

8.3 Transcribing:

8.3.1 Transcribing the interview involves taking notes of the interview; it is the full 'script' of the interview and the aim is to take a full written version of the interview.

8.3.2 However, transcribing an interview is very time consuming, with an estimated time ratio of 5:1 (i.e. 5 hours of transcribing a one hour interview).

8.4 Tape analysis was also used, which is a combination on the two and involves the researcher taking notes from the recording

8.5 Bias must be considered when taking notes and using tape analysis

8.6 What the researcher have to bear in mind is that good quality transcribing relies on skills beyond just taking notes and there is often space for subjectivity.

9. Analysis of qualitative data

In processing and analysing the data, it involves many closely related operations, performing with the purpose to summarize the gathered information and organise them in a form of answering the research objectives (Dawson, 2001; Kumar, 2005). This research applied the method of qualitative data analysis, which is called content analysis.

Content analysis is '*...a procedure for the categorization of verbal or behavioral data, for purposes of classification, summarization and tabulation*' (University of Surrey, 2013). Content analysis involves coding and classifying data, also referred to as categorizing and indexing and the aim of context analysis is to make sense of the data collected and to highlight the important messages, features or findings (University of Surrey, 2013).

10. Interpretation of Evidence

There is the possibility that the researcher arrives at generalization, which is building a theory, if a hypothesis is tested and upheld several times. In fact, the true significance of research is in its ability to reach certain generalizations (Dawson, 2001;

Kumar, 2005). In case that the researcher did not have any hypothesis to begin with, the researcher may aim to explain the findings based on some theories, which is commonly known as interpretation. However, the interpretation process may sometimes generate additional questions that may bring about further researches (Dawson, 2001; Kumar, 2005). The discussion and conclusion of research findings are in Chapter 4 and 5.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

Analysis of research findings is divided into four major parts where the results are discussed primarily based on three theories, including diamond of national advantage theories, marketing mix (7Ps) in cosmetic surgery business, total perceived quality model, and perception of the foreign patients towards cosmetic surgery in Thailand.

1. Analysis of Thailand Relating to Diamond of National Advantage Theory

In overall aspect, it can be seen that aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand has increasingly gained attention among foreigners for over ten years. This was mainly due to economic downturn in Thailand in the past, which resulted in lower cost of surgery that was declined 3-5 times due to fluctuation in the Thai currency. The spreading through word-of-mouth among the patients who had undergone plastic surgery and the rapidly widespread online communication about price and quality of aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand has led to the reputation of Thailand in performing the quality plastic surgery at an affordable price, and brought significant number of foreign patients to the Thai hospitals and clinics every year.

1.1 Factor Condition

Situated at the heart of Southeast Asia among its neighboring countries, Thailand is well known as one of the most famous countries for medical tourism. Thailand is a tropical country where the weather is rather warm and humid throughout the year. The country is divided into five main regions, consisting of north, south, east, northeast, and central. There are altogether 77 provinces where Bangkok is a capital city, which is Thailand's political, commercial, industrial and cultural hub. Thai is an official national language of the country while English nowadays is also widely communicated.

The Thai Economy

Thailand is an emerging economy and is recognized as a newly industrialized country. After Thailand experienced the highest growth rate from 1985 to 1996, with an average of 12.4 percent annually, the pressure on the Thai baht increased in 1997, which was the year when the Thai economy encountered a financial crisis. However, the economy in Thailand began to recover in 1999 as a result of strong exports, increasing by 4.2% and 4.4% in 2000. Growth in 2002, 2003 and 2004 was 5–7% annually. Growth in 2005, 2006 and 2007 covered around 4–5%. Due both to the weakening of the US dollar and an increasingly strong Thai currency, by March 2008, the dollar was hovering around the 33 baht mark (Sun Invest International, 2013; The Encyclopedia.com, 2014)

The economy of Thailand is an emerging economy which is heavily export-dependent, with exports accounting for more than two thirds of gross domestic product (GDP). The exchange rate is Baht 30.90/USD as of 26 April 2012. Major export commodities include Thai rice, textiles and footwear, fishery products, rubber, jewelry, cars, computers and electrical appliances. Substantial industries include electric appliances, components, computer parts and cars, while tourism in Thailand makes up about 6% of the economy estimate published in 2003 placed the trade at US\$4.3 billion per year or about 3% of the Thai economy (Sun Invest International, 2013; The Encyclopedia.com, 2014).

Thailand has a GDP worth US\$602 billion (on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis). This classifies Thailand as the 2nd largest economy in Southeast Asia, after Indonesia. Despite this, Thailand ranks midway in the wealth spread in Southeast Asia as it is the 4th richest nation according to GDP per capita, after Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia (Sun Invest International, 2013; The Encyclopedia.com, 2014).

Medical Tourism in Thailand

Thailand is particularly attractive to potential medical tourists and international patients for a number of important reasons. It has many internationally accredited hospitals, including 30 JCI-accredited hospitals as well as experienced, often Western-trained medical professionals, the latest medical technology, and

significantly lower costs of treatment comparing to related procedures in the West. All of these factors, together with its reputation as a popular tourist destination, Thailand has become one of the most famous medical tourism destinations. Some of the major destinations for medical tourism in Thailand are Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, Koh Samui, Pattaya, and Phuket (MyMEDHoliday.com, 2013; Sun Invest International, 2013; The Encyclopedia.com, 2014).

Almost 2.5 million tourists travelled from different countries around the world to come to Thailand for medical treatment and tourism in 2012. This indicated that there has been continuous growth in 2013 and in the coming future. The growth rate is around 16% per year. It is also projected to generate some 100 billion Thai baht in annual revenue by 2015 (Wikipedia, 2013; The Board of Investment, 2012; MyMEDHoliday.com, 2013).

“Medical and beauty service business is continuously in a growth period, especially with the opening of AEC in 2015 which is believed to enhance an expansion of medical and beauty service business. This is because, nowadays, a number of foreign patients come to use medical services in Thailand. When comparing to its competitors in Asia like Singapore, Thailand has approximately 1.4 million foreign patients while Singapore has around 600,000 foreign patients. As a result, the opening of AEC will support Thailand to obtain a larger market in Asia through the more convenient transportation, especially a group of foreign patients from Indonesia who often come to use services in Malaysia and Singapore. However, what still need to be done is in terms of government support.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

“People may have heard of the Thai government support to become the surgical hub of Asia; however, in practice, most of the hospitals have received so little support from the government, for example, visa granting and extension of stay for the foreign patients which is still quite difficult, and advertising relating to cosmetic surgery cannot fully be made. Comparing to

Singapore and India, the governments of both countries have provided a full support for the industry, particularly in terms of providing subsidiary to the hospitals to enable them to compete with other competitors for price. Additionally, they can also make 100% advertisement. Nowadays, the medical hub is still India. On the contrary, in Thailand, the regulations have forbidden the hospitals and clinics from advertising for cosmetic surgery, which consequently reduces the ability to compete with other countries.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

In short, the opening of AEC-IN 2015 will help support the medical tourism industry in Thailand in terms of establishing more confidence internationally and among the member countries. Traveling will become more convenient. However, there should be greater support from the government towards medical tourism, especially in terms of promotions as the hospitals still haven't received enough support with regards to this aspect in the past years.

Aesthetic Surgery in Thailand

At present, most of the major hospitals and famous clinics are providing reconstructive and cosmetic surgery in Thailand. Many hospitals have gained good reputation in terms of quality and price from customers around the world, for instance, Bumrungrad Hospital, Bangkok Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Lork Hospital, and Yanhee Hospital. Target group of medical services has expanded internationally, considering from the investment by hospital groups in some major tourist destination provinces in order to capture foreign patients. An example can be found in Bangkok Hospital Group in which they also opened their branches in Phuket and Pattaya City. In addition, public relations, particularly Internet, are used to promote hospital services.

From the interviews with the surgeons, personnel in Thailand are well trained and have extensive experience in the field, which helps enhance the credibility of aesthetic surgery in Thailand. Furthermore, the surgeons obtained a degree directly related to the cosmetic surgery field that meets the international standard. Therefore, their skill and knowledge level are considered to be in a high level. The advancement of

technology also enhances the standards of equipments and specialized skills for aesthetic surgery. Additionally, price, skilled surgeons and short waiting time are other major reasons identified by the patients.

1.2 Demand conditions

Table 1 Surgeons' opinions towards demand conditions

Doctor A	<p>“The Korean beauty trend is still in Thailand. Nowadays, many beauty clinics promote the specialist areas and turn themselves into agencies of the hospitals in Korea in order to send the patients to do cosmetic surgery there. The increased popularity of Korean culture that has a great influence through entertainment media, tourism, products and fashion until it has become the “Korean fever” across the region. How long such popularity will last in the cosmetic surgery business would also largely depend on the government support.”</p> <p>In the Thai medical tourism, the most successful surgery is sexual reassignment. This is partly due to the growth of aesthetic surgery industry as a result of increased demand both domestically and internationally.</p>
Doctor B	<p>“Many private hospitals are trying to implement strategies and offering services to capture more customers in order to generate more income and gain competitive advantage in the industry.”</p>
Doctor C	<p>“Thailand has capacity in terms of experienced medical personnel, modern equipments and low-cost treatment comparing to treatment quality standard in which the patients will receive. There is an increasing interest from local demand toward cosmetic surgery as the world’s perspective toward plastic surgery is shifting to be increasingly positive.”</p>

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Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

In the Thai medical tourism, the most successful surgery is sexual reassignment. This is partly due to the growth of aesthetic surgery industry as a result of increased demand both domestically and internationally.

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

“Thailand has capacity in terms of experienced medical personnel, modern equipments and low-cost treatment comparing to treatment quality standard in which the patients will receive. There is an increasing interest from local demand toward cosmetic surgery as the world’s perspective toward plastic surgery is shifting to be increasingly positive.”

Doctor C (Yunhee Hospital, 8 January 2014)

“Many private hospitals are trying to implement strategies and offering services to capture more customers in order to generate more income and gain competitive advantage in the industry.”

Doctor B (Samitivej Hospital, 20 February 2014)

Based on the interviews with the surgeons, most of them have performed cosmetic surgery more than thousands cases and the demand for cosmetic surgery is

also likely to increase continuously. It is rather common nowadays for the patients to do cosmetic surgery for beauty option.

Furthermore, the number of foreign patients traveling to Thailand for cosmetic surgery and medical travel has also been increasing significantly, for examples, American, European and other Asian patients. This indicates that the cosmetic surgery market in Thailand is favorable. Some of the former foreign patients even mentioned in the interviews that they had done aesthetic cosmetic surgery for a few times already.

1.3 Related and supporting industries

Medical treatment abroad is perceived as medical tourism as a result of the benefit that medical travelers can receive from treatment in other countries. Each treatment and tourism supports each other.

Table 2 Attitudes towards related and supporting industries

Doctor A	<p>“Many hospitals and clinics are now cooperating with travel agencies in order to provide good service with competitive price for the whole medical tourism package.”</p> <p>“Bumrungrad Hospital, one of the biggest international hospital in Bangkok, Thailand cooperating with Diethelm Travel built business network serve medical care, flight ticket, tourism, accommodation and transportation service.”</p>
Doctor D	<p>“Government also influences the industry. Its policy can push the reputation of the industry to the foreign market but since the situation in Thailand now is more focusing on other subject, many hospitals and clinics are seeking for their own marketing channel.”</p>
Doctor E	<p>“Related and supporting industry that plays important role in aesthetic industry is the tourism business. Tourism agencies became almost necessity to some of the hospitals and clinics because Thailand does</p>

	not provide only aesthetic service but also a well known as tourist destination.”
Patient A	“I actually started with willingness to have aesthetic surgery abroad then I took opportunity went travel in the country I chose. I wanted to have a laser surgery for hair removal and also to go traveling. So, I came to Lorlak Hospital to get laser surgery on my trip as benefit of traveling.”

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Patient A (Female, 20 February 2014)

As tourists, people who come for aesthetic surgery also require accommodation and other services such as airport pick up. This requirement had turned tourism industry to a big supporting industry of Thai medical care business to gain advantages among others. According to Doctor A:

“Many hospitals and clinics are now cooperating with travel agencies in order to provide good service with competitive price for the whole medical tourism package. “

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

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“Related and supporting industry that plays important role in aesthetic industry is the tourism business. Tourism agencies became almost necessity to some of the hospitals and clinics because Thailand does not provide only aesthetic service but also a well known as tourist destination.”

Doctor E (Bangkok Hospital, 17 October 2013)

“Government also influences the industry. Its policy can push the reputation of the industry to the foreign market but since the situation in Thailand now is more focusing on other subject, many hospitals and clinics are seeking for their own marketing channel.”

Doctor D (Lorlak Hospital, 7 December 2013)

In terms of related and supporting industries, it can be seen that many hospitals nowadays cooperate with travel agencies or other related businesses to offer add-on services to the patients; medical tourism is the key strategy in enhancing the development of tourism and medical services at the same time. Government also plays an important role in supporting medical tourism industry in terms of policy formulation, marketing and promotion. Some surgeons perceived that the government hasn't provided enough support in terms of working in cooperation with other related and supported industries.

1.4 Strategy, structure and rivalry

Table 3 Attitudes towards strategy, structure and rivalry

Doctor A	“I think the important factor that makes Thailand become one of the most visited destinations for aesthetic service is reasonable price comparing to other countries. Also, the Thai surgeons are experienced and well educated on this field. Technology of aesthetic surgery in Thailand is one of the best in the world.”
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<p>Doctor B</p>	<p>“The amount of surgery in Asia region showed that China obtains the highest proportion of surgery, followed by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Thailand is the only country in South-east Asia region that is also in the top ranking. It is also expected to expand continuously with the support of reinforcing factors from surgery in Asia, which is likely to grow rapidly after there was an evidence of an increase in demand for eyelid surgery and nose surgery.”</p> <p>“I think what we should pay attention to is the Asian market, which is CLMV group including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam in which there is a flow of people coming into Thailand to use medical and beauty services. With the strengths of the Thai medical services and its reputation for cosmetic surgery, along with tourism and excellent service reputation of Thailand, the foreign patients who travel to Thailand can also travel at the same time at a reasonable and affordable price, creating huge revenue for Thailand. It is very important for the government to be aware of and give importance to the above factors as well as formulate the policy to support an expansion of the cosmetic surgery business, which can be by means of supporting health and beauty business in the form of full-system cosmetic surgery tour and pushing Thailand to move forward to become the surgical hub of Asia.”</p>
<p>Doctor D</p>	<p>“The Thai medical care market has high competition. It can be seen that many private hospitals and clinics have invested huge amount of money in facilities, places, new technology equipment and even human resources to build competitive advantages of its hospitals and clinics. Then, supply side of medical care went up. International demand brought in to support growth of hospitals and clinics. Aesthetic surgery service is a medical option aiming for specific group of customer. Target customer is narrowed down from other medical treatments with one or few times service serve per customer. Now, aesthetic surgery service for the foreign patients is a newly and highly potential market channel for hospitals and clinics in Thailand.</p>

Doctor E	“In Asia, the trend of maintaining youthfulness has been in a culture for decade. Doctors and specialists have continuously developed surgical techniques to serve needs. As a result it leads the Thai aesthetic industry to be on top of its profession in many G7 countries.
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Doctor D (Lorlak Hospital, 7 December 2013)

In addition to low cost and reputation for cosmetic surgery, tourism and excellent services, Doctor E mentioned another reason why Thai aesthetic industry claimed to be one of the specialists:

“In Asia, the trend of maintaining youthfulness has been in a culture for decade. Doctors and specialists have continuously developed surgical techniques to serve needs. As a result it leads the Thai aesthetic industry to be on top of its profession in many G7 countries.

Doctor E (Bangkok Hospital, 17 October 2013)

“I think the important factor that makes Thailand become one of the most visited destinations for aesthetic service is reasonable price comparing to other countries. Also, the Thai surgeons are experienced and well educated on this field. Technology of aesthetic surgery in Thailand is one of the best in the world.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

Moreover, what make Thailand different from other places are the beautiful sceneries, historical places, and rich culture. Patients who come to Thailand combine vacation with beauty surgery. The former patients also agreed with this fact.

“When I had surgery done in Thailand couple years ago, medical tourism was not a big boom but I still took time to explore the country.”

Patient B (Female, 20 February 2014)

“I love travelling in Thailand. So after I underwent my cosmetic surgery, I decided to spend a week in the South of Thailand to explore its beautiful natural scenery as part of my recovery period.”

Patient F (Female, 20 February 2014)

However, one patient feels that the distance is one obstacle for post-surgery follow up.

“In my point of view, Thailand may have a problem with the post surgery follow up since the distance is an issue.”

Patient C (Male, 20 February 2014)

It can be concluded that among its foreign competitors in Asia, the major strengths of cosmetic surgery in Thailand are its readiness in terms of experienced medical personnel, modern equipment and facilities, reasonable costs of treatment comparing to quality of surgery that the patient will receive, and beautiful and interesting tourist attraction sites. Nevertheless, the distance is still an issue, making it difficult to follow up after the patients had a surgery in Thailand.

2. Analysis of Marketing Mix (7Ps) in Aesthetic Cosmetic Surgery

2.1 Product and Service

Medical treatment in Thailand is considered to have high safety standard for complete range of aesthetic surgery services. Quality of service is primarily based on service providers who are surgeons. The use of high-technology equipments also enables the surgical process to become easier and safer. From the interviews conducted with the Thai surgeons from the five leading hospitals show that many Thai

surgeons obtained a degree from overseas and undertook a special training in their specialized field. Highly advanced surgery requires specialized skill and highly trained physicians. Number of cosmetic surgery performed by the surgeons is the most important factor, which illustrates their experience and expertise. In Thailand, most of the surgeons are expertise in gender reassignment surgery, breast enlargement, nose surgery and eye surgery.

Table 4 Surgeons' attitudes towards product and service of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Doctor B	“Aesthetic plastic surgery is not only popular among female patients. There are also an increasing number of the male patients.” “An appointment can be made online. Some minor cosmetic surgery like laser surgery or upper eyelid surgery can even be performed on the same date with the doctors' consultant.”
Doctor E	“The majority of patients are still Thai; however, most of the hospitals and clinics are welcoming overseas patients better in recent years.”

Table 5 Patients' attitudes towards product and service of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	Cosmetic surgery in Thailand is well-known for its quality and reputation.
Patient B	The major purpose for me in having cosmetic surgery is for beauty enhancement, and I have a confident about the hospitals here.
Patient C	“I got hair transplantation.” My friend suggested me to do it here in Thailand.
Patient D	“I decided to travel to Thailand for undergoing cosmetic surgery due to good reputation of the Thai surgeons for their gender reassignment surgery skill. I am very satisfied with luxurious services from Bamrungrad Hospital and quality of the surgery.”
Patient E	“I underwent a surgery for hair removal. It is very fast and efficient.

Patient F	"I feel that I have more confidence after having cosmetic surgery, and I think that it also enhances my beauty. Now, I am very happy with myself."
Patient G	Undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand has a short waiting time as it operates every day.
Patient H	I have confident about having cosmetic surgery in Thailand due to quality of surgery and the surgeons.
Patient I	Thailand is really a good choice for me.
Patient J	"The major reason that I came to Thailand for gender reassignment surgery is because of long waiting time in the UK while Thailand offers a very short waiting time."

Another advantage of the Thai medical services is short waiting time. Cosmetic surgery service in Thailand offers short to no waiting time as it operates every day.

"An appointment can be made online. Some minor cosmetic surgery like laser surgery or upper eyelid surgery can even be performed on the same date with the doctors' consultant."

Doctor B (Samitivej Hospital, 20 February 2014)

The reputation in terms of quality of cosmetic surgery in Thailand has been widespread through word of mouth between patients and persons who are interested in having cosmetic surgery.

"I decided to travel to Thailand for undergoing cosmetic surgery due to good reputation of the Thai surgeons for their gender reassignment surgery skill. I am very satisfied with luxurious services from Bamrungrad Hospital and quality of the surgery."

Patient D (Male, 26 February 2014)

“The major reason that I came to Thailand for gender reassignment surgery is because of long waiting time in the UK while Thailand offers a very short waiting time.”

Patient J (Male, 20 February 2014)

From the interviews with the surgeons, aesthetic service in Thailand offers a broad range of surgery, for examples, nose reconstruction, eyelid surgery, gender reassignment, and many more. Choices of services are offered in response to the customer demand in this market segment. Typically, customers have different needs and demand and they tend to prefer customized service.

“The majority of patients are still Thai; however, most of the hospitals and clinics are welcoming overseas patients better in recent years.”

Doctor E (Bangkok Hospital, 17 October 2013)

“Aesthetic plastic surgery is not only popular among female patients. There are also an increasing number of the male patients.”

Doctor B (Samitivej Hospital, 20 February 2014)

From the interviews with former foreign patients, it is found that males are also increasingly interested in undergoing cosmetic surgery.

“I underwent a surgery for hair removal:

Patient E (Male, 26 February 2014)

“I got hair transplantation.”

Patient C (Male, 20 February 2014)

Results obtained from the interviews with former patients also indicated that female patients are more interested in undergoing cosmetic surgery for the purpose of beauty enhancement.

Moreover, aesthetic cosmetic surgery can be performed as medical treatment, but it is commonly used as the means to build self-confidence and self-esteem among patients.

“I feel that I have more confidence after having cosmetic surgery, and I think that it also enhances my beauty. Now, I am very happy with myself.”

Patient F (Female, 20 February 2014)

In terms of product and service, quality of service, experience and expertise of the surgeons as well as high-technology equipments are taken into consideration prior to the patients making their decision. They also mentioned short waiting time and wide range of service to be important factors.

2.2 Price

According to the interviews with foreign patients, the major reasons involved while choosing cosmetic surgery are often affordable price and reliability of the surgeons. Limited number of the experienced surgeons in some overseas countries resulted in extremely high cost of specific treatment. Some reconstructive surgery could be declared as necessary treatment that is covered by health insurance. However, most aesthetic surgeries usually involve personal expenses at patient's own costs. High price gap of cosmetic surgery between countries is evidenced to highly influence the decision to choose service provider.

Table 6 Patients' attitudes towards price of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	"In my opinion, the money I had spent for undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand is reasonable comparing to what I have received in return and my expectation."
Patient B	Cost of undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand is affordable and reasonable.
Patient C	"It will be 3 times more expensive of what I paid here if I want to undergo the same surgery in the US"
Patient D	"Price is definitely one of the major reasons for me."
Patient E	I usually compare prices of cosmetic surgery in different countries and found out that Thailand has very attractive packages.
Patient F	I consider prices of undergoing cosmetic surgery together with the skills of the surgeons. Surely, Thailand is a good choice for me.
Patient G	I feel like I made the right decision to have cosmetic surgery here. Price is really affordable and reasonable.
Patient H	My friends suggested me to come to Thailand for cosmetic surgery because of prices and quality.
Patient I	I have confident about the price of cosmetic surgery in Thailand to be one of the most affordable one.
Patient J	"I paid £5,000 for my gender reassignment surgery in Thailand while this price cannot be found in the UK."

In Thailand, the cost of cosmetic surgery is considered to be relatively low in comparison to some other countries. Most of the patients who come to Thailand for undergoing cosmetic surgery pointed out that price is one of the major factors in deciding to have cosmetic surgery in Thailand.

Table 7 Surgeons' attitudes towards price of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Doctor A	<p>“The price of cosmetic surgery in Philippines and Indonesia is relatively similar to Thailand; however, Thailand still has an advantage in terms of service. The cost of medical care is defined as first-rate medical care at the third world prices. Number of tourists coming to Thailand for this medical attraction has been increasing significantly and rapidly as a result of this surprisingly cheap cosmetic surgery.”</p> <p>“The Thai aesthetic surgery allows people from America, Europe and others who are unable to afford sex reassignment surgery in their home country. For Bumrungrad Hospital, the price is relatively similar to Singapore who is also considered to be its competitors. Regardless of high cost of living in Singapore, the government has provided a great support, especially in terms of price subsidiary. Singapore also has an advantage in terms of language.”</p>
Doctor B	The price of cosmetic surgery for the foreign patients is more expensive than the local patients, but still comparatively cheaper than many other countries, making it still more attractive among the foreign patients.
Doctor D	“I think cost of aesthetic cosmetic surgery is unbelievably lower comparing with some other countries such as the US. Thailand offers high standard and excellent service of aesthetic cosmetic surgery and procedures.”
Doctor E	Prices for foreigners may be more expensive comparing to local patients. However, it is still cheaper than other countries who are considered to be our competitors. In addition, the price and service quality in Thailand are also distinctiveness of Thailand. The patients can also travel at the same time during their trip.

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third world prices. Number of tourists coming to Thailand for this medical attraction has been increasing significantly and rapidly as a result of this surprisingly cheap cosmetic surgery.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

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Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

In many hospitals such as Samitivej Hospital and Bangkok Hospital, the price of cosmetic surgery for the foreign patients is more expensive than the local patients, but still comparatively cheaper than many other countries, making it still more attractive among the foreign patients. Moreover, the price and service quality in Thailand are also distinctiveness of Thailand. The patients can also travel at the same time during their trip.

Doctor B and Doctor E

“I think cost of aesthetic cosmetic surgery is unbelievably lower comparing with some other countries such as the US. Thailand offers high standard and excellent service of aesthetic cosmetic surgery and procedures.”

Doctor D (Lorlak Hospital, 7 December 2013)

The data obtained from the interviews with former patients indicated that cost of aesthetic surgery is significantly important for all interviewees in making a decision. In addition to the quality of surgery, cost efficiency is also one of the major reasons that foreign patients used in deciding to undergo cosmetic surgery with the surgeons in Thailand.

“In my opinion, the money I had spent for undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand is reasonable comparing to what I have received in return and my expectation.”

Patient A (Female, 20 February 2014)

“I paid £5,000 for my gender reassignment surgery in Thailand while this price cannot be found in the UK.”

Patient J (Male, 20 February 2014)

“It will be 3 times more expensive of what I paid here if I want to undergo the same surgery in the US”

Patient C (Male, 20 February 2014)

From the above findings from the interviews with foreign patients, it can be seen that price is one of the most important factors that the patients use to consider when making a decision to undergo cosmetic surgery. Eight out of ten interviewees mentioned that price is one of the major factors in considering a place to undergo cosmetic surgery. Most of the patients agreed that cost of undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand is affordable and reasonable. Another factor is the surgeons and reputation of the hospitals. Similarly, the doctors also mentioned that price is our advantage in attracting foreigners to come to Thailand for undergoing cosmetic surgery. Moreover, Thailand also has distinctiveness in terms of travel destinations where the patients can relax after having cosmetic surgery at very reasonable prices.

2.3 Place

The hospitals and clinics in Thailand welcome foreign patients throughout a year. High accessibility to cosmetic surgery services have enhanced many hospitals in Bangkok to be in the top rank of international hospitals and become professional in terms of international service provision.

Table 8 Patients' attitudes towards place of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	"Transportation is very convenient and comfortable as there are many flights flying to Thailand from almost every country more frequently."
Patient B	"The hospital offers the pick-up transportation to the hospital; hence, it is very easy for me to travel around."
Patient D	"The hospitals and clinics can be found on almost every street in Bangkok. Medical services can easily be accessible by the patients wherever they are in Bangkok."
Patient F	"I prefer to use transportation service of the hospital as it is even more convenient for me and I very satisfied with hospital transportation service; the Mercedes van provides great comfort to the hospital and travelling in Thailand."
Patient G	"Transportation in Bangkok is very convenient. I can easily travel from one place to another. From what I have experienced, ambulance or the other types of transportation are also provided by every hospital for more convenience and life saving." "I prefer having my surgery at private hospitals as they are more likely to be relaxing and not crowded comparing to public hospitals."
Patient H	"When I came to use service in Thailand, I usually prefer using pick-up service of the hospital for my own convenience." "For me, atmosphere of the hospital can significantly influence my decision making because I expect that I can have a good rest after my surgery."
Patient I	"When I chose the hospital for undergoing my cosmetic surgery, luxury hospitals situated in the center of Bangkok is primarily my first choice that I will look for."
Patient J	"I had my surgery at Bumrungrad Hospital which can be easily accessible by BTS or MRT as well as very easy to get around"

“Transportation is very convenient and comfortable as there are many flights flying to Thailand from almost every country more frequently.”

Patient A (Female, 20 February 2014)

“The hospitals and clinics can be found on almost every street in Bangkok. Medical services can easily be accessible by the patients wherever they are in Bangkok.”

Patient D (Male, 20 February 2014)

“Transportation in Bangkok is very convenient. I can easily travel from one place to another. From what I have experienced, ambulance or the other types of transportation are also provided by every hospital for more convenience and life saving.”

Patient G (Female, 26 February 2014)

“The hospital offers the pick-up transportation to the hospital; hence, it is very easy for me to travel around.”

Patient B (Female, 20 February 2014)

“When I came to use service in Thailand, I usually prefer using pick-up service of the hospital for my own convenience.”

Patient H (Female, 26 February 2014)

“When I chose the hospital for undergoing my cosmetic surgery, luxury hospitals situated in the center of Bangkok is primarily my first choice that I will look for.”

Patient I (Female, 26 February 2014)

“I had my surgery at Bumrungrad Hospital which can be easily accessible by BTS or MRT as well as very easy to get around”

Patient J (Male, 20 February 2014)

“I prefer to use transportation service of the hospital as it is even more convenient for me and I very satisfied with hospital transportation service; the Mercedes van provides great comfort to the hospital and travelling in Thailand.”

Patient F (Female, 20 February 2014)

According to the in-depth interviews with the surgeons, there are many places offering aesthetic cosmetic surgery services in Thailand, depending on the surgeons and specialists whose patients require. Some of the most popular hospitals are Bumrungrad Hospital and Bangkok Hospital. Bangkok is a big and convenient city for cosmetic surgery and is situated at the heart of the market industry.

“City transportation including public transportation like BTS facilitates people to travel more conveniently than before. There are various kinds of activities and outstanding hospitalities in Bangkok.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

Former patients mentioned in the interviews that the hospitals are impressive. They are above the standard and work professionally. The reputation of the hospital service in terms of cost and skills of the surgeons are favorable factors in attracting them to decide to travel to Thailand for cosmetic surgery.

From the interviews, private hospitals nowadays are more preferential among foreign patients as they believe that they would be able to receive efficient and professional service.

“I prefer having my surgery at private hospitals as they are more likely to be relaxing and not crowded comparing to public hospitals.”

Patient G (Female, 26 February 2014)

“For me, atmosphere of the hospital can significantly influence my decision making because I expect that I can have a good rest after my surgery.”

Patient H (Female, 26 February 2014)

In terms of place, the patients agreed that most of the hospitals are easily accessible and they also have convenient transportation and facilities. Reputation of the hospitals is also one of the factors influencing their decision making. The patients are more likely to prefer undergoing their cosmetic surgery at private hospitals to receive efficient and professional service.

2.3 Promotion

Different channels of communication are used by the hospitals and clinics in order to promote their services. They usually use advertising as a means to show its existence and types of service being offered rather than focusing on persuading people to use their services. This is also partly due to the ethical issue concerned with aesthetic surgery; therefore, they have to be careful in terms of overexposure as well as moral and cultural confusion.

Aesthetic surgery service always involves an ethical and privacy issue. This is the main reason why most of the hospitals and clinics always act as information provider or consultant for the patients who are interested in undergoing aesthetic plastic surgery instead of direct selling to the patients like other kinds of service.

Table 9 Surgeons' attitudes towards promotion of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Doctor A	<p>The major promotional strategy for the hospital is to act as information provider or consultant for the patients. Information is very important for them in making the decision to undergo cosmetic surgery. The hospital focuses on using website as a means to provide information and to promote services.</p> <p>In addition, we also emphasize service excellence to create word of mouth among customers. We have seen many of our patients received</p>
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	<p>recommendation from the former patients who used to undergo cosmetic surgery at the hospital. Reputation is the key of this business. Once you perform a good service with satisfactory result, words will spread around. Patients would feel more comfortable to have reference from previous patients.</p> <p>One of strategies the hospital used is opening local offices across Asia and one in London to attract patients who are interested in medical treatment as well as aesthetic surgery in Bumrungrad hospital. Personal contact can make an effective influence over the patients and also give confident attitude toward the institution.</p>
Doctor B	<p>It's not about advertising, especially here in Thailand where advertising for cosmetic surgery is prohibited; it's about how we can provide and deliver information to the patients before they decide to undergo cosmetic surgery. We need to gain confidence and trust from them. The most common way is to use website as a means for providing information.</p>
Doctor C	<p>Promotion in terms of cosmetic surgery is not about direct selling to the patients like other kinds of service. It is very important for the hospital to be able to provide information to the patients before they can make decisions. Most of the hospitals use website as the main channel for information provision.</p>
Doctor D	<p>Since advertising is forbidden in Thailand, we can see that nowadays most hospitals are using their websites as the major channel of promotion. Interested patients can easily access to the websites to find information they need prior to their decision making in undergoing cosmetic surgery and selection of the service provider.</p>
Doctor E	<p>Our hospital use website and call center as the major promotional methods. As for website, information on the websites about cosmetic surgery in Thailand is provided in both Thai and English languages. More</p>

	importantly, interested patients can send inquiry via the websites while other contact channels are also provided such as email and contact phone number.
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Table 10 Patients' attitudes towards promotion of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	I decided to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand by means of personal search via websites or recommendations from friends and/or former patients.
Patient B	I had done many researches for a certain period of time, mostly through the Internet and asking from friends who had previous experience.
Patient C	I joined the online community in order to communicate with others as well as did some researches from the Internet to find more information before making the decision.
Patient E	I find information on the hospital website that has the package. The city tours and special treatment are extra services I had received in which I did not expect. This is why I am still satisfied even though no discount is offered.

The most commonly found channel that is used to promote and market aesthetic plastic surgery for the hospitals and clinics is website. Interested patients can easily access to the websites to find information they need prior to their decision making in undergoing cosmetic surgery and selection of the service provider. Information on the websites about cosmetic surgery in Thailand is provided in both Thai and English languages. More importantly, interested patients can send inquiry via the websites while other contact channels are also provided such as email and contact phone number.

Another commonly known channel of marketing is word of mouth. According to the interview with the doctors, many patients received recommendation from the former patients. Hospitals and clinics do not regularly advertise their services; the former patients in the interviews decided to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand by means of personal search via websites or recommendations from friends and/or former patients.

“Reputation is the key of this business. Once you perform a good service with satisfactory result, words will spread around. Patients would feel more comfortable to have reference from previous patients.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

Another example from one of the successful hospitals in the business is Bumrungrad hospital. One of strategies they used is opening local offices across Asia and one in London to attract patients who are interested in medical treatment as well as aesthetic surgery in Bumrungrad hospital. Personal contact can make an effective influence over the patients and also give confident attitude toward the institution.

The Internet is still one of the most effective channels that reach the interested patients. According to the interviews with the former patients, those who are interested in aesthetic surgery had done many researches for a certain period of time, mostly through the Internet and asking from friends who had previous experience. Some joined the online community in order to communicate with others. Word of mouth is considered being a reliable channel of communication. Interested patients can rely on formers experiences and credibility of the doctors and institutes. Magazine is another source that catches attention. Reliability of sources is when they make a contact with either former patients or doctors. Both can provide them with the insight information that some websites could not do.

Many hospitals target both Thai patients and foreign patients. In order to support an increasing number of tourists from overseas, full-service packages combine medical treatments, accommodations of both hotel room and hospital room, and also travel package in Thailand, which are offered to medical tourists from the cooperation of tourist agencies. These packages are strongly recommended for cosmetic and reconstructive surgery, dental services and other treatments which do not require a long period of recovery.

Traveling including aesthetic surgery is a good strategy to attract customers. Luxurious hospital is considered to be an attractiveness of the service.

For instance, Bumrungrad Hospital offers a private room for only 54 USD per night, with 250-thread-count cotton sheets and full facilities. This does not only turn a hospital room into a great hotel, but it also provides service to the patients with the finest foods from magnificent restaurants in Bangkok.

According to the interviews with the surgeons, however, in terms of practice, cosmetic surgery service does not give any type of special offers such as discount or other promotion. Still, there is a follow-up with the patients as part of their practice.

In the interviews with former patients, they mentioned that the city tours and special treatment are extra services they received in which they did not expect. This is why the patients are still satisfied even though no discount is offered.

The patients stated that high quality surgery is the top of service. Place of recovery that has relaxing environment is another treatment they would like to have as they experience tension during surgery procedures.

2.4 People

Major factors contributing to the success of the hospitals are good service, high quality of surgery and service with the use of modern technology and equipments, and service personnel. The key person in aesthetic cosmetic surgery is the surgeons who perform the surgery. However, medical services begin since the patients contacted or arrived at the hospital. The entire services involved people in the process. Every person in the hospital is vital and creates the reputation of the hospital.

Table 11 Surgeons' attitudes towards people of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Doctor A	The key person in aesthetic cosmetic surgery is the surgeons who perform the surgery. However, medical services begin since the patients contacted or arrived at the hospital. The entire services involved people in the process. Every person in the hospital is vital and creates the reputation of the hospital.
Doctor B	The competition in medical tourism is not the major factor contributing to good service quality in Thailand. Instead, hospitality is a distinctive

	characteristic of the Thai people who commonly have service mind which can rarely find in other places.
Doctor C	Good service should be the major emphasis for all hospitals. Satisfaction and impression is the key to get customers to talk about how good the hospitals are.
Doctor D	A lot of patients try to look for skilled surgeons to perform their surgery as they perceived that reliability of the surgeons is very important for the surgery outcome they would receive.

Table 12 Patients' attitudes towards people of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	The reputation and proficiency of the surgeons is very important for me to decide where to have cosmetic surgery. Moreover, hospital should be more internationalizing. They should prepare for the foreign patients also.
Patient C	High reputation and service quality of the Thai aesthetic surgery service has attracted me to undergo cosmetic surgery here.
Patient D	I am very impressed by the service I have received from staff at all levels at the hospital. I think that hospitality is a distinctive characteristic of the Thai people who commonly have service mind which can rarely find in other places.
Patient F	I am very satisfied with the Thai aesthetic surgery service. They are very helpful and have hospitality.
Patient G	I usually looked for the doctors who have experiences and have been in the industry for some time. The reputation of his or her work can truly represent the message of his or her works. It means an increase in his pay-check! I guess I am looking for a surgeon who is grounded and can provide the right kind of information and have a sense of assurance.

Patient I	I was very impressed with the service in Thailand. The staffs were very helpful not just in hospitals but with other subject they required. Though language barrier was a little bit of the problem but it was not an obstacle to the service.
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The surgeons mentioned in the interviews that the competition in medical tourism is not the major factor contributing to good service quality in Thailand. Instead, hospitality is a distinctive characteristic of the Thai people who commonly have service mind which can rarely find in other places.

High reputation and satisfaction of foreign patients to Thai aesthetic surgery service has shown in the interviews from every patient. Thai staffs helpfulness is an impression in patients' thought.

According to the interview with the former patients, they were very impressed with the service in Thailand. The staffs were very helpful not just in hospitals but with other subject they required. Though language barrier was a little bit of the problem but it was not an obstacle to the service.

Although Patient A suggested that hospital should be more internationalizing. They should prepare for the foreign patients also.

Patients are looking for doctors who have experiences and have been in the industry for some time. The reputation of his or her work can truly represent the message of his or her works.

Another interesting factor when it comes to a surgeon quality:

"It means an increase in his pay-check! I guess I am looking for a surgeon who is grounded and can provide the right kind of information and have a sense of assurance."

Patient G (Female, 26 February 2014)

However, the Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons of Thailand suggested the patients to choose services only from the real surgeons.

“Currently, there are 301 surgeons who are the members of the Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons of Thailand. Nevertheless, there are still many of those who do not pass the training based on international standards and then open the cosmetic surgery clinics in Thailand.”

(The Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons of Thailand, February 10, 2014)

2.5 Process

Thai hospitals served one stop service for customers. Some hospitals I have gathered information such as Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Loralak Hospital give free of charge medical consultant and arrange patients' trip. Internet and telephone connection make service process easy and convenient. Start with choose service provider (hospitals or clinics) all information is available on the internet.

Internet is a first way people choose to search for information about their interested also aesthetic surgery besides get information from friends or relatives who have done surgery. Almost every service providers in Thailand have its own website to approach customer.

Interviewees feel that internet information is reliable for them. Then contact hospitals or clinics for more information about doctors, treatments and other services such as transportation. Make an appointment with the doctor and/or appointment for operation.

Table 13 Surgeons' attitudes towards process of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Doctor A	<p>“Bumrungrad Hospital uses email for contacting and making appointments with the patients. There are approximately 400 staff for replying emails. There are also 40 interpreters for all languages.”</p> <p>“The duration of each surgery actually depends on the case and the demand of patients. There is also a follow up after the surgery is done which is usually done via email since most of the foreign patients are from overseas and usually spend only around two weeks in Thailand.”</p>
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Doctor D	“Attitude toward aesthetic surgery of people had changed in the last few years they willing to accept and think the aesthetic surgery is easy and normal. The process of each surgery depends on which type of surgery and each patient. Some surgery can take only 20 minutes and some can be hours. Recovery time in the hospital can be from no time at all to few days. Most recovery time takes place at patients’ own place. For gender reassignment, the whole process can take up to six month until the patient recover. During recovery period patients can do almost regular activities.”
Doctor C	I usually provide surgery operation with no wait time if patient does not have any health problem.

“Bumrungrad Hospital uses email for contacting and making appointments with the patients. There are approximately 400 staff for replying emails. There are also 40 interpreters for all languages.”

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

“Attitude toward aesthetic surgery of people had changed in the last few years they willing to accept and think the aesthetic surgery is easy and normal. The process of each surgery depends on which type of surgery and each patient. Some surgery can take only 20 minutes and some can be hours. Recovery time in the hospital can be from no time at all to few days. Most recovery time takes place at patients’ own place. For gender reassignment, the whole process can take up to six month until the patient recover. During recovery period patients can do almost regular activities.”

Doctor D (Lorlak Hospital, 7 December 2013)

Doctor C (Yunhee Hospital, 8 January 2014) and Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014) also provide surgery operation with no wait time if patient does not have any health problem.

These primary data show shorter aesthetic surgery process according to high technology device as internet, high technology medical equipments and easier patients' decision making.

"The duration of each surgery actually depends on the case and the demand of patients. There is also a follow up after the surgery is done which is usually done via email since most of the foreign patients are from overseas and usually spend only around two weeks in Thailand."

Doctor A (Bumrungrad Hospital, 16 February 2014)

"It took me only one week for the Interviewee to make decision to come to Thailand for my surgery."

Patient A (Female, 20 February 2014)

"It took me one year for decision making to come to Thailand."

Patient B (Female, 20 February 2014)

The process for both of them was similar. First they collected information from internet and friends then they went deeper with the information once they found the doctors they interested in, make an appointment and flew to Bangkok for surgery. It looks as if the process was easy, in fact it was once the patients found what they looking for.

Almost every patient set their mind on the surgery it only depends on other factors such as cost and doctors. From our interview with both formal and interested patients they take quite some time to collect data and done some study. Aesthetic surgery is a delicate matter and patients want to make sure everything will go on the right track.

It is an interesting information to see that the patients who would like to have the surgery done have been doing information searching for long time, some is up to 3 years. Patients want to be certain on the service before they actually go ahead and be

under the knife. Patients who would like to take this surgery trip to travel can be up to month and they would like to have the surgery done as soon as possible.

2.6 Physical Evidence

Thai medical has highly competition market. There are luxury private hospitals and clinics spread all over main city in Thailand and they are competing not only quality of aesthetic surgery but the service environment is one factor people concerning and telling others through the word of mouth communication. Interviewee 4 from Korean mentioned in the interview that beside surgery services good environment and facilities are also important.

“Some of the patients want pizza, some request a better selection of cable TV, some asked for advice on sightseeing, some don't want to wonder around the city by themselves as they are here for the first time. This is a task we must provide.”

Business Director (Bumrungrad hospital, 16 February 2014)

“Thai hospitals realized this fact and provided nicest environment of services. Every detail of physical evidences has decorated and built for the best of customer satisfaction.”

Business Director (Bumrungrad hospital, 16 February 2014)

An example is Bangkok Hospital which is one of the most luxury hospitals in Thailand. There are 15 hospitals in Bangkok Hospital network in Thailand and many hospitals in Myanmar, Vietnam and Bangladesh. Bangkok hospital had launched new “Royal Suite Room” for patients. This suite has its own registration desk with two receptionists plus highly security system. There are a big living room with piano and other facilities, an office room for work and conference, a room with small kitchen for entourage and room equipped by new technology patient bed cost more than 988,000 baht. This also included helicopter pick up from Thai airport to the hospital and catering from five stars hotel chef.

Bumrungrad hospital also shows its leading position in international medical services with luxury accommodation. Seven restaurants served every customer's need e.g. McDonalds, Starbucks coffee, Au Bon Pain, Japanese, Italian, Thai and Indian restaurant.

According to our interview with the doctors, some hospitals provide special facilities such as luxurious waiting room, private consulting room, etc to enhance their service. Those are made to make the visits more pleasant. Some special facilities such as traveling trip, limousine can surely impress patients. This is only a complementary on top of an excellent performance of the surgery. Patients enjoyed facilities when they had their surgery in Bangkok and was impressed by the upscale hospital.

3. Perception of Foreign Patients towards Aesthetic Plastic Surgery in Thailand

In this section, the researcher aims to understand the perception of foreign patients toward aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand. Therefore, their perceptions before and after undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand were assessed and obtained from in-depth interviews. The analysis was divided into two parts, consisting of the expected quality and the experienced quality.

It can be seen that successful players in aesthetic surgery market importantly acquire reputation of customer service and positive attitudes of customers which are disseminated through different channels. From the study, the researcher has seen many existing players in medical tourism market in Thailand, with competition to gain higher reputation and positive perception among customers. Many hospitals and clinics are not only competing domestically but internationally as their new strategies to capture international market in leading to "Medical Hub in Asia."

3.1 The Expected Quality

Information obtained from the interviews showed that the former patients found out about aesthetic in Thailand through the websites or friends who had done the surgery before. The Internet is an effective source for them to find information about surgery, its procedures and costs as well as some feedbacks from the surgery at certain places. Many of useful information are provided for those who have never been to Thailand for surgery before.

Patients who want to undergo aesthetic surgery for the medical treatment purpose usually receive recommendation from the other doctors while those who prefer for the beauty purpose generally do some researches before they come to Thailand and make a decision by themselves.

Table 14 Patients' attitudes towards the expected quality of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	“Before I come to Thailand for my surgery, I have a very positive perception and I was not really nervous. Staffs here were very polite and they take me through steps. My perception about the hospital was great and I have done some researches before coming to Thailand. I also received some suggestions from my friend who used to do cosmetic surgery in Thailand”.
Patient B	“I decided to come here by myself. Before my trip, I search for information about the hospital and I was really impressed by their facilities. They have McDonalds here in which I really love!”
Patient C	“I first had my surgery in Australia for breast augmentation and implant. It costs me 16,000 AUS\$ in 2009 and I was really disappointed with the results. Then, I began to look for a great and reliable hospital overseas to have correction for my surgery. Thailand is finally my choice as I believe in professionalism of the surgeons in Thailand and cost is also relatively low.”
Patient D	“Perhaps it would be better if there was a list or consumer group that would find out about the dodgy clinics and report them, so that people will know where to go and where not to go.”

“Before I come to Thailand for my surgery, I have a very positive perception and I was not really nervous. Staffs here were very polite and they take me through steps. My perception about the hospital was great and I have done

some researches before coming to Thailand. I also received some suggestions from my friend who used to do cosmetic surgery in Thailand”.

Patient A (Female, 20 February 2014)

“I decided to come here by myself. Before my trip, I search for information about the hospital and I was really impressed by their facilities. They have McDonalds here in which I really love!”

Patient B (Female, 20 February 2014)

Some patients have their concern over the credibility of service which can be a great influence once make the decision on where to have surgery.

“I first had my surgery in Australia for breast augmentation and implant. It costs me 16,000 AU\$\$ in 2009 and I was really disappointed with the results. Then, I began to look for a great and reliable hospital overseas to have correction for my surgery. Thailand is finally my choice as I believe in professionalism of the surgeons in Thailand and cost is also relatively low.”

Patient C (Male, 20 February 2014)

“Perhaps it would be better if there was a list or consumer group that would find out about the dodgy clinics and report them, so that people will know where to go and where not to go.”

Patient D (Male, 26 February 2014)

The overall expectation of the former patients who had undergone plastic surgery is excellent performance of the surgeons that will lead to satisfactory result. While in the hospital they would like to have a comfortable recovery room, with good environment and friendly atmosphere. 10 out of ten former patients had awareness of aesthetic service in Thailand prior to their departure. Some only heard about it or come

across from the internet; some have heard from friends who had been to Thailand for surgery. Moreover, most of the former patients recognized Thailand as a good choice for undergoing cosmetic surgery at a relatively low price.

3.2 The Experienced Quality

Reputations of the Thai aesthetic surgery seem to spread in a satisfied level. Both former patient interviewees had been serving with services that meet their expectation.

Table 15 Patients' attitudes towards the experienced quality of cosmetic surgery in Thailand

Patient A	"I had a very positive experience with my cosmetic surgery in Thailand and I will definitely come back here again for my surgery."
Patient B	"My experience toward cosmetic surgery in Thailand was really awesome. The hospital was so much different from those in Australia. I think it's even better than any hospitals in Australia! The doctor is really lovely and fabulous. He is so cute and I want to take him home."
Patient H	"I came to Thailand to have corrective surgery. I was very angry for what I did in Australia. The surgery in Thailand was so impressive. It gives me great results. There are extra procedures and short recovery time, which make me very satisfied."
Patient I	"I think the hospital should consider on foreign patients more. Since they may have a special need and required much more attention. I was very happy with the surgery result but not very happy with the meal because it was too much of Thai food. In overall aspect, I was satisfied and surly recommended people who are interested in surgery to take Thailand into consideration."

"I had a very positive experience with my cosmetic surgery in Thailand and I will definitely come back here again for my surgery."

Patient A (Female, 20 February 2014)

“My experience toward cosmetic surgery in Thailand was really awesome. The hospital was so much different from those in Australia. I think it's even better than any hospitals in Australia! The doctor is really lovely and fabulous. He is so cute and I want to take him home.”

Patient B (Female, 20 February 2014)

“I came to Thailand to have corrective surgery. I was very angry for what I did in Australia. The surgery in Thailand was so impressive. It gives me great results. There are extra procedures and short recovery time, which make me very satisfied.”

Patient H (Female, 26 February 2014)

Only a small improvement from Patient I who suggested that:

“I think the hospital should consider on foreign patients more. Since they may have a special need and required much more attention. I was very happy with the surgery result but not very happy with the meal because it was too much of Thai food. In overall aspect, I was satisfied and surly recommended people who are interested in surgery to take Thailand into consideration.”

Patient I (Female, 20 February 2014)

From research findings on the experienced quality, it can be seen that most of the foreign patients were satisfied with overall process of cosmetic surgery as well as the outcomes after undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand. They believe that Thailand has reputation towards cosmetic surgery internationally. Some parts were reported as obstacles, mainly including language communication ability of personnel of the hospitals. They also advised that more focus should be given to the foreign patients.

Table 16 Content analysis of research findings

Theory used in this research	Research Findings
Theory of Diamond of National Advantage	
4.1 Factor Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thailand is an emerging economy and is recognized as a newly industrialized country and heavily export-dependent. ● Tourism in Thailand makes up about 6% of the economy. ● Thailand is particularly attractive to potential medical tourists and international patients. ● It has many internationally accredited hospitals as well as experienced, often Western-trained medical professionals, the latest medical technology, short waiting time, and significantly lower costs of treatment comparing to related procedures in the West.
4.2 Demand Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The number of foreign patients traveling to Thailand for cosmetic surgery and medical travel has also been increasing significantly. ● With an increasing demand toward cosmetic surgery, it indicates that the cosmetic surgery market in Thailand is favorable. ● The public perception towards cosmetic surgery has changed over decades in which there is large demand among Thai patients, especially teenagers

4.3 Related and supporting industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many hospitals nowadays cooperate with travel agencies or other related businesses to offer add-on services to the patients. ● Government also plays an important role in supporting medical tourism industry in terms of policy formulation, marketing and promotion.
4.4 Strategy, structure and rivalry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Among its foreign competitors in Asia, the major strengths of cosmetic surgery in Thailand are its readiness in terms of experienced medical personnel, modern equipment and facilities, reasonable costs of treatment comparing to quality of surgery that the patient will receive, and beautiful and interesting tourist attraction sites.
Marketing Mix (7Ps)	
Product and Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High safety standard, quality of service, experience and expertise of the surgeons as well as high-technology equipment are important factors that the patients considered prior to decision making to undergo cosmetic surgery. ● Short waiting time and wide range of service to be important factors.
Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most of the patient agreed that cost of undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand is affordable and reasonable. ● The cost of cosmetic surgery is considered to be relatively low in comparison to some other countries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Price gap between countries is evidenced to significantly influence the patients' decision to choose service provider. ● Eight out of ten interviewees mentioned that price is the major factors in considering a place to undergo cosmetic surgery.
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The patients agreed that most of the hospitals are easily accessible and they also have convenient transportation and facilities. ● Reputation of the hospitals is also one of the factors influencing their decision making. ● The patients are more likely to prefer undergoing their cosmetic surgery at private hospitals to receive efficient and professional service. ● Atmosphere of the hospital can significantly influence their decision making as they expect to have a good rest after having surgery done.
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The most commonly found channel that is used to promote and market aesthetic plastic surgery for the hospitals and clinics is website. ● Word of mouth ● Full-service packages combining medical treatments, accommodations of both hotel room and hospital room, and also travel package

<p>People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The key person in aesthetic cosmetic surgery is the surgeons who perform the surgery. ● The foreign patients often look for experienced surgeons, with reputation of their works. ● High reputation and satisfaction of foreign patients to Thai aesthetic surgery service has shown in the interview from every patient. ● Thai staffs helpfulness is an impression in the foreign patients' thought. ● Though language barrier was a little bit of the problem but it was not an obstacle to the service. ● Some patients mentioned that the hospitals should be more internationalizing in providing services for the foreign patients.
<p>Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thai hospitals served one stop service for customers. ● Some hospitals I have gathered information such as Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Lork Hospital give free of charge medical consultant and arrange patients' trip. ● Internet and telephone connection make service process easy and convenient. ● Interview results showed shorter aesthetic surgery process according to high technology

	<p>device as internet, high technology medical equipment and easier patients' decision making.</p>
Physical evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are luxury private hospitals and clinics spreading all over major cities in Thailand • They are competing not only quality of aesthetic surgery but the service environment is one factor people concerning and telling others through the word of mouth communication.
Total Quality Perceived Model	
The expected quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall expectation of the former patients who had undergone plastic surgery is excellent performance of the surgeons that will lead to satisfactory result. • 10 out of ten former patients had awareness of aesthetic service in Thailand prior to their departure. • Most of the former patients recognized Thailand as a good choice for undergoing cosmetic surgery at a relatively low price.
The experienced quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputations of the Thai aesthetic surgery seem to spread in a satisfied level. The former patients had been serving with services that meet their expectation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduction

This chapter concludes research findings, which are divided into four major parts where the conclusion is primarily based on three theories, including diamond of national advantage theories, marketing mix (7Ps) in cosmetic surgery business, total perceived quality model, and perception of the foreign patients towards cosmetic surgery in Thailand. Results can be concluded in different sections as follows.

2. Analysis of Thailand Relating to Diamond of National Advantage Theory

2.1 Factor Condition: Thailand is an emerging economy and is recognized as a newly industrialized country and heavily export-dependent, with exports accounting for more than two thirds of gross domestic product (GDP), while tourism in Thailand makes up about 6% of the economy. Thailand is particularly attractive to potential medical tourists and international patients for a number of important reasons. It has many internationally accredited hospitals as well as experienced, often Western-trained medical professionals, the latest medical technology, short waiting time, and significantly lower costs of treatment comparing to related procedures in the West. All of these factors, together with its reputation as a popular tourist destination, Thailand has become one of the most famous medical tourism destinations.

2.2 Demand conditions: The number of foreign patients traveling to Thailand for cosmetic surgery and medical travel has also been increasing significantly, for examples, American, European and other Asian patients. With an increasing demand toward cosmetic surgery, it indicates that the cosmetic surgery market in Thailand is favorable. Some of the former foreign patients even mentioned in the interviews that they had done aesthetic cosmetic surgery for a few times already. In Thailand, the public

perception towards cosmetic surgery has changed over decades in which there is large demand among Thai patients, especially teenagers (Sarnsamak, 2012).

2.3 Related and supporting industries: Many hospitals nowadays cooperate with travel agencies or other related businesses to offer add-on services to the patients; medical tourism is the key strategy in enhancing the development of tourism and medical services at the same time. Government also plays an important role in supporting medical tourism industry in terms of policy formulation, marketing and promotion. An advantage of the joining hand brings many benefits to the industry not only in the production line but other such as marketing channel and promotion (Lau, 2007; Porter, 2004).

2.4 Strategy, structure and rivalry: Among its foreign competitors in Asia, the major strengths of cosmetic surgery in Thailand are its readiness in terms of experienced medical personnel, modern equipment and facilities, reasonable costs of treatment comparing to quality of surgery that the patient will receive, and beautiful and interesting tourist attraction sites. Nevertheless, the distance is still an issue, making it difficult to follow up after the patients had a surgery in Thailand.

3. Analysis of Marketing Mix (7Ps) in Aesthetic Cosmetic Surgery

3.1 Product and Service: In aesthetic cosmetic surgery, surgery service in which the patients received from the surgeons is considered to be intangible product, while surgery equipments and facilities provided by the hospital are tangible products. According to The Chartered Institute of Marketing (2005), the importance of the products lies within the perception of customer toward the products. In terms of product and service of cosmetic surgery in Thailand, high safety standard, quality of service, experience and expertise of the surgeons as well as high-technology equipments are important factors that the patients considered prior to decision making to undergo cosmetic surgery. They also mentioned short waiting time and wide range of service to be important factors.

3.2 Price: Price is one of the most important factors that the patients use to consider when making a decision to undergo cosmetic surgery. Most of the patient agreed that cost of undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand is affordable and reasonable. The foreign patients mentioned that, in Thailand, the cost of cosmetic surgery is considered to be relatively low in comparison to some other countries. Such price gap between countries is evidenced to significantly influence the patients' decision to choose service provider. Eight out of ten interviewees mentioned that price is the major factors in considering a place to undergo cosmetic surgery. Price of cosmetic surgery is relatively similar among other Asian countries; however, the foreign patients still preferred to come to Thailand as a result of its outstanding service quality and tourist attractions.

3.3 Place: The patients agreed that most of the hospitals are easily accessible and they also have convenient transportation and facilities. Reputation of the hospitals is also one of the factors influencing their decision making. The patients are more likely to prefer undergoing their cosmetic surgery at private hospitals to receive efficient and professional service. Moreover, they mentioned that atmosphere of the hospital can significantly influence their decision making as they expect to have a good rest after having surgery done. Most of them prefer to use service at private hospitals due to relaxing and private atmosphere, which is not very crowded comparing to public hospitals. Thaiways (2012) pointed out that Thailand is the destination that is suitable for relaxation and resting after the operations; this is why many foreign patients decided to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand (Thaiways, 2012). It is also chosen to be one of the best places for undergoing plastic surgery, considering from numerous matters, including images of country to rest, healing and recuperation (Link, 2013).

3.4 Promotion: The most commonly found channel that is used to promote and market aesthetic plastic surgery for the hospitals and clinics is website. Another commonly known channel of marketing is word of mouth. Many hospitals target both Thai patients and foreign patients. In order to support an increasing number of tourists from overseas, full-service packages combine medical treatments, accommodations of

both hotel room and hospital room, and also travel package in Thailand, which are offered to medical tourists from the cooperation of tourist agencies. Traveling including aesthetic surgery is a good strategy to attract customers. Luxurious hospital is considered to be an attractiveness of the service.

3.5 People: Major factors contributing to the success of the hospitals are good service, high quality of surgery and service with the use of modern technology and equipments, and service personnel. The key person in aesthetic cosmetic surgery is the surgeons who perform the surgery. The foreign patients often look for experienced surgeons, with reputation of their works. According to Link (2013), the Thai surgeons are professionals, which are certified by American and Australian surgery boards. Most of Americans and Australians trust and believe in Thai surgeons' quality and services. Medical services begin since the patients contacted or arrived at the hospital. The entire services involved people in the process. Every person in the hospital is vital and creates the reputation of the hospital. High reputation and satisfaction of foreign patients to Thai aesthetic surgery service has shown in the interview from every patient. Thai staffs helpfulness is an impression in the foreign patients' thought. Though language barrier was a little bit of the problem but it was not an obstacle to the service. Some patients mentioned that the hospitals should be more internationalizing in providing services for the foreign patients.

3.6 Process: Thai hospitals served one stop service for customers. Some hospitals I have gathered information such as Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Lork Hospital give free of charge medical consultant and arrange patients' trip. Internet and telephone connection make service process easy and convenient. Start with choose service provider (hospitals or clinics) all information is available on the internet. Internet is a first way people choose to search for information about their interested also aesthetic surgery besides get information from friends or relatives who have done surgery. Almost every service providers in Thailand have its own website to approach customer. The foreign patients feel that internet information is reliable for them. Then contact hospitals or clinics for more information

about doctors, treatments and other services such as transportation. Make an appointment with the doctor and/or appointment for operation.

Interview results showed shorter aesthetic surgery process according to high technology device as internet, high technology medical equipments and easier patients' decision making. The duration of each surgery actually depends on the case and the demand of patients. There is also a follow up after the surgery is done which is usually done via email since most of the foreign patients are from overseas and usually spend only around two weeks in Thailand. Almost every patient set their mind on the surgery it only depends on other factors such as cost and doctors. From our interview with the former patients they took quite some time to collect data and done some study. It is an interesting information to see that the patients who would like to have the surgery done have been doing information searching for long time, some is up to 3 years. Patients want to be certain on the service before they actually go ahead and be under the knife. Patients who would like to take this surgery trip to travel can be up to month and they would like to have the surgery done as soon as possible.

3.7 Physical Evidence: Medical tourism in Thailand is a highly competitive market. There are luxury private hospitals and clinics spreading all over major cities in Thailand and they are competing not only quality of aesthetic surgery but the service environment is one factor people concerning and telling others through the word of mouth communication. Beside surgery services, good environment and facilities are also important.

4. Perception of Foreign Patients towards Aesthetic Plastic Surgery in Thailand

Successful players in aesthetic surgery market importantly acquire reputation of customer service and positive attitudes of customers which are disseminated through different channels. From the study, the researcher has seen many existing players in medical tourism market in Thailand, with competition to gain higher reputation and positive perception among customers.

4.1 The Expected Quality: This quality builds from the expectation of the customer which depends on the individual perception of how service should be. Patients who want to undergo aesthetic surgery for the medical treatment purpose usually receive recommendation from the other doctors while those who prefer for the beauty purpose generally do some researches before they come to Thailand and make a decision by themselves. Some patients have their concern over the credibility of service which can be a great influence once make the decision on where to have surgery. The overall expectation of the former patients who had undergone plastic surgery is excellent performance of the surgeons that will lead to satisfactory result. While in the hospital they would like to have a comfortable recovery room, with good environment and friendly atmosphere. 10 out of ten former patients had awareness of aesthetic service in Thailand prior to their departure. Some only heard about it or come across from the internet; some have heard from friends who had been to Thailand for surgery. Moreover, most of the former patients recognized Thailand as a good choice for undergoing cosmetic surgery at a relatively low price.

4.2 The Experienced Quality: This quality can be gathering through past experience of the customer. The experience will form a certain background image of the quality of the company which can be from the technical quality and functional quality. Reputations of the Thai aesthetic surgery seem to spread in a satisfied level. The former patients had been serving with services that meet their expectation.

5. Discussions

Medical tourism in Thailand is a potentially valuable market, promoted and developed for national advantages. Today, Thai medical services, particularly cosmetic surgery gains foreigners' reputation, and acquires international attention in world market. From research results in the above section, it can be discussed in relevance to research objectives that:

5.1 Factors that influencing foreigners to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand were mainly price and quality of cosmetic surgery and related services. Lunt et

al. (2012) pointed out that openness of information and development of diverse providers competing on quality and price now cater for all demands. Places for undergoing cosmetic surgery are also very convenient, with good facility and accessibility. According to Losken et al. (2005), the patients utilized the internet information which influenced decision making relating to procedures, surgeon and hospital. In addition, Thailand also has many interesting tourist attractions where they can travel after having a surgery. Connell (2006), MacReady (2007) and Ramírez de Arellano (2007) supported that the desire for privacy and the wish to combine traditional tourist attractions, hotels, climate, food, and cultural visits with medical procedures are also thought to be key contributing factors to the growth in this market.

5.2 In term of cosmetic surgery market, Thailand becomes one of the cosmetic surgery hubs in Asian. Thailand still earned its place as the first mover in medical tourism, with strengths in factor and demand conditions. Recently, there are many cosmetic surgeons provided in Thailand, which trained from either in Thailand or abroad. Cosmetic surgery market is the popular niche market in Thailand, which supported national medical tourism, accounted for over US\$2.3 billion in Thailand (Saniotis, 2007). Dr. Worapol Sukkheewattana, BNH Hospital, mentioned that the direction of cosmetic surgery and beauty market in Thailand in continuously growing, reaching 30,000 million baht nowadays. At the same time, medical and beauty industry is still an outstanding business for more than 4 consecutive years (www.banmuang.co.th, 2015). Research findings showed that most of the leading surgeons perceived that aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand is currently growing among both the Thai and foreign patients. The surgeons in Thailand have expertise and skills, which are competitive at an international level. However, the number of qualified surgeons is still considered to be in shortage. The surgeons on this research further pinpointed that cosmetic surgery as part of medical tourism market should receive more support from the government, especially in terms of promotion and advertising as well as supporting policy. This was in contrast to Pocock and Phua (2011) who mentioned that the governments supported cosmetic surgery market with high quality service by provide health care staffs, medical facilities, and equipment.

5.3 The majority of former foreign patients who had undergone aesthetic plastic surgery in Thailand perceived that prices are relative cheap while they are able to receive good outcome after the surgery. Patient satisfaction is an important dimension of healthcare treatment. Most of them were very satisfied with the surgery outcome and overall service of the hospitals where they had cosmetic surgery done. They were very impressed in a way that they can also travel after their surgery. According to Ehrbeck et al (2008), patients commonly reported high satisfaction with quality of care received overseas. As successful results become more apparent, demand tends increase further. The number of countries pursuing the development of cosmetic surgery as part of medical tourism market continues to grow rapidly. The success of medical tourism in Asia has particularly risen the global interest and competition.

5.4 Overall situation of aesthetic plastic surgery market in Thailand is currently in a growth period and has become a well-known destination for undergoing cosmetic surgery overseas. According to Samsamak (2012), in Thailand, the public perception towards cosmetic surgery has changed over decades in which there is large demand among Thai patients, especially teenagers. More than ten years ago, cosmetic surgery was not widely accepted in the eyes of public, which is different from today. Patients were hiding and felt unsecured to undergo cosmetic surgery. On the contrary, nowadays, this market is very popular and increasingly gains interests from the public. From 2010 to 2011, the cosmetic surgery market value has risen from 15 billion baht to 20 billion baht (Samsamak, 2012). With competitive pricing comparing to other countries, there are still many rooms for growth and development as long as the hospitals are still focusing on improving their equipment, technologies, services and facilities while receiving good support from the government in terms of advertising and promotion and providing subsidiaries to the hospitals to ensure sustainable growth of the medical tourism industry. Regarding to Link (2013), Bangkok, Thailand is in rank 7th of the world's top 10 cities for plastic surgery, which described that Bangkok is famous to American patients who are looking for relaxations at Thai plastic surgery centers. The International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) pointed out that the amount of cosmetic

surgery, both surgical and non-surgical procedures, in Asia showed that China has the highest number of cosmetic surgery, followed by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan while Thailand is the only nation in Southeast Asia that is in the rank. This reaffirms that cosmetic surgery in Thailand is internationally well-known and trusted by both Thais and foreigners (Postjung.com, 2016). In addition, Thai surgeons are professionals, which certified by American and Australian surgery boards. Most of American trust and believe in Thai surgeons' quality and services. Interestingly, the procedures prices are cheaper than in the United States for over 50% in the similar procedures, quality and services. Likewise, Thailand is chosen to be one of the best places for undergoing plastic surgery, considering on numerous matters, including images of country to rest, healing and recuperation. Most of the Australia patients who gain high income and strong national currency travel to Thailand for undergoing plastic surgery, which has low income and weak national currency. The reason is the destination is suitable for relaxation and resting after the operations and the procedures has done by professional and certified surgeons as well (Ryan, 2014).

6. Limitations

In this research, the researcher found some limitations in conducting the research. The major limitations would be in terms of the process data collection, which was difficult to make an appointment with the surgeons as well as contacting foreign patients for interviewing. It was very time-consuming and some foreign patients were not willing to participate in the interviews. Therefore, the researcher had to ask the surgeons for referrals after having interviews with the surgeons in order to create more reliability among foreign patients and gain more cooperation in conducting interviews. Another limitation would be ethical issues that the researcher had to treat them very carefully and all information provided by the participants had to be kept as highly confidential. As a result, some important information could not be revealed unless the participants allowed the researcher to do so. In terms of the scope of the study, this research only focused on studying about cosmetic surgery in the five leading hospitals and the study

population were only five surgeons and 10 foreign patients; it didn't represent the entire population involved in the cosmetic surgery market in Thailand. Therefore, the research findings only represented a small group of population and can only be treated as a case study, not applicable for representing the entire cosmetic surgery market in Thailand.

7. Policy Recommendations

7.1 Hospitals and clinics should focus on continuous improvement in all aspects relating to service provision of cosmetic surgery in Thailand in order to gain international reputation and credibility among foreign patients.

7.2 Even though Thailand still earned its place as the first mover in medical tourism, with strengths in factor and demand conditions, Thailand should improve in terms of firm's rivalry and competition as well as make the related and supporting industry stronger.

7.3 With competitive pricing comparing to other countries, there are still many rooms for growth and development as long as the hospitals are still focusing on improving their equipment, technologies, services and facilities while receiving good support from the government in terms of advertising and promotion and providing subsidies to the hospitals to ensure sustainable growth of the medical tourism industry.

8. Further Research Direction

8.1 There should be a comparative study of cosmetic surgery between Thailand and other countries in order to understand different natures of cosmetic surgery business and consumer behavior.

9. Final Conclusion

Medical tourism in Thailand is a potentially valuable market, promoted and developed for national advantages. Today, Thai medical services, particularly cosmetic surgery, gain foreigners' reputation, and acquire international attention in the world market. Research findings can be discussed in relevance to research objectives. In terms of

factors influencing foreigners to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand were mainly price and quality of cosmetic surgery and related services. Most of the leading surgeons perceived that cosmetic surgery in Thailand is currently growing among both the Thai and foreign patients. In addition, the majority of former foreign patients who had undergone cosmetic surgery in Thailand perceived that prices are relative cheap while they are able to receive good outcome after the surgery. Most of them were very satisfied with the surgery outcome and overall service of the hospitals where they had cosmetic surgery done. Overall situation of cosmetic surgery market in Thailand is currently in a growth period and has become a well-known destination for undergoing cosmetic surgery overseas. This research suggested that hospitals and clinics should focus on continuous improvement in all aspects relating service provision of cosmetic surgery in Thailand in order to gain international reputation and credibility among foreign patients. Moreover, there should be a comparative study of cosmetic surgery between Thailand and other countries in order to understand different natures of cosmetic surgery business and consumer behavior. Thailand still earned its place as the first mover in medical tourism, with strengths in factor and demand conditions. Nevertheless Thailand should improve in terms of firm's rivalry and competition as well as make the related and supporting industry stronger. With competitive pricing comparing to other countries, there are still many rooms for growth and development as long as the hospitals are still focusing on improving their equipment, technologies, services and facilities while receiving good support from the government in terms of advertising and promotion and providing subsidiaries to the hospitals to ensure sustainable growth of the medical tourism industry.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Foreign Patients

1. Age: _____
2. Nationality: _____
3. Monthly income: _____ Baht
4. Duration of stay in Thailand: _____ days
5. How many times have you travelled to Thailand for cosmetic surgery? _____
6. What is your major reason in deciding to undergo cosmetic surgery?

7. Why did you decide to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand?

8. Where did you find information about cosmetic surgery in Thailand?

9. What kind of cosmetic surgery did you do?

10. How long does it take to decide before undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand?

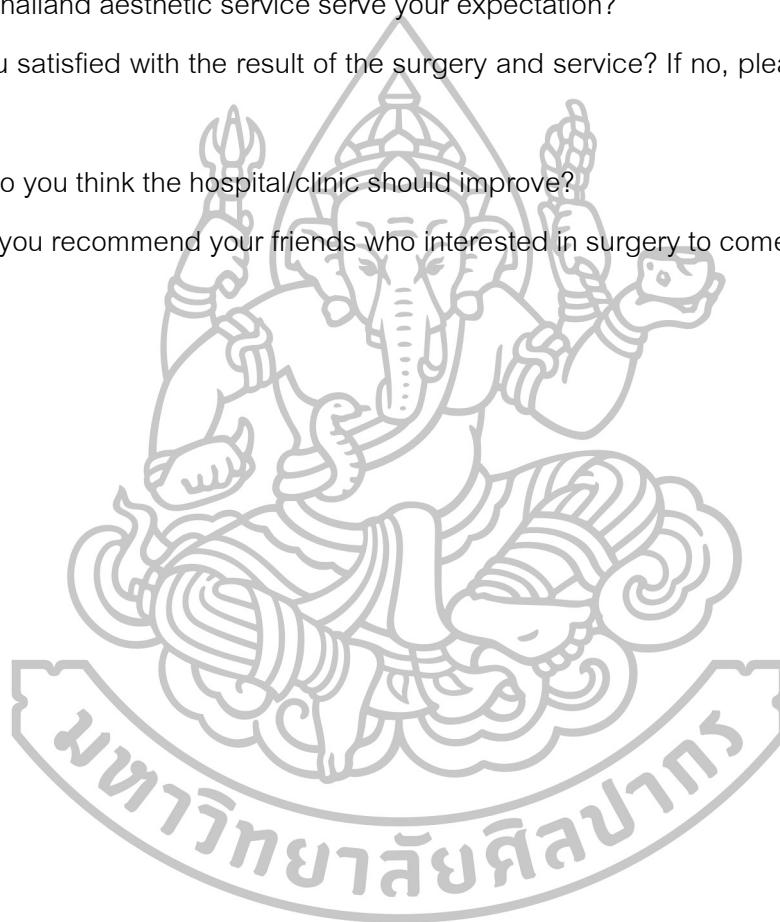
11. Are you satisfied with the result after your surgery? And why?

Appendix B

Interview questions for former patients

1. What is your reason to come to Thailand for aesthetic surgery?
2. Is this your first time for aesthetic surgery? not. How many times have you done the surgery?
3. What other factor have influence on you to make your decision to come to Thailand?
4. How do you feel about the hospital/clinic before and during your surgery?
 - Do they organize the service well?
 - Do they make your visit pleasant?
 - Do they provide you with information you needed?
5. What type of aesthetic surgery you have done?
6. Where and when have you done the surgery?
7. Do you think hospital/clinic provide service with reasonable price?
8. Was one of the reasons you came to Thailand for surgery is the lower cost?
9. How much would you have to pay for the same surgery in your homeland?
10. Did you find the hospital/clinic convenient for travel?
11. Do you find the hospital/clinic reliable
12. Did you receive any special treatment? If so. What kind of special treatment?
13. What kind of special treatment would you like to have in the future if you decide to come back for surgery?
14. Do you feel that you receive professional treatment from the doctor and institute?
15. How would you describe the willingness of the staffs?
16. Do you find languages become your obstacle?
17. How long before you decided to do the surgery in Thailand?
18. Could you please tell us about your process of contact before you came to surgery?
19. Did you feel comfortable with the process of before, during and after surgery?
20. Do you receive and follow up from the doctor after you surgery?
21. How long do want the follow up to be? 3 years? 5 years?

22. Can you tell us about the hospital/clinic you been to have your surgery done?
(Cleanness, Transportation , Friendly atmosphere ,staffs)
23. Do you need the hospital to keep a confidential record of your visit?
24. What was your expectation before you came to have the surgery done in Thailand?
25. How did you know about aesthetic surgery in Thailand?
26. Does Thailand aesthetic service serve your expectation?
27. Are you satisfied with the result of the surgery and service? If no, please tell us the reason.
28. What do you think the hospital/clinic should improve?
29. Would you recommend your friends who interested in surgery to come to Thailand?



Appendix C

Interview questions for surgeons

1. Could you please explain about the potentiality of services (Hospitals & clinics, Equipments, technology, Nurses& co-op -who provide service)
2. What kind of degree or awarded do Thai surgeon hold?
3. How many aesthetic Surgery you have done approximately in the last 5 years, Is it increased nowadays?
4. Have u ever done surgery for foreign patients, How many, and where are they from?
5. Do you join any service with other company to attract more foreign patients? And how to do you promote your service?
6. Do you think that join hand with any industry you provide better service? How?
7. Beside Thailand, Where is the famous destination foreign patient having the surgery done? Why do you think it is so?
8. What are the advantages of Thailand aesthetic surgery?
9. What type of aesthetic surgery do you perform?
10. Who are you customer?
11. How do you define your price among others (both in Thailand and developed countries)?
12. Where do you work?
13. Do you think Thailand especially Bangkok is the best location for aesthetic surgery services? And why?
14. What kind of special offer you provide for your patients?
15. Normally how long would one surgery be? Small/medium/large surgery?
16. What would approximate recovery time be?
17. What kind of facilities you provide for your patients in your hospital/clinic? (Rooms, TV, Etc.)

Appendix D

Comparing costs of medical procedures

Major medical procedures w/average total medical/hospital cost in a western-level hospital

Procedure	U.S. Costs from "Patient Beyond Border" by Josef Woodman. Details below								
	Countries					Cost as a % to U.S.			
	U.S.	India	Thailand	Singapore	Malaysia	India	Thailand	Singapore	Malaysia
Heart Bypass	130,000	10,000	11,000	18,500	9,000	8%	8%	14%	7%
Heart Valve Replacement	160,000	9,000	10,000	12,500	9,000	6%	6%	8%	6%
Angioplasty	57,000	11,000	13,000	13,000	11,000	19%	23%	23%	19%
Hip Replacement	43,000	9,000	12,000	12,000	10,000	21%	28%	28%	23%
Hysterectomy	20,000	3,000	4,500	6,000	3,000	15%	23%	30%	15%
Knee Replacement	40,000	8,500	10,000	13,000	8,000	21%	25%	33%	20%
Spinal Fusion	62,000	5,500	7,000	9,000	6,000	9%	11%	15%	10%

Note: Costs are for surgery, including hospital stay only.

Source: Deloitte Development LLC (2008). Medical Tourism: Consumers in Search of Value.



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