

# The Global Medical Tourism Market: Trends, Drivers, and Opportunities

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## Abstract

*The international medical tourism sector has experienced substantial growth over the past few years, driven by rising healthcare costs, prolonged waiting times, and increasing awareness of alternative medical destinations. This study examines the key factors influencing the expansion of medical tourism, including economic considerations, quality and safety standards, and regulatory frameworks. It also evaluates the challenges and opportunities faced by patients and healthcare providers in this evolving industry. A mixed-method approach was employed to collect data, utilizing surveys, interviews, and secondary sources to gain an in-depth understanding of medical tourism dynamics. Data were gathered from individuals considering medical tourism and industry practitioners to analyse patient motivations, leading destinations, and emerging trends in international healthcare travel. The research findings indicate that medical tourism is primarily driven by healthcare costs, the availability of specialized treatments, and the credentials of healthcare providers. India, Thailand, and Turkey have emerged as key destinations due to their advanced medical infrastructure and cost-effective treatments. However, significant challenges remain, including inconsistencies in regulatory frameworks, ethical dilemmas, and concerns about quality assurance. Additional factors such as language barriers, cultural differences, and post-procedure care also influence patient experiences and satisfaction levels. The study highlights the role of technological advancements, particularly telemedicine, in improving patient decision-making and facilitating consultations with healthcare professionals abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the industry by increasing patient awareness of safety protocols, altering travel regulations, and accelerating the adoption of digital health services. Despite these challenges, the medical tourism sector continues to present opportunities for economic growth and international healthcare collaboration. For sustainable development, industry stakeholders must prioritize enhancing quality assurance mechanisms, implementing standardized regulations, and promoting ethical medical tourism practices. Collaboration between governments, healthcare institutions, and tourism agencies is essential to addressing concerns related to patient safety and equitable access to healthcare services. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on medical tourism by providing insights into consumer behaviour, industry trends, and policy implications. Future research should explore the long-term economic impact of medical tourism, the integration of emerging technologies, and the evolving expectations of medical travellers.*

**Keywords:** Economic impact of medical travel; Healthcare globalization; Medical tourism; Patient mobility; Quality assurance; Regulatory challenges in medical tourism; Telemedicine in tourism.

## 1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, medical tourism has emerged as a significant trend reshaping healthcare delivery. It refers to individuals traveling across international borders for medical treatment, surgeries, or wellness services. This phenomenon has gained momentum due to rising healthcare costs, long waiting times, technological advancements, and the desire for a holistic healthcare experience.

Historically, people travelled long distances for healing waters and specialized treatments. Today, globalization and technology have fuelled its exponential growth, providing patients with greater access to information about international healthcare options. The appeal of medical tourism lies in its affordability, accessibility, and high-quality care. Patients seek treatment abroad to avoid high costs and

long delays, benefiting from advanced medical infrastructure and skilled professionals in destinations like Thailand, India, and Singapore. Medical tourism spans various medical specialties, from cosmetic surgeries to complex procedures like organ transplants and cancer therapies. However, it also presents ethical, legal, and quality challenges. Patients must navigate unfamiliar healthcare systems, language barriers, and regulatory differences, posing risks to their safety. This research aims to examine the drivers, trends, economic implications, ethical concerns, and regulatory challenges of medical tourism. By analysing these factors, this study seeks to provide insights into the evolving landscape of global healthcare and its impact on patients and local healthcare systems.

## 2. Objective

**Evaluate Economic Impact:** Understand how medical tourism affects the money situation in the countries people visit for treatment, as well as for the healthcare providers and the patients themselves. This means looking at things like how much money is spent, and how it helps local economies.

**Assess Quality and Safety Standards:** Check how safe and good the medical care is for people who travel for treatment. This involves looking at the rules in place, how well hospitals and clinics are checked to make sure they are up to scratch, and if they follow the same standards as in other countries.

## 3. Literature Review

Neha Malhotra & Kartik Dave – "An Assessment of Competitiveness of Medical Tourism Industry in India: A Case of Delhi NCR" This study explores India's rise as a medical tourism hub due to cost-effective healthcare, skilled professionals, and quality services. Despite its advantages, challenges such as weak regulations, infrastructure limitations, and ethical concerns persist. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the industry, requiring businesses and healthcare providers to adapt to new conditions to sustain growth. Medical Tourism Magazine – "The Role of Accreditation in Medical Tourism: Ensuring Quality and Trust" This article examines the significance of accreditation in medical tourism, which ensures quality and safety standards in healthcare facilities. Accreditation builds trust

among international patients but poses challenges like high costs and inconsistent standards across regions. Overcoming these barriers is essential for maintaining medical tourism's credibility and long-term sustainability. Diogo Cunha Ferreira, Inês Vieira, Maria Isabel Pedro, Paulo Caldas & Miguel Varela – "Patient Satisfaction with Healthcare Services: A Systematic Review" This research highlights the critical role of patient satisfaction in healthcare, affecting loyalty and profitability. Key influencing factors include medical care quality, communication, and waiting time. Social media plays a vital role in feedback, while methodologies like MUSA help assess satisfaction. However, challenges remain in measuring non-linear relationships between patient experience and healthcare quality. Hanis Waheed – "Ethical and Legal Issues in Medical Tourism" This study delves into the ethical and legal complexities of medical tourism, including limited legal recourse, regulatory disparities, and patient safety risks. Proposed solutions include uniform regulations, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and accreditation frameworks to address concerns regarding healthcare access disparities and ethical dilemmas. Vildan Yılmaz & Ebru Güneren – "Determining Destination Competitiveness in Medical Tourism" This research evaluates the factors influencing medical tourism competitiveness in Alanya, Turkey. Using methods like AHP and IPA, it identifies key patient preferences and proposes Quality Function Deployment (QFD) to improve service planning. Findings highlight the importance of enhancing healthcare services and collaboration between tourism and healthcare sectors to boost competitiveness. Iskra Alexandra Nola & Zdeslav Radović – "Impacts of Medical Tourism on Healthcare Access" This study discusses the global health implications of medical tourism, including inequalities in healthcare access and strain on local medical systems. The lack of universal healthcare standards necessitates global accreditation efforts to ensure patient safety. Simplifying insurance coverage and standardizing medical services could enhance accessibility and mitigate risks associated with international medical travel. [1]

#### 4. Research Methodology

##### Types of Research

**Primary Research:** Involves collecting new data through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and experiments.

**Secondary Research:** Analyses existing data from reports, government publications, academic journals, and media sources.

##### Hypothesis

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** No significant difference or relationship exists between variables.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** A significant difference or relationship exists between variables.

##### Hypothesis Tests

**Z-Test:** Assesses differences between a sample mean and a population mean.

#### 5. Study Approach

This study used primary research, collecting data via a questionnaire with Likert scale and multiple-choice questions. A sample of 50 participants (aged 18–65) was surveyed to analyse key factors influencing the global medical tourism market, its trends, drivers, and opportunities.

#### 6. Data Analysis

In this study, we analyse the insight of the sample size and the information they have that impact the industry of medical tourism, their pain points, their motive to go for medical tourism and what improvements can be implemented to enhance the medical tourism experience. (Figure 1)

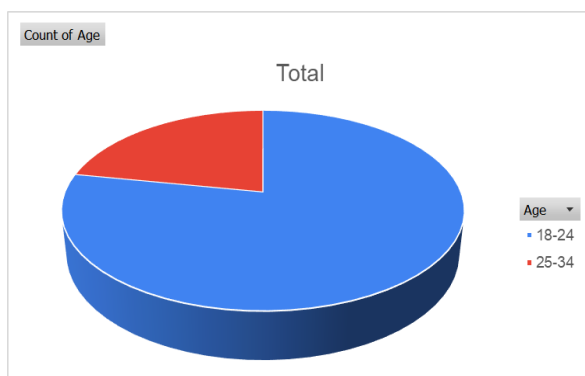


Figure 1 Showing Age Classification

Figure 1 illustrates Out of the total sample size (50), majority of the respondents fall in the age bracket of 18-24 (39), the age bracket of 25-34 has number of

respondents (11) and rest all of them are zero. (Figure 2)

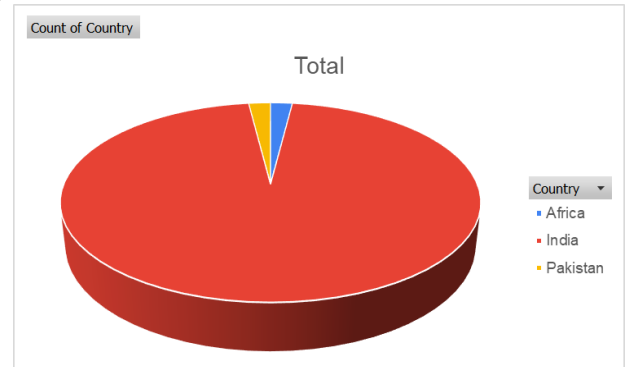


Figure 2 Showing Country Classification

Figure 2 illustrates Out of 50 respondents 48 resides in India while one is in Pakistan and one is in Africa with a bit knowledge about medical tourism.

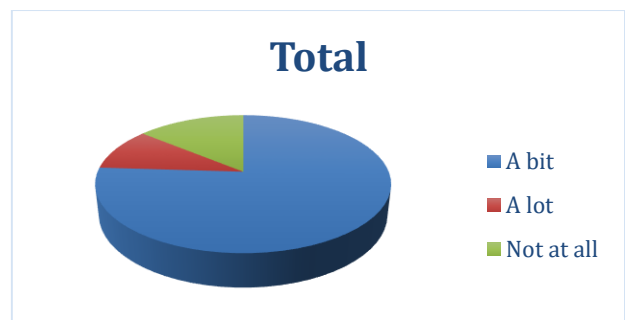


Figure 3 Showing Knowledge About Medical Tourism

Figure 3 illustrates Out of 50 respondents, 38 of them had some knowledge about medical tourism through personal experience or word of mouth, 5 of them knew a lot about medical tourism and for 7 of them the term “Medical Tourism” was unknown [2]

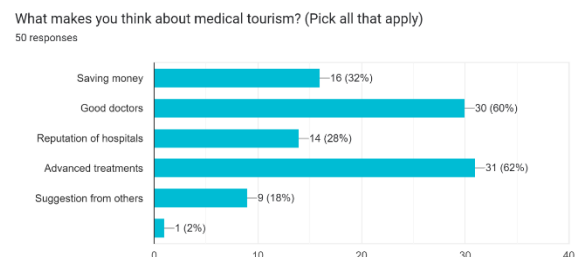
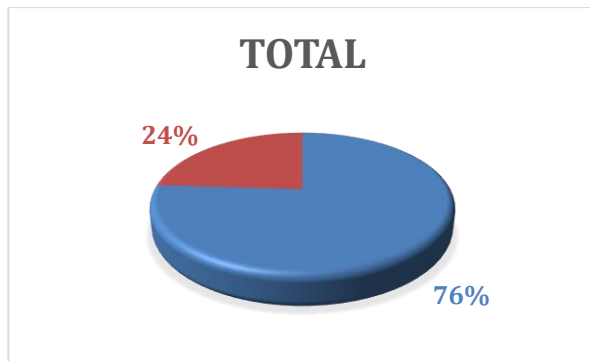


Figure 4 Showing What Makes Sample Size Think About Medical Tourism

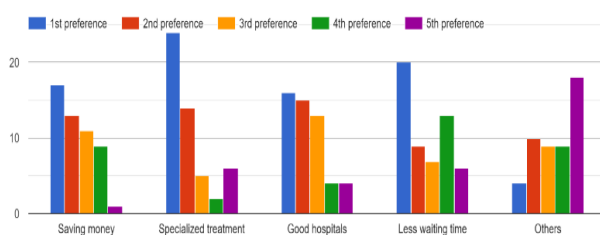
Figure 4 illustrates the most common reasons people consider medical tourism according to the survey are advanced treatments and good doctors, with 62% and 60% of respondents selecting those options respectively. Other reasons listed in the survey include saving money, reputation of hospitals and suggestion from others.



**Figure 5 Showing If Sample Size Saw Anything New in Medical Tourism Lately**

Figure 5 illustrates Out of 50 respondent's majority of them 76% (30) of them have not seen any new innovation happening in medical tourism while on the other hand 24% (12) of them have seen new things happening in medical tourism industry.

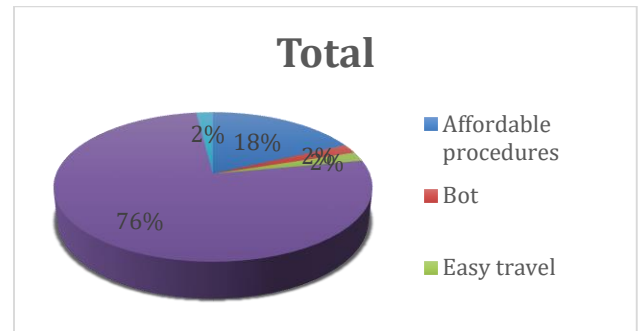
What do you think makes more people go for medical tourism?



**Figure 6 Showing What Makes People Go for Medical Tourism**

Figure 6 illustrates Out of 50 respondents; it shows that the top motivators for medical tourism are cost savings and access to specialized treatments. Less important factors include good hospital reputation, shorter wait times and other reasons. According to the survey, saving money is the most important factor

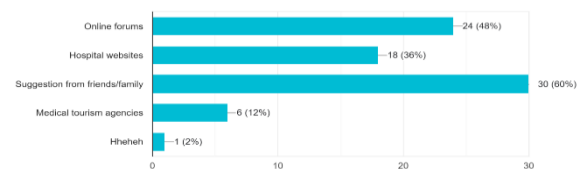
with 60% of respondents selecting it. [3]



**Figure 7 What Things Would Help You Pick a Country for Medical Treatment?**

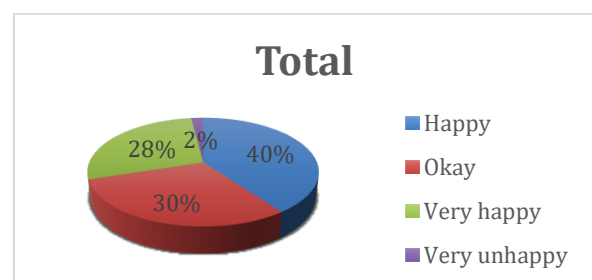
Figure 7 illustrates Out to 50 respondents 76% of them prefer "Good healthcare reputation" over any other preference we can clearly see that when it comes to health other factors like affordable procedures, Easy travel, language understanding etc. have less importance that good healthcare reputation.

Where do you usually get information about medical tourism? (Choose all that apply)  
50 responses



**Figure 8 Where do you Usually Get Information About Medical Tourism?**

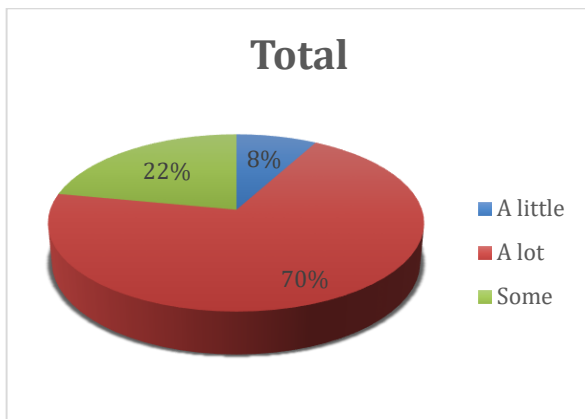
Figure 8 illustrates Out of 50 respondents people considering medical tourism are most influenced by cost savings (60%) and recommendations from friends and family (60%). Following these are hospital websites (36%) and online forums (48%).



**Figure 9 If you had medical treatment in another country, how happy were you with it?**

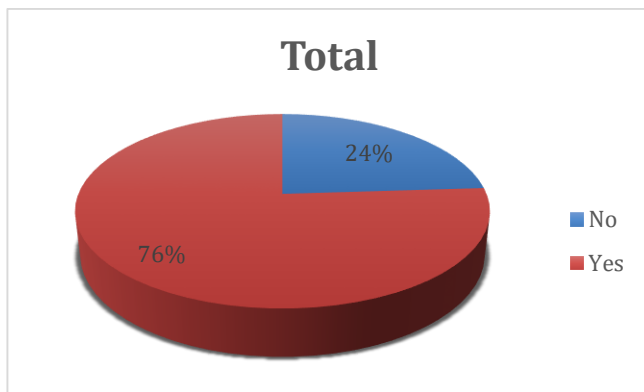


Out of 50 respondents we can see that majority of them 40% were “happy” followed by “Okay” that is 30%, 28% of the respondents were very happy which means they found medical tourism industry very useful and only 2% of the respondents were very unhappy.



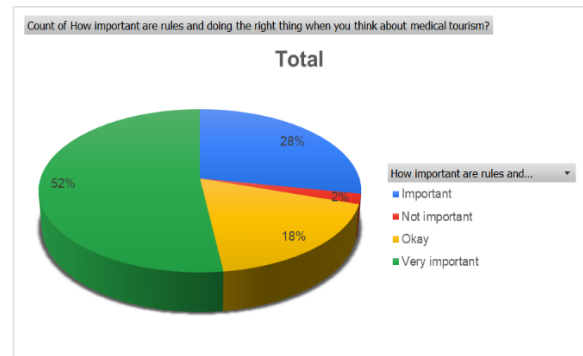
**Figure 10 Do You Think Technology Changes How Medical Tourism Works?**

Figure 10 illustrates Out of 50 respondents, 70% of people believe technology changes how medical tourism works. This suggests that technology may play a large role in facilitating medical tourism.[4]



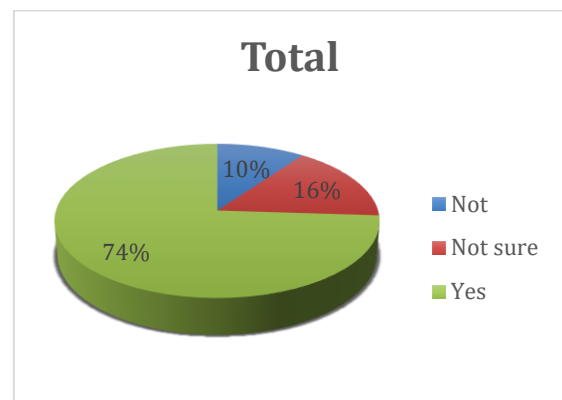
**Figure 11 Do you Think the COVID-19 Situation Changed How People See Medical Tourism?**

Figure 11 illustrates Out of 50 respondents 76%, people think that covid 19 had impact on medical tourism. It can be positive or negative as people might not be willing to go out of the country taking safety risk into consideration or they might be willing more to travel out of the country as covid restriction are off to get better healthcare facility. [5]



**Figure 12 How Important Are Rules and Doing the Right Thing When You Think About Medical Tourism?**

Figure 12 illustrates Out of 50 respondent’s majority of people (52%) believe that rules and doing the right thing are very important in medical tourism. A smaller percentage of people find these factors to be only somewhat important (28%) or not important at all (18%).



**Figure 13 Would you Think About or Tell Others to Try Medical Tourism Later on?**

Figure 13 illustrates Out of 50 respondents, 74% would like to tell others about medical tourism reasons can be personal experience, word of mouth etc. 10% won’t tell others about it and 16% are not sure about it.

**Do you want to add anything else about medical tourism?**

- The various points that some of the respondents noticed and wanted to add are –
- Features in hospital and improving technologies play a vital role in medical tourism

- Yes. Medical tourism offers several benefits, like access to high-quality healthcare at lower costs, shorter wait times for certain procedures, and also patients should consider some factors like language barriers, cultural differences before planning their medical travel.
- It's something many people are not aware of so it could be introduced to people from other countries.
- Person's health is primary and everybody wants Best treatment for themselves and their loved ones, one does not hesitate to Spend a fortune For their wellbeing it has often observed that people takes loans for the Treatment but at the end it is one's right and choice to get best possible Treatment. [6]

## 7. Findings

The growing trend of medical tourism raises significant questions about its implications and challenges. This research aims to understand the economic impact, quality and safety standards, ethical considerations, healthcare disparities, patient experiences, and future trends of medical tourism.

The two objectives are –

**Evaluate Economic Impact:** Understand how medical tourism affects the money situation in the countries people visit for treatment, as well as for the healthcare providers and the patients themselves. This means looking at things like how much money is spent, and how it helps local economies.

**Assess Quality and Safety Standards:** Check how safe and good the medical care is for people who travel for treatment. This involves looking at the rules in place, how well hospitals and clinics are checked to make sure they are up to scratch, and if they follow the same standards as in other countries.

Hypothesis

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant relationship between medical tourism and economic impact or quality and safety standards.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** Medical tourism positively affects the economies of destination countries and maintains satisfactory quality and safety standards for patients.

**Z-Test:** The z-test results indicate a z-score of

approximately -0.7602. Comparing this value with the significance level, we find that the absolute value of the z-score (-0.7602) is less than the significance level (0.740564255).

**Interpretation:** Since the absolute value of the calculated z-score is less than the significance level, we fail to reject the null hypothesis at the specified significance level. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to conclude a significant relationship between medical tourism and its impact on the economies of destination countries or the maintenance of quality and safety standards for patients. Based on the data provided and the chosen significance level, we do not have sufficient evidence to support the claim that medical tourism positively affects destination economies or ensures satisfactory quality and safety standards for patients.

## Conclusion

Medical tourism is a rapidly growing sector, offering affordable and high-quality healthcare across borders. Countries like India and Thailand have successfully attracted international patients, but challenges such as regulatory inconsistencies, ethical concerns, and quality assurance remain critical. Technology and globalization continue to drive its expansion, yet patient safety and standardization must be prioritized. The Z-Test analysis yielded a z-score of -0.7602, leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This suggests no significant relationship between medical tourism and its economic impact or quality and safety standards.

Primary Data Findings:

- Demographics: 66% of respondents were male, 78% were aged 18-24, and 96% were from India.
- Awareness & Motivators: 76% had some knowledge of medical tourism; key motivators included advanced treatments (62%), good doctors (60%), and cost savings (32%).
- Decision Factors: 76% prioritized a good healthcare reputation, while 48% valued affordability.
- Technology & COVID-19 Impact: 70% believed technology plays a key role, and 76% felt COVID-19 changed perceptions of

medical tourism.

- Satisfaction & Recommendations: 40% were satisfied with their experience, and 74% would recommend medical tourism to others.

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