



## **The Study of Thailand's Cosmetic Surgery Market and Attitudes of Surgeons and Foreign Patients towards Cosmetic Surgery in Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

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 cosmetic surgery in Thailand for promoting medical tourism market; 2) to study the perspectives of the leading surgeons in cosmetic surgery in Thailand; 3) to study the perceptions of foreigners who had undergone cosmetic surgery in Thailand and; 4) to examine the conditions and practice of cosmetic 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, consisted 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, and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals. By using snowballing technique, five leading hospitals were first selected as a case study 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. 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. The major limitations of this research is related to the process data collection, which was difficult to make an appointment with the surgeons as well as contacting foreign patients for interviewing. The process was very time-consuming and some foreign patients were not willing to participate in the 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. 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.

**Keywords:** Cosmetic Surgery, Cosmetic Surgery Market, Attitudes of Foreign Patients and Surgeons, Thailand

### **Introduction**

According to Atiyeh, Rubeiz and Hayek (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. Recently, cosmetic surgery gained popularity throughout worldwide, due to, people are highly concerned



on appearance both facial and body figure (Salehahmadi & Rafie, 2012; Stockhaus, 2012). 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).

Regarding to medical tourism market, cosmetic 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, Exworthy, Green, Horsfall, Mannion and Smith, 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; Stockhaus, 2012). In Thailand, Thai government supports cosmetic surgery as national medical tourism. 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 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 (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 cosmetic 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 becomes one of the best choices for cosmetic surgery patients, including eyes surgery, nasal reshaping, breast reduction and especially sex reassignment surgery (Sinhaneti & Pullawan, 2008). Thus, in order to promote cosmetic surgery as part of medical tourism in Thailand, many aspects relating to cosmetic 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 cosmetic 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 cosmetic 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 cosmetic surgery in Thailand. The researcher expects that this research will contribute to the development of medical tourism market in Thailand and increase popularity of cosmetic surgery in Thailand among foreigners as well as create better understanding towards cosmetic surgery in Thailand.

### Methods and Materials

This research is an exploratory descriptive study, using qualitative research method. Both primary and secondary data are applied as an approach to data collection. The primary data collection method was conducted by using an in-depth interview with five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals, and with 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals. The secondary data collection was done through the review of literature relating to cosmetic surgery in Thailand.

The researcher applied the recruitment 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). In this research, the recruitment of participants consists of five actual Thai cosmetics surgeons in the five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals, including Bumrungrad Hospital, Yunhee Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok Hospital and Lorklak Hospital, and 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals. The researcher selected five leading hospitals as a case study 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 1 below illustrates the snowball sampling method used in this research.

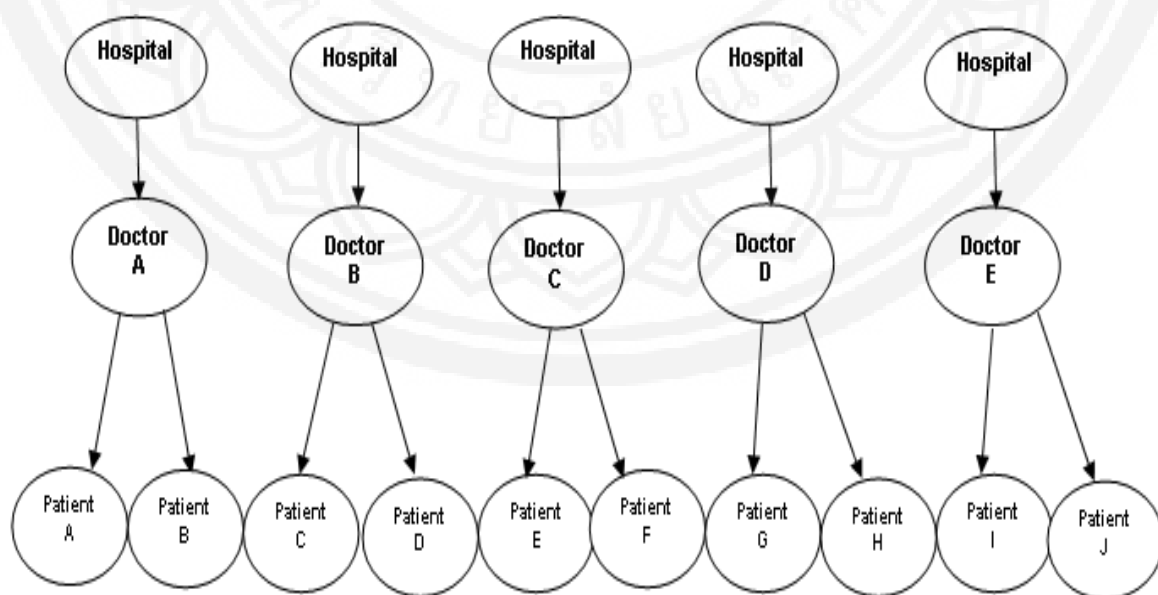


Figure 1 Snowball sampling method used in this research



The first recruitment group 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 gain popularity not only for Thais but also for international patients. 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, du Cros and Vong, 2013). The second recruitment group includes 10 foreigners who had done cosmetic surgery in Thailand from five leading cosmetic surgery hospitals.

The data collection process was conducted for three months. The interviews were 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.

In this research, ethical issues concerning research participants are primarily given importance to. Some ethical issues relating to participants of the research are access to data, obtaining consent from participants, seeking sensitive information, avoidance of causing any potential harms to participants, and keeping confidentiality. In terms of 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. In obtaining 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. When seeking sensitive information, the researcher has been very careful

about the respondents' sensitivities. 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. When the researcher gathered information, careful examination of any potential harm from the participants' involvement in this research was made. In this research, the questionnaire was carefully designed, with proper language and wordings used. More importantly, 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.

## Results

The main findings of this research are divided into 4 sections as explained below.

### 1. Factors that foreigners undergoing cosmetic surgery in Thailand for promoting medical tourism market

Factors influencing foreigners to undergo cosmetic surgery in Thailand were mainly **price** and quality of cosmetic surgery and related services. 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. Eight out of ten interviewees mentioned that price is the major factors in considering a place to undergo cosmetic surgery.

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 equipment 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. **Place** for undergoing cosmetic surgery are also very convenient, with good facility and accessibility. 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. 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.

In terms of **people**, 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. 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.

## **2. The perspectives of the leading surgeons in cosmetic surgery market in Thailand**

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 (Saniotis, 2007). Research findings showed that most of the leading surgeons perceived that cosmetic 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.

## **3. The perceptions of foreigners who had undergone cosmetic surgery in Thailand**

**3.1 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.

**3.2 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.

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. 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, Guevara and Mango (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.

#### **4. The conditions and practice of cosmetic surgery market in Thailand in relation to medical tourism in Thailand**

**4.1 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.

**4.2 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).

**4.3 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).

**4.4 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.

### Discussion

From research results in the above section, it can be discussed in relevance to research objectives that:

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. (2011) 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, Bueke, Elliott and Carlson (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.

2. 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 2007 in Thailand (Sanjotis, 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 (Banmuang.co.th, 2015). Research findings showed that most of the leading

surgeons perceived that cosmetic 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.

3. 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. 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.

4. 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. 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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).

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 treated as a case study, not applicable for representing the entire cosmetic surgery market in Thailand.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

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. 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. In terms of policy recommendations, government should put greater effort in promoting medical tourism industry to meet the goal of becoming the surgical hub in Asia. Government should provide subsidiaries to hospitals as well as legalising the advertising and promotion of cosmetic surgery to establish international reputation and reliability among foreign patients. The goal of becoming the surgical hub of Asia would then be not too far to achieve.

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