

FACTORS AFFECTING MEDICAL TOURISTS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN HOSPITALS IN MALAYSIA



Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2021

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

FACTORS AFFECTING MEDICAL TOURISTS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN HOSPITALS IN MALAYSIA

By

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December 2021

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Over the years, medical tourism has gained popularity in Malaysia, and it is now a wellrecognized industry. Nonetheless, Malaysian medical tourism hospitals' performance in terms of patient numbers and market value has been marginal when compared to its main competitors in the industry. To gain a better understanding of medical tourists' behaviour and shed light on the practical side of the medical tourism industry, this study aimed to investigate medical tourists' behavioural intention and satisfaction with social media platforms in Malaysian hospitals by extending the technology acceptance model with context-specific variables. The current study empirically tested the relationship between medical tourists' perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, system quality, information quality, perceived risk, self-efficacy, behavioural intention, and satisfaction. To fill the existing gap on the importance of firm-hosted social media platforms online marketing in the decision-making process of medical tourists, and the most significant factors in predicting social media adoption, a model was developed to understand and explain medical tourists' perception on social media platforms in Malaysian hospitals. Eighteen hypotheses were developed based on prior literature. This study collected and analysed data using a quantitative approach. This study's data was gathered from 324 medical tourists who visited Malaysia. This study used SmartPLS to examine variable relationships. The findings of structural equation modelling statistically supported fifteen of the study's eighteen hypotheses. The empirical findings also revealed that all measurement items are critical attributes and valid indicators of the underlying constructs. The current study's fundamental theoretical contributions include conceptual development by combining and advancing certain aspects of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Information System Success Model (IS success model), as well as empirical validation of each factor in the proposed model. On the other hand, practitioners in the tourism industries, policymakers, and destination marketers should consider the components of the conceptual framework to fully utilise the social media platform to gain and establish a competitive advantage over industry rivals by providing a better understanding of patients' demands and barriers to using web-based health information. A low response rate, a limited number of investigated factors, and the risk of positively skewed results could limit the study's findings. Additional research is necessary to validate the study's findings and expand its scope.



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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI PERSEPSI PELANCONG PERUBATAN TERHADAP PLATFORM MEDIA SOSIAL DI HOSPITAL DI MALAYSIA

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Selama bertahun-tahun, pelancongan perubatan telah mendapat populariti di Malaysia, dan kini merupakan industri yang diiktiraf dengan baik. Walau bagaimanapun, prestasi Hospital Pelancongan Perubatan Malaysia dari segi bilangan pesakit dan nilai pasaran telah menjadi kecil berbanding dengan pesaing utama dalam industri. Untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang tingkah laku pelancong perubatan dan memberi penerangan tentang sisi praktikal industri pelancongan perubatan, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat niat tingkah laku pelancong perubatan dan kepuasan dengan platform media sosial di hospital Malaysia dengan memperluaskan model penerimaan teknologi dengan konteks -Pembolehubah khusus. Kajian semasa secara empirikal menguji hubungan antara kegunaan yang dirasakan oleh pelancong perubatan, kemudahan penggunaan, kualiti sistem, kualiti maklumat, risiko yang dirasakan, keberkesanan diri, niat tingkah laku, dan kepuasan. Untuk mengisi jurang yang sedia ada mengenai kepentingan platform media sosial yang dihoskan dalam pemasaran dalam talian dalam proses membuat keputusan pelancong perubatan, dan faktor-faktor yang paling penting dalam meramalkan penggunaan media sosial, model telah dibangunkan untuk memahami dan menjelaskan persepsi pelancong perubatan di platform media sosial di hospital Malaysia. Lapan belas hipotesis telah dibangunkan berdasarkan kesusasteraan terdahulu. Kajian ini mengumpul dan menganalisis data menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Data kajian ini dikumpulkan dari 324 pelancong perubatan yang melawat Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan SmartPls untuk mengkaji hubungan berubah -ubah. Penemuan pemodelan persamaan struktur secara statistic disokong lima belas hipotesis lapan belas kajian. Penemuan empirikal juga mendedahkan bahawa semua item pengukuran adalah atribut kritikal dan petunjuk yang sah bagi pembinaan asas. Sumbangan teoretikal asas kajian semasa termasuk pembangunan konseptual dengan menggabungkan dan memajukan aspek tertentu dari model penerimaan teknologi (TAM), teori kognitif sosial (SCT), dan model kejayaan sistem maklumat (adalah model kejayaan), serta pengesahan empirikal setiap faktor dalam model yang dicadangkan. Sebaliknya, pengamal dalam industri pelancongan, pembuat dasar, dan pemasar destinasi harus mempertimbangkan komponen rangka kerja konseptual untuk menggunakan sepenuhnya platform media sosial untuk mendapatkan dan mewujudkan kelebihan daya saing ke atas saingan industri dengan memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang tuntutan pesakit dan halangan menggunakan maklumat kesihatan berasaskan web. Kadar tindak balas yang rendah, jumlah faktor yang disiasat, dan risiko keputusan yang positif dapat mengehadkan penemuan kajian. Penyelidikan tambahan diperlukan untuk mengesahkan penemuan kajian dan mengembangkan skopnya.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the inspiration and support from all the wonderful individuals around me. This is my opportunity to extend my thanks and appreciation to them.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the self-less effort of my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Yuhanis Abdul Aziz, for the continuous support of my PhD study and research, for her patience, motivation, invaluable advice, and immense knowledge. Her guidance and plentiful experience have encouraged me in all the time of my academic research, writing of this thesis and daily life. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my Ph.D study.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisors, Prof. Azmawani Abd Rahman and Assoc. Prof. Dr Raja Nerina Raja Yusof for their support, encouragement and insightful comments on my study. It is my supervisory committee kind help and support that have made my study and life in the Malaysia a wonderful time. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents. Without their tremendous understanding, encouragement and spiritual support throughout my life and specially in the past few years, it would be impossible for me to complete my study.

Above all, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and endurance I've needed during this journey.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

The current study aims to explore the technological and psychological aspects that impact medical tourists' technology acceptance behaviour and degree of satisfaction. Understanding what drives medical tourists to use the Internet, particularly social media, for medical travel is essential, given that social media is one of the most popular modes of communication among travellers and has been proven to improve tourism marketing strategies (Cham et al., 2020). To achieve this, this study combined three dominant theories, namely Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Information System Success Model (IS success model), to propose an empirical model to predict and explain medical tourists' behavioural intention and satisfaction with social media adoption for medical tourism purposes.

By investigating the relationship between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use with behavioural intention (TAM's constructs), this study indicated a link between the choice of a medical tourism destination and the usage of social media as an information gathering tool. Furthermore, in order to develop a more robust model by combining key theories in information system and human behaviour, as well as to identify the determinants of medical tourists' behavioural intention in the online environment and explain medical tourists' adoption behaviour and satisfaction, this study proposed self-efficacy (SCT's construct) and perceived risk as psychological factors, and information quality and system quality (IS success model's construct) as technological ones, as antecedents of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Combining theories allows for a more holistic description and explanation of phenomena from multiple perspectives (Horvath, 2019).

This chapter starts with a background on the study's key concepts, followed by the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, and theoretical and practical significance of the study. The scope of the study is discussed later in this chapter, followed by a definition of the keywords used in the study. The thesis structure is the focus of the final section of this chapter. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

1.2 Background of the Study

Tourism industry is widely regarded as one of the most important contributors to a country's economic development (Fry-McKibbin et al., 2017). According to UNWTO, the tourism industry witnessed its tenth consecutive year of sustainable growth in 2019, reaching USD 1,481 billion in tourism receipts and 1,460 million in tourist arrivals, despite intermittent shocks, indicating the sector's strength and resilience (UNWTO,

2021). Tourism also generates \$5 billion in exports every day, making it the "world's third largest export category after fuels and chemicals, and ahead of automotive products and food" in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021, p. 4). Tourism, as a part of service industry, has a number of distinguishing attributes, including intangibility, inseparability in terms of production and consumption, perishability and inflexibility (Chang & Chang, 2017). The tourism industry encompasses a wide range of products and services. Natural, man-made, symbiotic and event-based are some of these tourism products. In the following, these tourism products are illustrated (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1: Forms of tourism products (Vinayek et al., 2013)

Medical tourism, as a segment of health tourism (Andújar et al., 2021) is a growing sector of global tourism that offers hospitals the ability to expand by capturing the international market (Thayarnsin & Douglas, 2016; Beladi et al, 2019). This sector of the tourism industry has been viewed as a viable option for those who cannot access medical care in their home country or neighbouring countries. Medical tourism refers to "the act of travelling nationally and internationally for the purpose of taking medical treatment as well as visiting tourist attractions" (Subbaraman et al., 2021, p. 2). According to Chhabra et al. (2021), people who choose to cut health-care costs fly to other nations to undergo more specialized but less costly services. By crossing foreign borders, medical tourists also benefit from visiting a destination. This sector of the tourism industry has been considered an alternative for those who cannot afford medical treatments in their home country. Medical tourism, like all other tourism products, is intangible and experiential in nature (Cham, Lim, & Sigala, 2022; Fan, Isa, & Yang, 2022). As a result, each medical tourist views medical tourism subjectively.

Medical tourism accounts for a significant portion of the global tourist industry. In 2019, the global medical tourism market size is estimated between \$74 and \$92 billion while the average spending per visit is \$3550 (Patients Beyond Borders, 2021). In a recent

study, according to Allied Research Market (2020b), the global medical tourism market was worth \$104.68 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow to \$273.72 billion by 2027. The global medical tourism market had 23,042.90 thousand patients in 2019 and is expected to grow to 70,358.61 thousand patients by 2027. From the academic standpoint, the importance of medical tourism is widely acknowledged. While there is a developing body of literature on medical tourism that provides conceptual and theoretical understanding, the number of empirical investigations is fairly limited (Isikli et al., 2019). As a result, more research and investigation in the medical tourism sector are required.

The great majority of the world's medical tourism market is controlled by Asia. Asia's most popular medical tourism destinations include Singapore, India, Thailand, and Malaysia (Sarker et al., 2021; Firman et al., 2021). Malaysia's performance in the medical tourism industry has been marginal in comparison to other countries; however, evidence suggests that it is catching up quickly. Malaysia has allocated US\$7 million to this purpose in order to boost Malaysia as a health tourism hub (MHTC, 2018). One of the reasons why governments are paying such close attention to medical tourism is because this niche market attracts high-end tourists from both developing and developed countries, boosting local businesses (Softinn, 2017). Malaysia has positioned itself as one of Asia's and the world's top medical tourism destinations (Stolley & Watson, 2012; The Star, 2020). To promote Malaysia as a medical tourism hub, the Malaysian government has implemented a number of incentive programs, such as investing in health and wellness services, supporting hospitals, targeted tax allowances, and subsides for private healthcare, which has resulted in a positive influx of patients from other countries (Sopha et al., 2019; Tatum, 2020). An overview of the benefits and achievements of medical tourism in Malaysia, as well as the advantages that Malaysia has over other destinations, are shown in the Figure 1.2.





Choosing an appropriate marketing and information distribution medium is critical for product and service providers. Social media marketing is a great way to engage customers and distribute information about your products and services (Ebrahim, 2020).

For product and service suppliers, social media marketing assist them in promoting a brand, targeting consumers, educating customers, maintaining a less expensive marketing channel, obtaining new customers, and reinforcing existing customer relationships, distributing their message, and creating, sustaining, and monitoring their brands (Business Queensland, 2020; Kumar, 2021).

According to DataReportal (2021), the number of the world digital population at the beginning of 2021 was equal to 7.83 billion users, among which around 4.20 billion (53.6%) users were social media active users. The number of internet users around the world, with an almost constant growth, from 3.77 billion users in 2017 reached to 4.66 billion in 2021. In the following, the number of the internet users in each regain as a percentage of the total number of global internet users in 2021 is illustrated in Figure 1.3.



Figure 1.3: Share of global internet users by region (DataReportal, 2021)

The number of internet and social network users, as well as the percentage of internet and social network penetration in the world and Malaysia, are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Internet and social media usage in 2020

World	Malaysia
4.54 billion	26.69 million
59%	83%
3.80 billion	26 million
49%	81%
	World 4.54 billion 59% 3.80 billion 49%

(Source: DataReportal, 2021)

The data show that Malaysia has a higher internet and social media penetration rate than the rest of the world. Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in a report indicated that 88.7% of the population are Internet user. While 28.6% of them are spending 5 to 8 hours online (MCMC, 2020). Whereas 92.2% of the Internet users aged between 16 to 64 are actively engaged with social media, 53.2% of them used social media for work purposes (DataReportal, 2021). It indicates that Malaysians are well aware of the internets and social media's rising significance. What is important here, however, is how marketing departments of Malaysian medical tourism organisations can direct their online activities in a way that allows them to fully benefit from the potential offered by social media.

According to research by Statista, in 2021, 49 percent of Generation Z, 49 percent of Millennials, 27 percent of Generation X, and 7 percent of Baby Boomers believe social media are a better way to learn about new products. This revealed that customers of all ages accept and prefer to search for products and services through social media (Statista, 2021a). Patients of all ages and genders utilise the internet as a frequent source of health information (Bao et al., 2017). It indicates that people of all ages consider the internet to be a valuable source of health information. It's also worth noting that, in comparison to pre-COVID-19, more customers are purchasing online. Due to COVID-19, more seniors are shopping online (Allied Research Market, 2020a).

In another study conducted by Statista (2017), 5700 marketers were asked to describe the benefits of utilising social media for marketing purposes. Using social media, according to 88 percent of marketers, boosts brand visibility while 69% feel it is helping to build more devoted followers. The following are some of the additional advantages highlighted by marketers: Increased traffic (78%), generated leads (66%), provided market insight (66%), increased thought leadership (57%), grew business relationships (53%) and improved sales (52%).

Deloitte (2018) found that social media marketing boosts brand success. Two out of five marketing executives say social media is the most important tool for customer interaction. Social media marketing encourages consumers to engage directly with companies and brands, resulting in a conversation (Deloitte, 2018). Pre-prepared video, livestream, influencer marketing, interactive content, and user-generated content (UGC) are the top five digital consumer engagement tactics, according to a 2021 survey (Figure 1.4).

As illustrated in Figure 1.4, nearly 93 percent of marketers polled believed that UGC is one of the most effective marketing tactics. It is expected that revenue from social media advertising will grow at an annual rate of 11.8 percent, reaching USD 76.56 billion in 2022 (Statista, 2021b).



Figure 1.4: Leading digital consumer engagement tactics in 2021 (Statista, 2021b)

Furthermore, Statista (2021d) conducted a survey between 2014 and 2018 to investigate "trust in online customer reviews". This statistic compares online reviews with in-person advice. According to the findings, in 2018, 25% of respondents believe that if there are multiple online reviews, they will trust the reviews. The next most significant factor is the reviews' credibility. The percentage of people who do not trust reviews at all has decreased from 20 percent in 2015 to only 6 percent in 2018, demonstrating how online reviews have gained acceptance among users in such a short period of time (Figure 1.5).



Figure 1.5: Percentage of trust in online customer reviews (Statista, 2021d)

Over the last decade, the tourism sector, like other industries, has been impacted by the development of social media and has attempted to adapt to evolving internet technologies and trends. The social media has revolutionized the way people plan vacations, make choices, and share their experiences, and purchase tourism products (Katsikari et al., 2020). Social media serves as a data mining and information extraction platform (Xu et al., 2016). According to O'Keefe (2013), social media is the ideal means to deliver messages to customers across an infinite number of channels. However, gathering information and making purchases on websites other than official channels, where there is no control over media content, has always been accompanied with concerns about receiving incorrect information and deceit (Viviani & Pasi, 2017).

Medical tourism, a rapidly developing segment of the tourism sector, also benefits from the opportunities presented by social media (John et al., 2018). Potential medical tourists nowadays use the internet not only to read information, but also to communicate with medical tourism providers and potential or experienced medical service users (Cham et al., 2020). For this purpose, medical tourism service providers must establish themselves as a dependable and trustworthy source of information. To accomplish this, they must maintain and constantly update their social media pages, which must include patient reviews, hospital contact details, and medical treatment information (Cham et al., 2020).

Given what has been said about the importance of social media in the healthcare industry, it is imperative that social media be used for medical tourism purposes (Medhekar, 2018). According to Schöne et al (2020), online environments enable and provide components for the interactive exchange of information, ideas, and experiences between providers and users, as well as between users. Social media provides a platform for patients and health professionals to communicate about a variety of health issues in order to improve health outcomes (Charalambous, 2019). Thus, a medical tourism provider's official social media platform can be regarded as a business front line, and it can be of primary importance. However, the question here is how to persuade medical tourists to utilize these official websites. To address this issue, the factors that impact medical tourists' behavioural intention and degree of satisfaction in an online context should be identified.

1.3 Problem Statement

Medical tourism has become one of the most rapidly growing sections of the tourism industry (Ghasemi et al., 2021). According to Çapar and Aslan (2020) Medical tourism is regarded "as a strategic alternative tourism resource with many benefits, particularly economic ones, and has gained importance in recent years" (p.80). This presents an opportunity for developing countries to tap into this lucrative sector, particularly in Asia Pacific, where healthcare travel potential is expected to reach USD19.87 billion by 2025 (MHTC, 2021b). Medical tourism has grown in popularity and revenue in recent years and Malaysian medical tourism has become a recognised industry (Cham et al., 2020). Malaysia's medical tourism revenue has grown in recent years. The number of medical tourists was 882000 in 2014 and 122000 in 2019. This industry doubled its revenue from 2014 to 2019 (Table 1.2).

Year	No. healthcare travellers	Generated revenue
2014	882000	RM777,000,000
2015	859000	RM914,000,000
2016	921000	RM1,123,000,000
2017	1050000	RM1,300,000,000
2018	1200000	RM1,500,000,000
2019	1220000	RM1,700,000,000

 Table 1.2: Number of healthcare travellers and revenue between 2011-2019

(Source: MHTC, 2021c)

In a report by Allied Market Research (2019), the market value and number of patients in a few selected Asian countries were reported. According to the data shown in Table 1.3, Malaysia's market value and patient numbers are not significant when compared to its primary competitors in the medical tourism industry, Thailand and Singapore (Allied Market Research's, 2019). When compared to Singapore and Thailand in terms of patient population, Malaysia's (12.97 percent) is less than half of Singapore's (29.86 percent) and considerably behind Thailand's (57.17 percent). Market value, on the other hand, which, unlike statistics such as visitor arrival numbers, is a forward-looking indicator that denotes the current value of future cash flows (Raad, Sharma, & Nicolau, 2021), indicates that Thailand's expected market value for medical tourism is six times (\$6,654.27) and Singapore's expected market value for medical tourism is three times (\$3,460.10) that of Malaysia (\$1,461.66) (Table 1.3).

 Table 1.3: Estimated medical tourism market value and patients in selected Asian countries in 2017

Country	Market value (Million)	Percentage (%)	Number of foreign patients (Thousands)	Percentage (%)
Thailand	\$6,654.27	57.483	1,931.69	57.172
Singapore	\$3,460.10	29.89	1,008.77	29.86
Malaysia	\$1,461.66	12.63	438.23	12.97

(Source: Allied Market Research, 2019)



In his study, Lai (2017) Malaysia is on track to become one of the region's top medical tourism destinations. He predicted lower costs would lure medical tourists from Singapore to Malaysia. Malaysia loses medical tourists to more costly (Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand) and less developed countries. It can be concluded that, despite the fact that Malaysia has cutting-edge facilities (Saragih & Jonathan, 2019) and that medical tourism in Malaysia is very inexpensive (Woodman, 2020), the number of medical tourists in Malaysia is quite low in comparison to other top medical tourism destinations (Table 1.4). The following table (Table 1.4) shows the number of patients in top medical tourism destinations around the world from 2017 to 2019. According to statistics, Malaysia has fewer medical tourists than Mexico, Thailand, Singapore, India, Brazil, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates, but slightly more than France, South Korea, and Costa Rica (Allied Market Research, 2019).

Country	2017	2018	2019
Mexico	2,767.92	3,086.39	3,429.62
Thailand	1,931.69	2,193.80	2,482.63
Singapore	1,008.77	1,143.12	1,290.73
India	690.31	805.51	936.23
Brazil	666.93	744.99	829.38
South Africa	606.39	683.73	768.37
UAE	593.85	674.31	763.08
Malaysia	438.23	505.14	580.18
France	386.37	429.79	476.45
South Korea	319.25	365.25	416.41
Costa Rica	310.91	351.92	397.02
South Korea Costa Rica	319.25 310.91	365.25 351.92	416.41 397.02

Table 1.4: Number of patients in top medical tourism destinations around the world

(Source: Allied Market Research, 2019)

Therefore, marketers must re-evaluate their marketing strategy and seek out novel and previously untapped marketing avenues in order to assist Malaysia outperforms its competitors and attract more potentials medical tourists. Medical tourism companies strive to attract patients by utilising new marketing channels such as social media platforms (Rejeb, Keogh, & Treiblmaier, 2019).

In the present era, social media is one of the most efficient and effective means of gathering and disseminating information (Ali et al., 2020). Social media is one of the most important channels via which businesses of all sizes can engage with their customers (Chae et al., 2020). Recognizing the social media's importance as a source of information for medical tourists and the medical tourism industry, hospitals are utilising their websites as a significant marketing tool for displaying their medical facilities, infrastructure, services, and patients' success stories (Rai, 2019). However, there has been little discussion in the academic community about the importance of online marketing and the extent to which official social media platforms can influence medical tourists' online behaviour. In addition, the existing literature does not give much insight into how social media involvement translates to improved experience quality in healthcare settings (Lee, In, & Lee, 2020). According to Richter and Kazley (2020), the use of social media platforms by hospitals offers a strategy for developing connections in the marketplace, and the patient-centred aspect of health care has pushed hospitals to undertake these initiatives. Richter and Kazley (2020) discovered in their study that hospitals with a Facebook page that had been active on Facebook in the previous 30 days and had more "likes" had more patients willing to definitely suggest the hospital and a better overall satisfaction level. These criteria were used to compare the Facebook pages of two leading medical tourism hospitals in Malaysia and Thailand (Table 1.5).

Hospital	No. of Facebook page likes	No. of Facebook page followers	People checked in here	Number of posts in the past 30 days
Prince Court (Malaysia)	125,709	126,631	194,784	13
Bumrungrad (Thailand)	2,329,910	2,348,749	672,753	53

 Table 1.5: A comparison between Facebook pages' performance of medical tourism hospitals

Malaysian hospitals' poor social media performance demonstrates that, while many industries have expanded their social media marketing efforts, Malaysian hospitals have taken a more traditional approach to marketing. According to Richter and Kazley (2020), this can result in lower levels of patient satisfaction and fewer consumers recommending Malaysian medical tourism hospitals, resulting in a smaller number of patients.

In the medical tourism sector, social media plays a critical marketing role. It has become a primary source of information for medical tourists seeking to choose a medical destination, and medical treatments (Cham, Lim, & Sigala, 2021). As Cham et al. (2021) highlighted, despite the fact that social media has been identified as one of the primary channels of communication among tourists, research on medical tourism in relation to social media communication is still limited. The gaps mentioned above represent a research gap that should be addressed, especially given the high-credence nature of the medical tourism industry (Cham et al., 2021). The importance of this study is that it investigates the role of social media in influencing customers' perception of Malaysian hospitals online presence.

Tourist behaviour has been extensively researched in the context of hospitality and tourism (García-Milon et al., 2021; Horner & Swarbrooke, 2020); however, studies on medical tourism are still in the early stages of development. Some of these research focused on the medical tourism pull and push factors (Fetscherin & Stephano, 2016; Ha et al., 2021; Zarei & Maleki, 2019), while others investigated the barriers that may impede the growth of medical tourism (Momeni et al., 2018; Raoofi et al., 2021; Tiren-Verbeet et al., 2018). Since medical tourism has yet to fully realise social media's potential, the question is how it can learn from the travel industry to apply social media tactics and strategies.

Several studies explain medical tourists' use of social media. Among these efforts are studies by Cham et al. (2021), and Claster et al. (2015). While these studies focused on the use of the internet for medical tourism purposes, the variables that facilitate social media use for medical travel remain unknown. In addition, prior research on social media's role in medical tourism destination selection focused on third-party websites (Abd Mutalib et al., 2017; Medhekar, 2018). Medical tourism literature has overlooked the role of firm-hosted social media websites as a marketing tool and information channel.

Several studies have been carried out to investigate the importance of information systems in the field of medical tourism (Chang et al., 2016). Theory of Planned Behaviour (Seow et al., 2017), Grounded Theory (Momeni et al., 2018), and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Alghizzawi et al., 2019) are among the theories and models developed and tested in the field of medical tourism. TAM is one of the most beneficial models in IS research (Lin et al., 2007). TAM has been used to explain online shopping (Vahdat et al., 2021), teachers' technology adoption (Ranellucci et al., 2020), and employee green behaviour (Zhang et al., 2019), but there is no extension of TAM or other related theories that addresses medical tourism tourists' use of firm-hosted social media platforms. To confirm prior research findings and expand TAM's applicability to different users and study settings, more research is needed.

For this purpose, this study uses TAM, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and the Information system success model (IS success model) to investigate psychological and technological constructs effective in using firm-hosted social media platforms. TAM and the IS success model can be used to study technology adoption and use. TAM was designed to explain how people adopt new technologies based on their perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989). Similarly, The IS success model explains information system implementation. SCT, on the other hand, explains the factors that influence people's behaviour. In light of the foregoing, a conceptual model with factors drawn from the above theories should be developed to predict and explain medical tourists' online behaviour and satisfaction.

It is important to consider the impact of perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) on medical tourists' intentions. Despite being the most important drivers of technology adoption (Kazaure et al., 2020) Few studies have examined their role in predicting health behaviour (Pu et al., 2021). It is also crucial to look at the factors that impact perceived ease of use and usefulness. According to Stevens and Jouny-Rivier (2020) the TAM is strong and predictive when it comes to new Information system adoption. Despite this, few studies have looked at the antecedents of perceived ease of use and usefulness (Stevens & Jouny-Rivier, 2020).

Despite Davis (1989) confirming that perceived ease of use and usefulness can serve as mediators in system usage, few studies have addressed their importance (Baccarella et al., 2020; Hubert et al., 2019; Makmor et al., 2019). Mediation analysis determines variable relationships statistically. As a result, additional mediation analyses were performed in this study to determine whether perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use can act as mediators for the independent variables on behavioural intention.

For the purposes of this study, the constructs used include self-efficacy, perceived risk (psychological constructs), information quality and system quality (technological constructs). Self-efficacy is one of the proposed antecedents of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Self-efficacy concept has been proven to be a consistent predictor of health-related behaviours in educational, clinical, social, and organizational settings (Ahli et al., 2019; Cho, 2020). With a limited literature focusing on social psychology theory in the context of medical tourism, academic research focusing solely on behaviour is overlooked (Seow et al., 2017). Furthermore, only a few empirical studies have

examined the direct impact of online self-efficacy on ease of use and usefulness (Yakasai et al., 2021). As a result, this study examines self-efficacy as a predictor of medical tourists' perceived ease of use and usefulness of firm-hosted social media adoption.

Previous research on the effect of perceived risk on social media usability and medical tourism was also lacking. It is critical to include perceived risk in TAM since customers relate to and value risk when assessing services and products for adoption or purchase (Mutahar et al., 2018). Perceived risk has been used to explain individual behaviour in ride-sharing (Wang et al., 2020), mobile payment (Li et al., 2019), and internet banking studies (Marakarkandy et al., 2017), among others. Although it has been demonstrated that perceived risk influences TAM components, the findings may not be applicable to online medical tourism information. This study posits that online risk perception is critical in predicting intent to use firm-hosted social media platforms.

Prior research has also confirmed the importance of information and system quality on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Hsu & Wu, 2017; Shafique et al., 2019). Putri et al. (2020) proposed incorporating information quality and system quality into the TAM model and testing how these constructs influence patients' perceptions of their ease of use and usefulness. The combination of TAM and IS success model is shown to be very effective in testing and understanding people's acceptance of information technology systems (Hawash et al., 2021). Given that technological variables are critical for understanding technology adoption, this link has not been studied in medical tourism. This study investigated the impact of information and service quality on medical tourists' firm-hosted social media adoption.

Many prior research on information technology usage and adoption have only looked at behaviour as an output component (Sulistyowati et al., 2020; Yakasai et al., 2021). However, when evaluating the success of an information system, it is strongly advised to consider user satisfaction (Isaac et al., 2018). TAM was expanded in this study with satisfaction as the output component. TAM constructs were used to determine medical tourists' satisfaction with firm-hosted social media. Table 1.6 summarises the problem statements.

To improve understanding and development of behaviour and information system theories in medical tourism, an integrated model for medical tourists' perceptions on social media platforms is needed. from a theoretical perspective, the goal of this study was to underline the significance of technological and psychological factors in medical tourists' perception of hospital social media platforms in the context of medical tourism. It should be noted that a better knowledge of these relationships will result in a larger competitive advantage for Malaysian hospitals, particularly in the exceedingly challenging medical tourism industry. As previously stated, research on medical tourism in connection to social media is very limited. To date, research on the topic of social media use within the medical tourism industry has been under studied, with few empirical studies addressing the significance of social media. This implies a research gap that should be investigated further. Establishing a positive perception of Malaysian hospitals on social media platforms and understanding the factors driving it would be a useful alternative marketing strategy for Malaysia to compete for the medical tourism industry. Therefore, the study of the challenges and barriers in the use of social media for medical travel is require.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

This study's general research objective was to investigate the factors that influence medical tourists' behavioural intentions and satisfaction of medical tourists toward using official social media platforms of medical providers. For this purpose, the current study aims to empirically test the relationship between the following factors: Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Risk, Self-efficacy, System Quality, Information Quality, Behavioural Intention and Satisfaction of medical tourist. In an attempt to achieve the purpose of this research, and after thorough analysis of prior literature, this study takes TAM, IS Success, and SCT as its theoretical basis.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

This research specifically attempts to:

RO1. Evaluate the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived risk with behavioural intention.

RO2. Examine the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived risk with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

RO3. Examine the relationship between system quality and information quality with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

RO4. Assess the relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

RO5. Assess the relationship between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use with behavioural intention.

RO6. Investigate the relationship between behavioural intention and satisfaction.

RO7. Evaluate the mediating role of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness between self-efficacy, perceived risk, and behavioural intention.

With the help of medical tourists who select Malaysia as their medical tourism destination, this study will offer a deeper understanding of the constructs influencing medical tourists' behavioural intention and satisfaction with firm-hosted social media platforms.

1.5 Research Questions

According to the previous discussion, the overall research question of this study is: What technological and psychological related factors influence medical tourists' behavioural intention and satisfaction toward using firm-hosted social media platforms?

The following are the specific and fundamental research questions raised:

RQ1. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived risk with behavioural intention?

RQ2. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived risk with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use?

RQ3. What is the relationship between system quality and information quality with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use?

RQ4. What is the relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness?

RQ5. What is the relationship between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use with behavioural intention?

RQ6. What is the relationship between behavioural intention and satisfaction?

RQ7. Do perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness play a mediating role between self-efficacy, perceived risk, information quality, system quality and behavioural intention?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The current research will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of tourism by investigating the antecedents of medical tourists' adoption behaviour and satisfaction with firm-hosted social media platforms. The present study's significance in terms of theoretical and practical contributions is discussed in the following paragraphs of this section.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

In terms of the academic literature this research extends the study of online behaviour in the context of medical tourism in Malaysia. It also contributes to the present literature on online behaviour studies by incorporating the perspective of firm-hosted social media platforms. The conceptual model presented in this study provides guidelines for future online behaviour studies, and hence for the development of additional research in this field.

The current study investigates the influence of self-efficacy, perceived risk, and information quality and system quality on medical tourists' intention to use a firm-hosted social media platform. The study reveals that not only technological constructs but also psychological factors may affect medical tourists' behavioural intentions. Since little is

known about the measurement of psychological and technological constructs in medical tourism, this study focuses on the relationship between these constructs and behavioural intention. These relationships might have considerable explanatory power in predicting medical tourists' behaviour in online environment.

Furthermore, this study examines the impact of various factors on perceived ease of use and usefulness. Understanding the antecedents of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness as essential TAM components is necessary to explain user acceptance and usage as predicting use intention based solely on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use has been criticised as insufficient and excessively simple (Izuagbe et al., 2019; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996). As such this research sheds light on how medical tourists' perceptions of ease of use and usefulness form as they make decisions about whether or not to use firm-hosted social media sites.

Moreover, the current study integrates the technology acceptance model (TAM) with the social cognitive theory (SCT) and information system success model (IS success model) theories to create a research model for predicting and explaining medical tourists' online behavioural intention and satisfaction. According to Patel et al. (2021), theory development in the domain of information systems demands a shift in focus. They proposed adding theories from other domains and related constructs to existing theories (Patel et al., 2021). This study combines the TAM, SCT, and IS success model to investigate medical tourists' behavioural intention to use firm-hosted social media platforms. Self-efficacy, information quality and system quality are considered as external variables. In addition to the theories, this study's theoretical foundation includes perceived risk component. The perception of risk can also help explain medical tourists' use of social media by revealing its impact on online behaviour (Rehman et al., 2020). Earlier research have linked risk with TAM in tourism and social media services. This study, however, integrates TAM and perceived risk in the context of firm-hosted social media platforms for medical tourism, where there is little empirical research.

In addition, this study argues that medical tourists' behavioural intentions towards the usage of firm-hosted social media platforms have a direct influence on their satisfaction with these platforms. Previous research on the relationships between intention and satisfaction gave little consideration to medical tourists' context. Furthermore, comprehending this relationship may assist academicians in structuring and designing a reference guide for medical tourism providers. This study aims to extend TAM by examining the technological and psychological components that drive medical tourism. This study's research framework incorporates key tourism constructs and introduces an integrated medical tourism model. This research adds to our understanding of the SCT and IS success models. The SCT focuses on self-efficacy and performance (Peifer et al., 2020), while the IS success model focuses on user perceptions of system and information quality (Trivedi, 2019). Both theories complement one another. Many research issues can't be answered with a single theory. As Mayer and Sparrowe (2013) highlighted "many research questions can't be fully addressed by drawing only upon a single theory" (p. 917). The theory combination helps researchers understand the complexities of the events being studied. This study's framework incorporated TAM, SCT, and IS success model, unlike previous research that only examined one.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

This research delves into the nature of medical tourism and its relationship with social media, the potential that social media offers the medical tourism industry, and how this industry may profit from this versatile marketing tool. Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) announced in 2009 that Malaysia intends to be more competitive and people-oriented in the health industry to be successful in the global economy (Shariff, 2010). Malaysia Year of Healthcare Travel 2020 (MyHT2020) was to be promoted as the country's first significant international healthcare travel campaign in 2020. However, COVID-19 severely impacted medical tourism in Malaysia, and the campaign was postponed (MYHT, 2020). To promote Malaysia as the region's top healthcare destination, companies and stakeholders in the medical tourism sector must overcome current challenges and constraints.

Social media, along with telehealth, teleconsulting, e-pharmacy, conferences, and webinars, allows hospitals to continue engaging with healthcare travellers, confirming the importance of firm-hosted social media as a channel of communication. This research can help marketers develop strategies to increase consumers' social media engagement with medical tourism providers. Solving customers' complex behaviour is a challenge for marketing researchers and practitioners. Channel management and consumer-provider communication determine medical tourism providers' long-term sustainability. To provide excellent customer service, medical tourism providers must encourage two-way social media communication with potential medical tourists. This study can help medical tourism destination marketers use social media to reach potential medical tourists more efficiently and on a larger scale.

This study provides a framework for medical tourism providers to allocate resources for their social media presence in accordance with their budgets and business strategies, allowing them to improve their performance. The proposed framework shows how marketers can better understand their consumers and design the ideal social media platform based on medical tourists' behaviour. Policymakers and social media managers cannot simply adopt a strategy because it worked for another business. They must consider audience traits, perceptions, and needs. This study will help practitioners and industry players use social media to gain medium- to long-term market share. It can also provide a comprehensive view of accurate, timely, and up-to-date information dissemination.

Although this study does not intend to present any action plans, it does shed some light on the practical side of the medical tourism industry for the public and private sectors in terms of providing a safer online environment for online medical tourists who surf social media for medical tourism information prior to their travel. Table 1.6 contains a summary of the problem Statements, research objectives, research questions, and contributions.

Practical gap	Academic gap	Problem statement	Research objective	Research question	Research contribution
Businesses may utilise	Little attention has	There is a scarcity of	RO1. Evaluate the relationship	RQ1. What is the	This study addresses a
social media as an efficient	been paid to the use of	empirical evidence on	between self-efficacy and	relationship between self-	gap in the literature by finding the most
medical tourists in order to	medical tourism	marketing and the	perceived tiss with beliaviou at intention.	with behavioural intention?	significant factors in
attract and boost their	marketing. (Cham et	extent to which firm-	RO2. Examine the relationship	RQ2. What is the	predicting social media
interest (John et al., 2018).	al., 2020).	hosted social media	between self-efficacy and	relationship between self-	adoption intention
Therefore, the medical for the medical		platforms can influence the online hehaviour of	perceived risk with perceived usefulness and nerceived ease	efficacy and perceived risk with nerceived usefulness	among medical tourists.
deep understanding of how		medical tourists.	of use.	and perceived ease of use?	Adding to the existing
to optimize medical tourists'			RO3. Examine the relationship	RQ3. What is the	body of knowledge on
use of social media.			between system quality and	relationship between system	the effect of self-
			perceived usefulness and	quality with perceived	risk on online
		2	perceived ease of use	usefulness and perceived ease of use?	behaviour.
Health care managers and	A review of the	TAM has not been	RO4. Assess the relationship	RQ4. What is the	Empirically testing the
be able to improve patient-	healthcare studies	studying medical	and perceived usefulness.	perceived ease of use and	evaluating the usage of
centred care and assistance	revealed that they	tourists' interactions	RO5. Assess the relationship	perceived usefulness?	firm-hosted social
if they have a better	overlooked criteria	with medical tourism	between perceived usefulness	RQ5. What is the	media platforms in the
knowledge of patients needs and harriers to	other industries	providers III all ollille context	and percerved ease of use with behavioural intention	retationship between nerceived usefulness and	context or meancar fourism.
obtaining Web-based health	(Alhashmi et al.,			perceived ease of use with	
information (Leung, 2014).	2019).			behavioural intention?	
It is necessary to develop a	TAM fails to take into	Many previous studies	RO6. Investigate the	RQ6. What is the	Understanding the level
model that can specify the	account factors	on information	relationship between	relationship between	of medical tourists'
relationship between the provision of tourist	evalualing lectinology usage, such as user	doption focused solely	benavioural intenuon and satisfaction.	benavioural intenuon and satisfaction?	saustaction regarding the information obtained
information and satisfaction	satisfaction (Isaac et	on behaviour as an			from firm-hosted social
With medical tourism products in order to find an	al., 2018).	output component and			media platforms.
active marketing method for		user satisfaction.			
medical tourists in the future (Bae 2020)					
(200) - (200)					

Table 1.6: Summary of the problem statements, research objectives, questions, and contributions


Table 1.6: Continued

Few studies have

There is a lack of information for stakeholders and policymakers on what facilitates medical tourists' online information seeking behaviour.

focused on the role of PU and PEOU and their antecedents namely self-efficacy, perceived risk, information and system quality in predicting health behaviour (Pu et al., 2020; Seow et al., 2018).

There is a lack of knowledge on what are the most significant factor in predicting social media adoption intention among medical tourists.

RO7. Evaluate the mediating role of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness between self-efficacy, perceived risk, and behavioural intention.

RQ7. Do perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness play a mediating role between self-efficacy, perceived risk, information quality, system quality and behavioural intention?

Add to the existing body of knowledge by addressing the significance of perceived ease of use and usefulness as mediators.

This study enhances the current literature by examining perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness as a mediator to see whether these two factors mediate the effect of self-efficacy and perceived risk on medical tourists' behavioural intention. The study informs the sector about the benefits and limitations of medical providers' social media platforms, which are used to attract medical tourists. The proposed antecedents (perceived risk, self-efficacy, information quality, and system quality) should aid medical tourism providers in developing future strategies and decisions. For example, because individuals' belief systems are linked to how they judge and accept emerging technologies (Ali et al., 2018), it is critical to investigate whether medical tourists' acceptance of medical providers' social media platforms is influenced by self-efficacy. This study will help medical tourism providers understand the importance of information and system quality in social media platform adoption. These findings will help Malaysian medical tourism providers overcome acceptability and adoption barriers. Given what has been said, the study's practical implications are valuable.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the current research is to look into the factors that influence medical tourists' behavioural intentions and satisfaction when it comes to using firm-hosted social media platforms to make decisions regarding their medical trip. To that end, this research attempts to examine the factors that impact medical tourists' perceived usefulness and ease of use, including self-efficacy, perceived risk, information, and system quality. Early medical tourism research mostly focused on patient loyalty, hospital branding, doctors' ratings. Few of these studies looked at medical tourists' behaviour or considered consumer perspectives when promoting destinations. This study was prompted by gaps in the literature and the growing number of potential medical tourists who use the internet to exchange information and experiences on medical tourism locations and services.

The growing number of online medical tourists demonstrates the importance of social media as a source of information for medical travel planning, allowing medical tourism providers to optimise their marketing activities by focusing on this emerging and popular marketing tool. Examining the constructs that influence medical tourists' use of firmhosted social media platforms for medical travel gives insight into potential areas for improvement in their social media as a gateway to attract and retain medical tourists.

A quantitative study is being conducted on medical tourists in Malaysia. This study's population includes all medical tourists who used social media before travelling to Malaysia. This study analyses medical tourists who used firm-hosted social media platforms in Malaysia (as recognised by MHTC). Data was collected between September 2019 and March 2020. Due to ethical constraints, the procedure was carried out using the Internet via purposive sampling. The link to the questionnaire was sent to those who have contact with medical tourists, and they were asked to share the link with as many medical tourists as they knew. Chapter 5 will discuss the population and data collection method in detail. The study's findings will help medical tourists.

1.8 Definition of Keywords

Social networking sites: Online platforms that enable people to create private or public online profiles that they can then use to connect with and interact with other users are known as social networking sites (SNSs). In contrast to traditional mass media, the vast majority of SNSs are peer-generated, which means that users are both information providers and recipients (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016).

The firm hosted social media: A platform provided by businesses that facilitates communication between customers and service providers. The active processing of information by the consumer in firm-hosted social media is accompanied by knowledge exchanges, which can be customer-to-customer and/or customer-to-firm interactions (Claffey & Brady, 2017).

Medical tourists: According to Tapia et al. (2020), "a medical tourist is an international traveller whose motivation is the search for healthcare services in a different country from his own country of residence" (p.4).

Behavioural intention: Warshaw and Davis (1985) described behavioural intention as "the degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to perform or not perform some specified future behaviour" (p.214). In the present study, the term "behavioural intention" relates the extent to which medical tourists have made informed decisions about whether or not to use firm-hosted social media platforms for medical purposes.

Self-efficacy: People's assessments of their own abilities to plan and carry out the steps necessary to achieve specific types of results are referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy, in this study, refers to medical tourists' judgments of their own ability to obtain or share medical tourism information through firm-hosted social media platforms.

Perceived risk: The term perceived risk refers to "a combination of uncertainty plus seriousness of outcome involved" (Bauer, 1967, p. 15). In this study, perceived risk refers to medical tourists' perceptions of the unpredictability and severity of the outcomes associated with using a firm-hosted social media platform.

Information quality: The term information quality refers to the "characteristics of the output offered by the IS, such as accuracy, timeliness, and completeness" (Petter & McLean, 2009, p. 161). In this study, information quality is the extent to which a potential medical tourist considers firm-hosted social media platforms provide accurate, up-to-date, and comprehensive information.

System quality: System quality is identified as the "performance of the IS in terms of reliability, convenience, ease of use, functionality, and other system metrics" (Petter &

McLean, 2009, p. 161). In this study, system quality relates to the degree to which a potential medical tourist perceives the performance of firm-hosted social media platforms is efficient, straightforward and smooth, with no glitches.

Perceived usefulness: Davis (1989) defined perceived usefulness as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her performance" (p.320). Perceived usefulness in this study refers to how much medical tourists believe that using a firm-hosted social media platform will enhance the information search process.

Perceived ease of use: Davis (1989) defined perceived ease of use as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (p.320). Perceived ease of use in this study refers to the extent to which medical tourists believe that adopting a firm-hosted social media platform will be simple and free of effort.

Satisfaction: Satisfaction refers to the "customer's evaluation of the pre- and postpurchase experience in terms of whether it has met or exceeded his or her expectations" (Anderson & Swaminathan, 2011, p. 225). In this study, satisfaction refers to medical tourists' evaluations of firm-hosted social media platforms before and after their medical trip with regard to if the provided information met or surpassed their expectations.

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, each of which covers the following topics: introduction, overview of the tourism industry, literature review, conceptual frameworks and hypotheses development, research methodology, results and findings, as well as conclusions, contributions, limitations, and future research recommendations.

Chapter **one** presents the study's background and statements of the problem. The study's objectives and research questions are also outlined in this chapter. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical significance of this research are discussed in two sections. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the study's scope and keyword definitions.

Chapter **two** presents an overview of the tourism industry. This chapter discusses tourism industry in general and tourism in Malaysia in particular. Various types of tourism are discussed later in this chapter, followed by a brief history of medical tourism around the world and in Malaysia. The final section of this chapter is dedicated to the main studies conducted in the context of medical tourism.

Chapter **three** highlights the literature by focusing on the drivers of consumer behaviour and information seeking behaviour of medical tourists. Following a thorough review of the studies that have been conducted in the field of medical tourism technology adoption, the theoretical constructs of the present study, namely behavioural intention, selfefficacy, perceived risk, system quality, information quality, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use, are introduced. The chapter concludes with the research gap identified during the review of relevant literature.

Chapter **four** presents the conceptual framework and hypotheses of this study. First, the study's underlying theories are introduced. Following a brief overview of each of the underlying ideas, the proposed conceptual model of this study is presented. Research hypotheses are developed towards the end of the chapter.

Chapter **five** consists of the methodology used in this research. The research paradigm and research design are discussed in detail at the beginning of this chapter. The sampling procedure is explained, including the population and sample of the study, as well as the sample size suitable for the purpose of the study. Following that, the process of developing the questionnaire and the structure of the questionnaire is clarified. The measurement items for each factor are then presented. Following an explanation of the necessary steps for the pre- and pilot study, the procedure for data collection and data analysis is elaborated. The criteria for reliability and validity are also stated in this chapter, which is required to ensure adequate measurement of the study's constructs.

Chapter **six** presents the survey and analyses results as well as the study's main finding. For the statistical analyses, the data was first screened to ensure that it was correct and complete. The descriptive analysis follows, which includes both the descriptive statistics of the study's respondents and the constructs. The study then assesses and validates the measurement as well as the structural model. A report on the findings of the mediating effect evaluation concludes this chapter.

Chapter **seven** discusses the findings, contributions, limitations, and future research directions. It discusses and interprets the findings of this study in light of previous studies and research. The theoretical and practical implications of this study's findings are discussed later in this chapter. This chapter concludes by discussing the study's limitations and providing suggestions and recommendations for future studies.

1.10 Chapter Summary

Chapter one provided an introduction to current research. This chapter expanded on the study's background, including some background information on medical tourism and social media. The problem statement section underlined the significance and necessity of carrying out this study. This chapter also presented the study's research objectives, research questions, and theoretical and practical significance. Later, the scope of the study was discussed, as well as the definition of the keywords used in the study. Finally, it outlined the thesis structure. The following chapter will look at the tourism industry as a whole.

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